

Sir Thomas More

A play by
Anthony Munday, Henry Chettle, Thomas Decker,
Thomas Heywood, and William Shakespeare

Edited by Gerard B. Wegemer

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[*Censor Edmund Tilney, Master of Revels, writes:*] *Leave out the insurrection wholly and the cause thereof, and begin with Sir Thomas More at the Mayor's sessions, with a report afterwards of his good service done being Sheriff of London upon a mutiny against the Lombards—only a short report, and not otherwise, at your own perils.*

E. Tilney

1.1

Enter at one end John Lincoln with George Betts and clown Ralph Betts together; at the other end enters Francis de Barde, and Doll Williamson, a lusty woman, he baling her by the arm.

DOLL

Whither wilt thou hale² me?

BARDE

Whither I please; thou art my prize and I plead purchase of thee.

DOLL

Purchase of me? Away ye rascal! I am an honest, plain carpenter's wife and though I have no beauty to like a husband, yet whatsoever is mine scorns to stoop to a stranger. Hand off then when I bid thee!

5

BARDE

Go with me quietly, or I'll compel thee.

DOLL

Compel me, ye dog's face? Thou think'st thou hast the goldsmith's wife in hand, whom thou enticed'st from her husband with all his plate, and when thou turned'st her home to him again, mad'st him, like an ass, pay for his wife's board.

10

BARDE

So will I make thy husband too, if please me.

Enter Cavaler with a pair of doves, Williamson the carpenter and Sherwin following him.

DOLL

Here he comes himself; tell him so if thou dar'st.

CAVELER [*To Williamson.*]

Follow me no further; I say thou shalt not have them.

WILLIAMSON

I bought them in Cheapside,³ and paid my money for them.

SHERWIN

He did, sir, indeed, and you offer him wrong, both to take them from him and not restore him his money neither.

15

CAVELER

If he paid for them, let it suffice that I possess them. Beef and brewis⁴ may serve such hinds. Are pigeons meat for a coarse⁵ carpenter?

¹ The primary basis for this edition is W. W. Greg's *The Book of Sir Thomas More* (Oxford UP, 1911). For the best scholarly edition, see John Jowett's *Sir Thomas More* (Arden Shakespeare, 2011).

² pull along forcibly

³ London's main food market

⁴ broth or broth-soaked bread

⁵ common

LINCOLN [*Aside to George Betts.*]

It is hard when Englishmen's patience must be thus jettied⁶ on by strangers,
and they not dare to revenge their own wrongs. 20

GEORGE BETTS [*Aside to Lincoln.*]

Lincoln, let's beat them down, and bear no more of these abuses.

LINCOLN [*Aside to George Betts.*]

We may not, Betts. Be patient and hear more.

DOLL

How now, husband? What, one stranger take thy food from thee, and
another thy wife? By'r Lady, flesh and blood, I think, can hardly brook that.

LINCOLN

Will this gear⁷ never be otherwise? Must these wrongs be thus endured? 25

GEORGE BETTS

Let us step in, and help to revenge their injury.

BARDE

What art thou that talkst of revenge? My Lord Ambassador shall once more
make your Mayor have a check if he punish thee not for this saucy presumption.

WILLIAMSON

Indeed, my Lord Mayor, on the Ambassador's complaint, sent me to
Newgate⁸ one day because (against my will) I took the wall⁹ of a stranger. You 30
may do anything. The goldsmith's wife, and mine now, must be at your
commandment.

GEORGE BETTS

The more patient fools are ye both to suffer it.

BARDE

Suffer it? Mend it thou or he if ye can or dare. I tell thee, fellow, an¹⁰ she
were the Mayor of London's wife, had I her once in my possession, I would 35
keep her in spite of him that durst say nay.

GEORGE BETTS

I tell thee, Lombard, these words should cost thy best cap,¹¹ were I not
curbed by duty and obedience. The Mayor of London's wife? O God, shall it
be thus?

DOLL

Why, Betts, am not I as dear to my husband as my Lord Mayor's wife to 40
him? [*To Williamson.*] And wilt thou so neglectly suffer thine own shame?
[*To de Barde.*] Hands off, proud stranger, or by him that bought me, if
men's milky hearts dare not strike a stranger, yet women will beat them down,
ere they bear these abuses.

BARDE

Mistress, I say you shall along with me. 45

DOLL

Touch not Doll Williamson, lest she lay thee along on God's dear earth.
[*To Caveler.*] And you, sir, that allow such coarse cates¹² to carpenters, whilst
pigeons which they pay for must serve your dainty appetite: deliver them back

⁶ encroached upon

⁷ business

⁸ London's main prison

⁹ i.e., took the privilege of walking near the wall (the cleaner and safer side of the pavement)

¹⁰ if

¹¹ *best cap*: head

¹² provisions

to my husband again or I'll call so many women to mine assistance, as we'll
not leave one inch untorn of thee. If our husbands must be bridled by law, 50 1.1
and forced to bear your wrongs, their wives will be a little lawless, and soundly
beat ye.

CAVELER

Come away, de Bard, and let us go complain to my Lord Ambassador. *Exeunt both.*

DOLL

Ay, go, and send him among us, and we'll give him his welcome too. I am
ashamed that freeborn Englishmen, having beaten strangers within their own 55
bounds, should thus be braved and abused by them at home.

SHERWIN

It is not our lack of courage in the cause, but the strict obedience that we
are bound to. I am the goldsmith whose wrongs you talked of, but how to
redress yours or mine own is a matter beyond all our abilities.

LINCOLN

Not so, not so, my good friends. I, though a mean man, a broker by 60
profession and named John Lincoln, have long time winked at these vile
enormities with mighty impatience, and, as these two brethren here, Bettses by
name, can witness, with loss of mine own life would gladly remedy them.

GEORGE BETTS

And he is in a good forwardness,¹³ I tell ye, if all hit right.

DOLL

As how, I prithee? Tell it to Doll Williamson. 65

LINCOLN

You know the Spital sermons¹⁴ begin the next week. I have drawn a bill
of our wrongs, and the strangers' insolencies.

GEORGE BETTS

Which he means the preachers shall there openly publish in the pulpit.

WILLIAMSON

Oh, but that they would! I'faith it would tickle¹⁵ our strangers thoroughly.

DOLL

Ay, and if you men durst not undertake it, before God we women will. 70
Take an honest woman from her husband? Why, it is intolerable!

SHERWIN [*To Lincoln.*]

But how find ye the preachers affected to it?

LINCOLN

Master Doctor Standish [will not meddle with such matter in his sermon, but
Master Doctor Beale promised that he will undertake to]¹⁶ reform it and 75
doubts not but happy success will ensue upon our wrongs. You shall perceive
there's no hurt in the bill; here's a copy of it. I pray ye hear it.

ALL

With all our hearts; for God's sake, read it.

LINCOLN (*Reads.*)

"To you all the worshipful lords and masters of this city that will take

¹³ eagerness

¹⁴ *Spital sermons*: Sermons preached on Easter Monday and Tuesday from a special pulpit at St. Mary's Spital outside of
Bishopsgate, London

¹⁵ vex, provoke

¹⁶ This emendation follows Vittorio Gabrieli and Giorgio Melchiori's reconstruction in *Sir Thomas More* (Manchester UP, 1990).
Here and occasionally throughout, a portion of the manuscript is missing or damaged.

compassion over the poor people your neighbors, and also of the great
 importable hurts, losses, and hindrances whereof proceedeth extreme poverty 80 1.1
 to all the King's subjects that inhabit within this city and surburbs of the same.
 For so it is that aliens and strangers eat the bread from the fatherless
 children, and take the living from all the artificers, and the intercourse from all
 merchants, whereby poverty is so much increased that every man bewaileth
 the misery of other, for craftsmen be brought to beggary, and merchants to 85
 neediness. Wherefore, the premises considered, the redress must be of the
 commons,¹⁷ knit and united to one part. And as the hurt and damage grieveth
 all men, so must all men set to their willing power for remedy, and not suffer
 the said aliens in their wealth, and the natural born men of this region to come
 to confusion." 90

DOLL

Before God, 'tis excellent, and I'll maintain the suit to be honest.

SHERWIN

Well, say 'tis read, what is your further meaning in the matter?

GEORGE BETTS

What? Marry, list to me. No doubt but this will store us with friends enough,
 whose names we will closely keep in writing, and on May Day¹⁸ next in the
 morning we'll go forth a-Maying, but make it the worst May Day for the 95
 strangers that ever they saw. How say ye? Do ye subscribe, or are ye
 faint-hearted revolters?

DOLL

Hold thee, George Betts, there's my hand and my heart; by the Lord, I'll
 make a captain among ye, and do somewhat to be talk of¹⁹ for ever after.

WILLIAMSON

My masters, ere we part, let's friendly go and drink together, and swear true 100
 secrecy upon our lives.

GEORGE BETTS

There spake an angel; come, let us along then. *Exeunt.*

1.2

*An arras is drawn, and behind it (as in sessions) sit the Lord Mayor, Justice Suresby, and other justices,
 Sheriff More and the other sheriff sitting by; Smart is the plaintiff,
 Lifter the prisoner at the bar.*

LORD MAYOR

Having dispatched our weightier businesses,
 We may give ear to petty felonies.
 Master Sheriff More, what is this fellow?

MORE

My lord, he stands indicted for a purse.
 He hath been tried; the jury is together. 5

LORD MAYOR

Who sent him in?

SURESBY

That did I, my lord.
 Had he had right, he had been hanged ere this,
 The only captain of the cutpurse crew.

¹⁷ commoners

¹⁸ *May Day*: the first of May. This particular May-Day came to be known as Ill or Evil May-Day, as is indicated later at 2.1.

¹⁹ *somewhat to be talk of*: something to be talked about

LORD MAYOR

What is his name?

SURESBY

As his profession is: Lifter,²⁰ my lord, 10
One that can lift a purse right cunningly.

LORD MAYOR

And is that he²¹ accuses him?

SURESBY

The same, my lord, whom, by your honor's leave,
I must say somewhat to,²² because I find 15
In some respects he is well worthy blame.

LORD MAYOR

Good Master Justice Suresby, speak your mind.
We are well pleased to give you audience.

SURESBY

Hear me, Smart. Thou art a foolish fellow.
If Lifter be convicted by the law,
As I see not how the jury can acquit him, 20
I'll stand to't thou art guilty of his death.

MORE [*To Lord Mayor.*]

My lord, that's worth the hearing.

LORD MAYOR

Listen then, good Master More.

SURESBY [*To Smart.*]

I tell thee plain, it is a shame for thee 25
With such a sum to tempt necessity.
No less than ten pounds, sir, will serve your turn
To carry in your purse about with ye,
To crack and brag in taverns of your money?
I promise ye, a man that goes abroad 30
With an intent of truth, meeting such a booty,
May be provoked to that he never meant.
What makes so many pilferers and felons
But such fond baits that foolish people lay
To tempt the needy miserable wretch?
Ten pounds odd²³ money, this is a pretty sum 35
To bear about, which were more safe at home.

Lord Mayor and More whisper.

'Fore God, 'twere well to fine ye as much more
To the relief of the poor prisoners,
To teach ye be [more mindful of]²⁴ your own.

MORE

Good my lord, soothe²⁵ a [little jest]²⁶ for once, 40
Only to try conclusions²⁷ in this case.

²⁰ See Thomas Stapleton's chapter on More's "Quick Wit" in *The Life of Sir Thomas More* for a version of this incident.

²¹ he who

²² *somewhat to*: something about

²³ or so

²⁴ John Shirley's emendation in *Sir Thomas More* (Goulden, 1938)

²⁵ indulge

²⁶ Shirley's emendation

²⁷ *try conclusions*: experiment

MAYOR

Content, good Master More. We'll rise awhile
 And till the jury can return their verdict
 Walk in the garden. How say ye, justices?

ALL JUSTICES

We like it well, my lord; we'll follow ye.

45

Exeunt Lord Mayor and justices.

MORE

Nay, plaintiff, go you too;

Exit Smart.

and, officers,

Stand you aside, and leave the prisoner

To me awhile.

Exeunt all but More and Lifter

Lifter, come hither.

LIFTER

What is your worship's pleasure?

MORE

Sirrah, you know that you are known to me
 And I have often saved ye from this place
 Since first I came in office. Thou seest beside
 That Justice Suresby is thy heavy friend,
 For all the blame that he pretends to Smart
 For tempting thee with such a sum of money.
 I tell thee what: devise me but a means
 To pick or cut his purse, and on my credit
 And as I am a Christian and a man,
 I will procure thy pardon for that jest.

50

55

LIFTER

Good Master Shrieve,²⁸ seek not my overthrow.
 You know, sir, I have many heavy friends
 And more indictments like to come upon me.
 You are too deep for me to deal withal;
 You are known to be one of the wisest men
 That is in England. I pray ye, Master Sheriff,
 Go not about to undermine my life.

60

65

MORE

Lifter, I am true subject to my king.
 Thou much mistak'st me, and for thou shalt not think
 I mean by this to hurt thy life at all,
 I will maintain²⁹ the act when thou hast done it.
 Thou knowst there are such matters in my hands
 As, if I pleased to give them to the jury,
 I should not need this way to circumvent³⁰ thee.
 All that I aim at is a merry jest.
 Perform it, Lifter, and expect my best.

70

75

LIFTER

I thank your worship; God preserve your life.
 But Master Justice Suresby is gone in;
 I know not how to come near where he is.

²⁸ Sheriff

²⁹ uphold

³⁰ entrap

MORE

Let me alone for that; I'll be thy setter.³¹
 I'll send him hither to thee presently 80
 Under the color of thine own request
 Of private matters to acquaint him with.

LIFTER

If ye do so, sir, then let me alone.
 Forty to one but then his purse is gone.

MORE

Well said, but see that thou diminish not 85
 One penny of the money, but give it me.
 It is the cunning act that credits thee.

LIFTER

I will, good Master Sheriff; I assure ye.
Exit More.
 I see the purpose of this gentleman
 Is but to check the folly of the Justice 90
 For blaming others in a desperate case
 Wherein himself may fall as soon as any.
 To save my life it is a good adventure.³²
 Silence there, ho! Now doth the Justice enter.
Enter Justice Suresby.

SURESBY

Now, sirrah, now what is your will with me? 95
 Wilt thou discharge thy conscience like an honest man?
 What sayst to me, sirrah? Be brief, be brief.

LIFTER

As brief, sir, as I can.
 (*Aside.*) If ye stand fair, I will be brief anon.

SURESBY

Speak out and mumble not. What sayst thou, sirrah? 100

LIFTER

Sir, I am charged, as God shall be my comfort,
 With more than's true—

SURESBY

Sir, sir, ye are indeed, "with more than's true,"
 For you are flatly charged with felony.
 You're charged with more than truth, and that is theft, 105
 More than a true man should be charged withal.
 Thou art a varlet;³³ that's no more than true.
 Trifle not with me; do not, do not, sirrah;
 Confess but what thou knowest. I ask no more.

LIFTER

There be, sir, there be, if't shall please your worship— 110

SURESBY

"There be," Varlet? What be there? Tell me what there be.
 Come off or on. "There be," what be there, knave?

LIFTER

There be, sir, diverse very cunning fellows

³¹ decoy for a swindler

³² venture

³³ rogue

| | | |
|--|-----|-----|
| That while you stand and look them in the face Will have your purse. | 115 | 1.2 |
| SURESBY | | |
| Th'art an honest knave. Tell me what are they? Where they may be caught? Ay, those are they I look for. | | |
| LIFTER | | |
| You talk of me, sir.— | | |
| Alas, I am a puny. ³⁴ There's one, indeed, Goes by my name; he puts down all for purses [] [] | 120 | |
| SURESBY | | |
| Be as familiar as thou wilt, my knave. 'Tis this I long to know. | | |
| LIFTER (<i>Aside.</i>) | | |
| And you shall have your longing ere ye go. This fellow, sir, perhaps will meet ye thus, <i>(Action [of greeting, embracing].)</i> Or thus, or thus, and in kind compliment Pretend acquaintance, somewhat doubtfully, And these embraces serve— | 125 | |
| SURESBY (<i>Sbrugging gladly.</i>) | | |
| Ay, marry, Lifter, Wherefore serve they? | | |
| LIFTER | | |
| Only to feel Whether you go full under sail or no, Or that your lading be aboard your bark. ³⁵ | 130 | |
| SURESBY | | |
| In plainer English, Lifter, if my purse Be stored ³⁶ or no? | | |
| LIFTER | | |
| Ye have it, sir. | | |
| SURESBY | | |
| Excellent, excellent. | | |
| LIFTER | | |
| Then, sir, you cannot but for manners' sake Walk on with him, for he will walk your way, Alleging either you have much forgot him, Or he mistakes you. | 135 | |
| SURESBY | | |
| But in this time has he my purse or no? | | |
| LIFTER | | |
| Not yet, sir, fie! [<i>Aside.</i>] No, nor I have not yours. <i>[He takes Suresby's purse.]</i> <i>Enter Lord Mayor, etc.</i> But now we must forbear; my lords return. | 140 | |

³⁴ unimportant person

³⁵ *lading be aboard your bark*: freight be on your vessel

³⁶ full

SURESBY

A murrain³⁷ on't! Lifter, we'll more anon.
 Ay, thou sayst true; there are shrewd knaves indeed.

He sits down.

But let them gull me, widgeon me, rook me, fop me,³⁸
 I'faith, i'faith, they are too short for me. 145
 Knaves and fools meet when purses go;
 Wise men look to their purses well enough.

MORE (*Aside.*)

Lifter, is it done?

LIFTER (*Aside.*)

Done, Master Shrieve, and there it is.

MORE (*Aside.*)

Then build upon my word, I'll save thy life.

RECORDER

Lifter, stand to the bar. 150
 The jury have returned thee guilty; thou must die.
 According to the custom, look to it, Master Shrieve.

MAYOR

Then gentlemen, as you are wont to do,
 Because as yet we have no burial place,
 What charity your meaning's to bestow 155
 Toward burial of the prisoners now condemned,
 Let it be given. There is first for me.

RECORDER

And there's for me.

ANOTHER

And me.

SURESBY

Body of me, my purse is gone!

MORE

Gone, sir? What, here? How can that be? 160

MAYOR

Against all reason, sitting on the bench?

SURESBY

Lifter, I talked with you. You have not lifted me, ha?

LIFTER

Suspect ye me, sir? Oh what a world is this!

MORE

But hear ye, Master Suresby, are ye sure
 Ye had a purse about ye? 165

SURESBY

Sure, Master Shrieve? As sure as you are there,
 And in it seven pounds odd money, on my faith.

MORE

Seven pounds odd money? What, were you so mad,
 Being a wise man and a magistrate,
 To trust your purse with such a liberal sum? 170

³⁷ plague

³⁸ *gull ... fop me*: i.e., defraud me

| | | |
|---|-----|-----|
| Seven pounds odd money? 'Fore God it is a shame With such a sum to tempt necessity. I promise ye, a man that goes abroad With an intent of truth, meeting such a booty, ³⁹ May be provoked to that he never thought. | 175 | 1.2 |
| What makes so many pilferers and felons, But these fond baits that foolish people lay To tempt the needy miserable wretch? Should he be taken now that has your purse, I'd stand to't, you are guilty of his death, For questionless he would be cast by law. 'Twere a good deed to fine ye as much more To the relief of the poor prisoners, To teach ye lock your money up at home. | 180 | |
| SURESBY Well, Master More, you are a merry man. I find ⁴⁰ ye, sir, I find ye well enough. | 185 | |
| MORE Nay, ye shall see, sir, trusting thus your money, And Lifter here in trial for like case, But that the poor man is a prisoner, It would be now suspected that he had it. Thus may ye see what mischief often comes By the fond carriage of such needless sums. | 190 | |
| MAYOR Believe me, Master Suresby, this is strange. You, being a man so settled in assurance, Will fall in that which you condemned in other. | 195 | |
| MORE Well, Master Suresby, there's your purse again, And all your money. Fear nothing of More: Wisdom still [doth bid ye watch] ⁴¹ the door. <i>Exeunt.</i> | | |

1.3

Enter the Earls of Shrewsbury and Surrey, Sir Thomas Palmer and Sir Roger Cholmley.

| | |
|---|----|
| SHREWSBURY My Lord of Surrey, and Sir Thomas Palmer, Might I with patience tempt your grave advice? I tell ye true, that in these dangerous times I do not like this frowning vulgar brow. My searching eye did never entertain A more distracted countenance of grief Than I have late observed In the displeasèd commons of the city. | 5 |
| SURREY 'Tis strange, that from his princely clemency, So well a tempered mercy and a grace | 10 |

³⁹ prize

⁴⁰ understand

⁴¹ Shirley's emendation

To all the aliens in this fruitful land,
 That this high crested⁴² insolence should spring
 From them that breathe from his majestic bounty,
 That, fattened with the traffic⁴³ of our country,
 Already leap into his subjects' face. 15

PALMER

Yet Sherwin, hindered to commence his suit
 Against de Bard, by the Ambassador
 By supplication made unto the King,
 Who, having first enticed away his wife
 And got his plate, near worth four hundred pound, 20
 To grieve some wronged citizens that found
 This vile disgrace oft cast into their teeth,
 Of late sues Sherwin, and arrested him
 For money for the boarding of his wife.

SURREY

The more knave Barde, that, using Sherwin's goods,
 Doth ask him interest for the occupation.⁴⁴ 25
 I like not that, my Lord of Shrewsbury.
 He's ill bestead⁴⁵ that lends a well paced horse
 Unto a man that will not find him meat.

CHOLMLEY

My Lord of Surrey will be pleasant still. 30

PALMER

I being then employed by your honors
 To stay the broil⁴⁶ that fell about the same,
 Where by persuasion I enforced the wrongs
 And urged the grief of the displeasèd city,
 He answered me, and with a solemn oath, 35
 That, if he had the Mayor of London's wife,
 He would keep her in despite of any English.⁴⁷

SURREY

'Tis good, Sir Thomas, then, for you and me
 Your wife is dead and I a bachelor.
 If no man can possess his wife alone, 40
 I am glad, Sir Thomas Palmer, I have none.

CHOLMLEY

If 'a⁴⁸ take my wife, 'a shall find her meat.

SURREY

And reason good, Sir Roger Cholmley, too.
 If these hot Frenchmen needsly⁴⁹ will have sport,
 They should in kindness yet defray the charge. 45
 'Tis hard when men possess our wives in quiet
 And yet leave us in to discharge⁵⁰ their diet.

⁴² proud

⁴³ commerce

⁴⁴ use

⁴⁵ situated

⁴⁶ quarrel

⁴⁷ Tilney strikes out "English" and adds "man."

⁴⁸ he

⁴⁹ necessarily

⁵⁰ pay for

SHREWSBURY

My lord, our caters⁵¹ shall not use the market
 For our provision, but some stranger⁵² now
 Will take the victuals from him he hath bought. 50
 A carpenter, as I was late informed,
 Who, having bought a pair of doves in Cheap,
 Immediately a Frenchman⁵³ took them from him
 And beat the poor man for resisting him;
 And when the fellow did complain his wrongs, 55
 He was severely punished for his labour.

SURREY

But if the English blood be once but up,
 As I perceive their hearts already full,
 I fear me much, before their spleens be cold,
 Some of these saucy aliens for their pride 60
 Will pay for't soundly, wheresoe'er it lights.
 This tide of rage, that with the eddy strives,
 I fear me much will drown too many lives.

CHOLMLEY

Now afore God, your honors, pardon me.
 Men of your place and greatness are to blame— 65
 I tell ye true, my lords—in that his Majesty
 Is not informal⁵⁴ of this base abuse,
 And daily wrongs are offered to his subjects,
 For if he were, I know his gracious wisdom
 Would soon redress it. 70

Enter a messenger.

SHREWSBURY

Sirrah, what news?

CHOLMLEY

None good, I fear.

MESSENGER

My lord, ill news, and worse I fear will follow
 If speedily it be not looked unto.
 The city is in an uproar and the Mayor
 Is threatened if he come out of his house. 75
 A number of poor artificers⁵⁵ [are out
 Inflamed to kill the hated aliens.]⁵⁶

[CHOLMLEY]

[Twas to be] feared what this would come unto.
 This follows on the doctor's publishing
 The bill of wrongs in public at the Spital. 80

SHREWSBURY

That Doctor Beale may chance beshrew⁵⁷ himself
 For reading of the bill.

PALMER

Let us go gather forces to the Mayor

⁵¹ servants in charge of ordering supplies for a household

⁵² Tilney adds "Lombard" and strikes out "stranger."

⁵³ Tilney adds "Lombard" and strikes out "Frenchman."

⁵⁴ informed

⁵⁵ craftsmen

⁵⁶ Shirley's emendation, and the next

⁵⁷ blame

For quick suppressing this rebellious rout.

1.3

SURREY

Now I bethink myself of Master More, 85
 One of the sheriffs, a wise and learned gentleman,
 And in especial favor with the people.
 He, backed with other grave and sober men,
 May by his gentle and persuasive speech
 Perhaps prevail more than we can with power. 90

SHREWSBURY

Believe me but your honor well advises.
 Let us make haste, or I do greatly fear
 Some to their graves this morning's work will bear. *Exeunt.*

2.1

*Enter Lincoln, George and Clown Bettses,
 Williamson, Sherwin and other armed, Doll in
 a shirt of mail, a headpiece, sword and buckler, a crew attending.*

CLOWN BETTS

Come, come; we'll tickle their turnips; we'll butter their boxes!⁵⁸ Shall
 strangers rule the roost? Yes, but we'll baste the roast. Come, come; a flaunt,
 a flaunt.⁵⁹

GEORGE BETTS

Brother, give place and hear John Lincoln speak.

CLOWN BETTS

Ay, Lincoln my leader, 5
 And Doll my true breeder,
 With the rest of our crew
 Shall ran-tan-tarra-ran.
 Do all they what they can,
 Shall we be bobbed, braved?⁶⁰ No. 10
 Shall we be held under? No.
 We are free-born
 And do take scorn
 To be used so!

DOLL

Peace there, I say! Hear Captain Lincoln speak! 15
 Keep silence till we know his mind at large.

CLOWN BETTS [*To Lincoln.*]

Then largely deliver. Speak, bully,⁶¹ and he that presumes to interrupt thee in
 thy oration, this for him!

LINCOLN

Then, gallant bloods, you whose free souls do scorn
 To bear th'enforcèd wrongs of aliens, 20
 Add rage to resolution; fire the houses
 Of these audacious strangers! This is St Martin's,
 And yonder dwells Meautis, a wealthy Picardy,
 At the Green Gate,
 De Bard, Peter van Hollock, Adrian Martin, 25

⁵⁸ *tickle ... boxes*: beat them up

⁵⁹ *display oneself ostentatiously*

⁶⁰ *bobbed, braved*: beaten

⁶¹ a term of endearment

With many more outlandish fugitives.
 Shall these enjoy more privilege than we
 In our own country? Let's then become their slaves!
 Since justice keeps not them in greater awe,
 We'll be ourselves rough ministers at law. 30

CLOWN BETTS

Use no more swords,
 Nor no more words,
 But fire the houses!
 Brave Captain Courageous,
 Fire me their houses! 35

DOLL

Ay, for we may as well make bonfires on May Day as at Midsummer⁶²; we'll
 alter the day in the calendar, and set it down in flaming letters.

SHERWIN

Stay! That would much endanger the whole city, whereto I would not the least
 prejudice.

DOLL

No, nor I neither—so may mine own house be burned for company. I'll tell
 ye what: we'll drag the strangers out into Moorfields, and there bombast them
 till they stink again. 40

CLOWN BETTS

And that's soon done, for they smell for fear already.

GEORGE BETTS

Let some of us enter the strangers' houses,
 And if we find them there, then bring them forth. 45

DOLL

But if ye bring them forth ere ye find them, I'll never allow of that.

CLOWN BETTS

Now, Mars, for thy honor,
 Dutch or French,
 So it be a wench,
 I'll upon her. 50

[Exeunt Clown, Sherwin, and others.]

WILLIAMSON

Now lads, how shall we labor in our safety?
 I hear the Mayor hath gathered men in arms
 And that Shrieve More an hour ago received
 Some of the Privy Council in at Ludgate.
 Force now must make our peace or else we fall. 55
 'Twill soon be known we are the principal.⁶³

DOLL

And what of that? If thou be'st afraid, husband, go home again and hide thy
 head for, by the Lord, I'll have a little sport now I am at it.

GEORGE BETTS

Let's stand upon our guard, and if they come
 Receive them as they were our enemies. 60

Enter Sherwin and the rest.

⁶² June 24, when lighting bonfires was traditional

⁶³ main persons responsible

CLOWN BETTS

2.1

A purchase, a purchase!⁶⁴ We have found, we ha' found—

DOLL

What?

CLOWN BETTS

Nothing, not a French Fleming nor a Fleming French to be found, but all fled, in plain English.

LINCOLN

How now, have you found any?

65

SHERWIN

No, not one; they're all fled.

LINCOLN

Then fire the houses, that, the Mayor being busy
About the quenching of them, we may 'scape.
Burn down their kennels; let us, straight away,
Lest this day prove to us an ill May Day.

70

CLOWN BETTS

Fire, fire! I'll be the first.
If hanging come, 'tis welcome; that's the worst.

Exeunt.

2.2

Enter Sheriff More and the Lord Mayor.

MAYOR

What, Sir John Munday, are you hurt?

SIR JOHN

A little knock, my lord. There was even now
A sort of prentices playing at cudgels.
I did command them to their masters' houses,
But one of them, backed by the other crew,
Wounded me in the forehead with his cudgel;
And now, I fear me, they are gone to join
With Lincoln, Sherwin, and their dangerous train.⁶⁵

5

MORE

The captains of this insurrection
Have ta'en themselves to arms, and came but now
To both the Counters,⁶⁶ where they have released
Sundry indebted prisoners, and from thence
I hear that they are gone into St Martin's,
Where they intend to offer violence
To the amazed Lombards. Therefore, my lord,
If we expect the safety of the city,
'Tis time that force or parley do encounter
With these displeasèd men.

10

15

Enter a messenger.

MAYOR

How now, what news?

⁶⁴ plundered prize

⁶⁵ Tilney marks these opening lines for deletion.

⁶⁶ debtors' prisons in London

| | | |
|---|----|--|
| MESSENGER | | 2.2 |
| My lord, the rebels have broke open Newgate, From whence they have delivered many prisoners, Both felons and notorious murderers, That desperately cleave to their lawless train. | 20 | |
| MAYOR | | |
| Up with the drawbridge; gather some forces To Cornhill and Cheapside. And, gentlemen, If diligence be used on every side, A quiet ebb will follow this rough tide. | 25 | |
| | | <i>Enter Shrewsbury, Surrey, Palmer, Cholmley.</i> |
| SHREWSBURY | | |
| Lord Mayor, his Majesty, receiving notice Of this most dangerous insurrection, Hath sent my Lord of Surrey and myself, Sir Thomas Palmer and our followers To add unto your forces our best means For pacifying of this mutiny. In God's name, then, set on with happy speed. ⁶⁷ The King laments if one true subject bleed. | 30 | |
| SURREY | | |
| I hear they mean to fire the Lombards' houses. O power, what art thou in a madman's eyes? Thou mak'st the plodding idiot bloody-wise. | 35 | |
| MORE | | |
| My lords, I doubt not but we shall appease With a calm breath this flux ⁶⁸ of discontent. | | |
| PALMER | | |
| To call them to a parley questionless May fall out good. 'Tis well said, Master More. | 40 | |
| MORE | | |
| Let's to these simple men, for many sweat Under this act that knows not the law's debt Which hangs upon their lives. For silly ⁶⁹ men Plod on they know not how; like a fool's pen That ending shows not any sentence writ Linked but to common reason or slightest wit. These follow for no harm, but yet incur Self penalty with those that raised this stir. P' God's name on, to calm our private foes With breath of gravity, not dangerous blows. | 45 | |
| | | 50 |
| | | <i>Exeunt.</i> |

2.3⁷⁰

*Enter Lincoln, Doll, Clown Betts, George Betts, [Sherwin,
Williamson, others, [and a sergeant-at-arms].*

LINCOLN

Peace, hear me! He that will not see a red herring at a Harry groat,⁷¹ butter at

⁶⁷ success

⁶⁸ flow

⁶⁹ defenseless; ignorant; deserving of pity

⁷⁰ This scene is widely accepted to be in Shakespeare's hand.

⁷¹ *Harry groat*: a type of coin minted by Henry VIII

eleven pence a pound, meal at nine shillings a bushel, and beef at four nobles⁷² a stone, list to me. 2.3

GEORGE BETTS

It will come to that pass, if strangers be suffered. Mark him!

LINCOLN

Our country is a great eating country; *argo*,⁷³ they eat more in our country than they do in their own. 5

CLOWN BETTS

By a halfpenny loaf a day, troy weight.

LINCOLN

They bring in strange roots, which is merely to the undoing of our poor prentices,⁷⁴ for what's a sorry parsnip to a good heart?

WILLIAMSON

Trash, trash! They breed sore eyes, and 'tis enough to infect the city with the palsy. 10

LINCOLN

Nay, it has infected it with the palsy, for these bastards of dung—as you know they grow in dung—have infected us, and it is our infection will make the city shake, which partly comes through the eating of parsnips.

CLOWN BETTS

True, and pumpkins together. 15

SERGEANT

What say you to the mercy of the King?
Do you refuse it?

LINCOLN

You would have us upon th' hip,⁷⁵ would you? No, marry, do we not. We accept of the King's mercy, but we will show no mercy upon the strangers.

SERGEANT

You are the simplest things that ever stood
In such a question. 20

LINCOLN

How say you now? Prentices "simple"? Down with him!

ALL

Prentices simple? Prentices simple?

*Enter the Lord Mayor, the Earl of Surrey,
and the Earl of Shrewsbury.*

SHERIFF

Hold, in the King's name, hold!

SURREY

Friends, masters, countrymen—

MAYOR

Peace ho, peace! I charge you, keep the peace. 25

SHREWSBURY

My masters, countrymen—

⁷² English gold coins

⁷³ Lincoln's mistake for the Latin *ergo* (therefore)

⁷⁴ apprentices

⁷⁵ *upon th' hip*: at a disadvantage

SHERWIN

The noble Earl of Shrewsbury, let's hear him.

GEORGE BETTS

We'll hear the Earl of Surrey.

LINCOLN

The Earl of Shrewsbury.

GEORGE BETTS

We'll hear both.

30

ALL

Both, both, both, both!

LINCOLN

Peace, I say peace! Are you men of wisdom, or what are you?

SURREY

What you will have them, but not men of wisdom.

SOME

We'll not hear my Lord of Surrey.

OTHERS

No, no, no, no, no! Shrewsbury, Shrewsbury!

35

MORE

Whiles they are o'er the bank of their obedience,
Thus will they bear down all things.

LINCOLN

Shrieve⁷⁶ More speaks. Shall we hear Shrieve More speak?

DOLL

Let's hear him. 'A⁷⁷ keeps a plentiful shrievaltry,⁷⁸ and 'a made my brother
Arthur Watchins Sergeant Safe's yeoman. Let's hear Shrieve More!

40

ALL

Shrieve More, More, More, Shrieve More!

MORE

Even by the rule you have among yourselves,
Command still audience.

SOME

Surrey, Surrey!

OTHERS

More, More!

45

LINCOLN AND GEORGE BETTS

Peace! Peace! Silence! Peace!

MORE

You that have voice and credit with the number,
Command them to a stillness.

LINCOLN

A plague on them, they will not hold their peace. The devil cannot rule them.

MORE

Then what a rough and riotous charge have you,

50

⁷⁶ Sheriff

⁷⁷ He

⁷⁸ Doll mispronounces "shrievaltry," which is "the office of sheriff."

To lead those that the devil cannot rule.
Good masters, hear me speak.

DOLL

Ay, by th' Mass, will we. More, thou'rt a good housekeeper, and I thank thy good worship for my brother Arthur Watchins.

ALL

Peace, peace! 55

MORE

Look! What you do offend you cry upon:
That is, the peace. Not one of you here present,
Had there such fellows lived when you were babes
That could have topped⁷⁹ the peace as now you would,
The peace wherein you have till now grown up 60
Had been ta'en from you, and the bloody times
Could not have brought you to the state of men.
Alas, poor things; what is it you have got,
Although we grant you get the thing you seek?

GEORGE BETTS

Marry, the removing of the strangers,⁸⁰ which cannot choose but much
advantage the poor handicrafts⁸¹ of the city. 65

MORE

Grant them removed, and grant that this your noise
Hath chid down all the majesty of England.
Imagine that you see the wretched strangers,
Their babies at their backs, with their poor luggage 70
Plodding to th' ports and coasts for transportation,
And that you sit as kings in your desires,
Authority quite silenced by your brawl,
And you in ruff⁸² of your opinions clothed:
What had you got? I'll tell you. You had taught 75
How insolence and strong hand should prevail,
How order should be quelled, and by this pattern
Not one of you should live an aged man,
For other ruffians, as their fancies wrought—
With selfsame hand, self reasons, and self right— 80
Would shark⁸³ on you, and men, like ravenous fishes,
Would feed on one another.

DOLL

Before God, that's as true as the Gospel.

LINCOLN

Nay, this' a sound fellow, I tell you. Let's mark him.

MORE

Let me set up before your thoughts, good friends, 85
One supposition, which if you will mark
You shall perceive how horrible a shape
Your innovation⁸⁴ bears. First, 'tis a sin
Which oft th'apostle did forewarn us of,
Urging obedience to authority; 90

⁷⁹ beheaded; killed or destroyed

⁸⁰ foreigners

⁸¹ makers of handicrafts

⁸² vainglory

⁸³ prey

⁸⁴ insurrection; rebellion

And 'twere no error if I told you all
You were in arms 'gainst God.

ALL

Marry, God forbid that!

MORE

Nay, certainly you are.
For, to the king, God hath his office lent 95
Of dread,⁸⁵ of justice, power, and command,
Hath bid him rule, and willed you to obey;
And to add ampler majesty to this,
He hath not only lent the king his figure,
His throne and sword, but given him his own name, 100
Calls him a god on earth. What do you, then,
Rising 'gainst him that God himself installs,
But rise 'gainst God? What do you to your souls
In doing this? Oh, desperate as you are,
Wash your foul minds with tears, and those same hands 105
That you, like rebels, lift against the peace
Lift up for peace, and your unreverent knees,
Make them your feet. To kneel to be forgiven
Is safer wars than ever you can make,
Whose discipline is riot.⁸⁶ 110
In, in, to your obedience! Why, even your hurly⁸⁷
Cannot proceed but by obedience.
Tell me but this: What rebel captain,
As mutinies are incident,⁸⁸ by his name
Can still the rout? Who will obey a traitor? 115
Or how can well that proclamation sound
When there is no addition⁸⁹ but “a rebel”
To qualify⁹⁰ a rebel? You'll put down strangers,
Kill them, cut their throats, possess their houses,
And lead the majesty of law in lyam⁹¹ 120
To slip⁹² him like a hound—alas, alas!
Say now the King,
As he is clement if th'offender mourn,
Should so much come too short of your great trespass
As but to banish you: whither would you go? 125
What country, by the nature of your error,
Should give you harbor? Go you to France or Flanders,
To any German province, Spain or Portugal,
Nay, anywhere that not adheres to England—
Why, you must needs be strangers. Would you be pleased 130
To find a nation of such barbarous temper
That, breaking out in hideous violence,
Would not afford you an abode on earth,
Whet their detested knives against your throats,
Spurn you like dogs, and like as if that God 135
Owed⁹³ not nor made not you, nor that the elements

⁸⁵ respect, reverence

⁸⁶ *To kneel... riot*: i.e., To repent your lack of discipline is the sounder war to wage.

⁸⁷ commotion, tumult

⁸⁸ likely to occur

⁸⁹ identifying mark of one's occupation or rank

⁹⁰ give recognized status to

⁹¹ a leash for hounds

⁹² release a hunting animal from a leash

⁹³ owned

Were not all appropriate to your comforts,
 But chartered unto⁹⁴ them? What would you think
 To be thus used? This is the strangers' case,
 And this your mountainish inhumanity. 140

ALL

Faith, 'a says true. Let's do as we may be done by.⁹⁵

LINCOLN

We'll be ruled by you, Master More, if you'll stand our friend to procure our
 pardon.

MORE

Submit you to these noble gentlemen,
 Entreat their mediation to the King, 145
 Give up yourself to form, obey the magistrate,
 And there's no doubt but mercy may be found,
 If you so seek it.

ALL

We yield, and desire his Highness' mercy.
They lay by their weapons.

MORE

No doubt his Majesty will grant it you. 150
 But you must yield to go to several prisons,
 Till that his Highness' will be further known.

ALL

Most willingly, whither you will have us.

SHREWSBURY

Lord Mayor, let them be sent to several prisons,
 And there in any case be well entreated.⁹⁶ 155

My Lord of Surrey, please you to take horse
 And ride to Cheapside, where the aldermen
 Are with their several companies in arms.
 Will them to go unto their several wards,⁹⁷
 Both for the stay⁹⁸ of further mutiny, 160
 And for the apprehending of such persons
 As shall contend.

SURREY

I go, my noble lord.
Exit.

SHREWSBURY

We'll straight go tell his Highness these good news.
 Withal,⁹⁹ Shrieve More, I'll tell him how your breath
 Hath ransomed many a subject from sad death. 165
Exeunt Shrewsbury and Cholmley.

MAYOR

Lincoln and Sherwin, you shall both to Newgate, the rest unto the Counters.

PALMER

Go, guard them hence. A little breath well spent

⁹⁴ *chartered unto*: licensed to

⁹⁵ See Mt 7:12.

⁹⁶ treated

⁹⁷ districts

⁹⁸ prevention

⁹⁹ Moreover

Cheats expectation in his fair'st event.

DOLL

Well, Sheriff More, thou hast done more with thy good words than all they
could with their weapons. Give me thy hand; keep thy promise now for the
King's pardon, or, by the Lord, I'll call thee a plain cony-catcher.¹⁰⁰ 170

LINCOLN

Farewell, Shrieve More, and as we yield by thee,
So make our peace; then thou deal'st honestly.

CLOWN BETTS

Ay, and save us from the gallows, else 'a deals double honestly.¹⁰¹
They are led away.

MAYOR

Master Shrieve More, you have preserved the city 175
From a most dangerous fierce commotion,
For if this limb of riot here in St Martin's
Had joined with other branches of the city
That did begin to kindle, 'twould have bred
Great rage. That rage much murder would have fed. 180

PALMER

Not steel but eloquence hath wrought this good.
You have redeemed us from much threatened blood.

MORE

My lord and brethren, what I here have spoke,
My country's love and next the city's care
Enjoined¹⁰² me to; which, since it thus prevails, 185
Think God hath made weak More his instrument
To thwart sedition's violent intent.
I think 'twere best, my lord, some two hours hence
We meet at the Guildhall, and there determine
That through every ward the watch be clad 190
In armor, but especially provide
That at the city gates, selected men,
Substantial citizens, do ward tonight,
For fear of further mischief.

MAYOR

It shall be so.
Enter Shrewsbury.

But yond methink's my Lord of Shrewsbury. 195

SHREWSBURY

My lord, his Majesty sends loving thanks
To you, your brethren, and his faithful subjects,
Your careful¹⁰³ citizens. But Master More, to you
A rougher, yet as kind a salutation:
Your name is yet too short; nay, you must kneel. 200
[More kneels.]
A knight's creation is this knightly steel.
[He knights More.]
Rise up, Sir Thomas More.

¹⁰⁰ cheat

¹⁰¹ *double honesty*: not honestly at all (as in double-dealing)

¹⁰² Compelled

¹⁰³ solicitous; concerned

MORE

I thank his Highness for thus honoring me.

2.3

SHREWSBURY

This is but first taste of his princely favor,
 For it hath pleased his high Majesty, 205
 Noting your wisdom and deserving merit,
 To put this staff of honor in your hand,
 For he hath chose you of his Privy Council.
[He gives More a staff of office.]

MORE

My lord, for to deny my Sovereign's bounty
 Were to drop precious stones into the heaps 210
 Whence first they came.
 To urge my imperfections in excuse,
 Were all as stale as custom. No, my lord,
 My service is my King's—good reason why,
 Since life or death hangs on our Sovereign's eye. 215

MAYOR

His Majesty hath honored much the city
 In this his princely choice.

MORE

My lord and brethren,
 Though I depart for [Court] my love shall rest
 [True to the home wherewith my youth was blessed.]¹⁰⁴
 I now must sleep in Court; sound sleeps forbear. 220
 The chamberlain to state is public care.
 Yet in this rising of my private blood,¹⁰⁵
 My studious thoughts shall tend the city's good.
Enter Crofts.

SHREWSBURY

How now, Crofts? What news?

CROFTS

My lord, his Highness sends express command 225
 That a record be entered of this riot,
 And that the chief and capital offenders
 Be thereon straight arraigned, for himself intends
 To sit in person on the rest tomorrow
 At Westminster. 230

SHREWSBURY

Lord Mayor, you hear your charge.
 Come, good Sir Thomas More, to Court let's hie:¹⁰⁶
 You are th'appearer of this mutiny.

MORE *[To Mayor.]*

My lord, farewell. New days begets new tides;
 Life whirls 'bout fate, then to a grave it slides. 235
Exeunt severally.

¹⁰⁴ Shirley's emendation

¹⁰⁵ *private blood*: common origins

¹⁰⁶ go quickly

2.4

Enter Sheriff and meet a messenger.

SHERIFF

Messenger, what news?

MESSENGER

Is execution yet performed?

SHERIFF

Not yet; the carts stand ready at the stairs,
And they shall presently away to Tyburn.

MESSENGER

Stay, Master Shrieve; it is the Council's pleasure,
For more example in so bad a case,
A gibbet¹⁰⁷ be erected in Cheapside,
Hard by the Standard, whither you must bring
Lincoln and those that were the chief with him
To suffer death, and that immediately.

Enter Officers.

5

SHERIFF

It shall be done, sir.

Exit messenger.

Officers, be speedy.

10

Call for a gibbet; see it be erected.
Others make haste to Newgate; bid them bring
The prisoners hither, for they here must die.
Away, I say, and see no time be slacked.

OFFICERS

We go, sir.

15

Exeunt some severally; others set up the gibbet.

SHERIFF

That's well said, fellows; now you do your duty.
God, for his pity, help these troublous times.
The street's stopped up with gazing multitudes;
Command our armèd officers with halberds
Make way for entrance of the prisoners.
Let proclamation once again be made
That every householder, on pain of death,
Keep in his prentices, and every man
Stand with a weapon ready at his door,
As he will answer to the contrary.

20

25

OFFICER

I'll see it done, sir.

Exit.

Enter another officer.

SHERIFF

Bring them away to execution.
The writ is come above two hours since;
The city will be fined for this neglect.

OFFICER

There's such a press and multitude at Newgate,
They cannot bring the carts unto the stairs
To take the prisoners in.

30

¹⁰⁷ gallows

SHERIFF

Then let them come on foot.

We may not dally time with great command.

OFFICER

Some of the Bench, sir, think it very fit
 That stay be made and give it out abroad 35
 The execution is deferred till morning,
 And when the streets shall be a little cleared,
 To chain them up, and suddenly dispatch it.

The prisoners are brought in well guarded.

SHERIFF

Stay, in meantime methinks they come along.
 See, they are coming, so, 'tis very well. 40
 Bring Lincoln there, the first unto the tree.¹⁰⁸

CLOWN BETTS

Ay, for I cry lag,¹⁰⁹ sir.

LINCOLN

I knew the first, sir, did belong to me.
 This the old proverb now complete doth make:
 That "Lincoln should be hanged for London's sake."
 P' God's name, let's to work: 45

[*To Hangman.*] Fellow, dispatch.

He goes up.

I was the foremost man in this rebellion,
 And I the foremost that must die for it.

DOLL

Bravely, John Lincoln, let thy death express
 That, as thou lived'st a man, thou died'st no less. 50

LINCOLN

Doll Williamson, thine eyes shall witness it.
 Then, to all you that come to view mine end,
 I must confess I had no ill intent,
 But against such as wronged us overmuch.
 And now I can perceive it was not fit 55
 That private men should carve out their redress,
 Which way they list.¹¹⁰ No, learn it now by me:
 Obedience is the best in each degree.

And asking mercy meekly of my King,
 I patiently submit me to the law. 60

But God forgive them that were cause of it,
 And, as a Christian truly from my heart,
 I likewise crave they would forgive me too.

[]

That others by example of the same 65
 Henceforth be warnèd to attempt¹¹¹ the like
 'Gainst any alien that repairèth¹¹² hither.
 Fare ye well, all; the next time that we meet
 I trust in heaven we shall each other greet.

*He leaps off.*¹⁰⁸ gallows¹⁰⁹ *cry lag*: request to be last¹¹⁰ wish¹¹¹ *to attempt*: against attempting¹¹² comes

| | | |
|---|-----|-----|
| DOLL | | 2.4 |
| Farewell, John Lincoln; say all what they can: Thou lived'st a good fellow, and died'st an honest man. | 70 | |
| CLOWN BETTS | | |
| Would I were so far on my journey; the first stretch is the worst, methinks. | | |
| SHERIFF | | |
| Bring Williamson there forward. | | |
| DOLL | | |
| Good Master Shrieve, I have an earnest suit, And, as you are a man, deny't me not. | 75 | |
| SHERIFF | | |
| Woman, what is it? Be it in my power, Thou shalt obtain it. | | |
| DOLL | | |
| Let me die next, sir; that is all I crave. You know not what a comfort you shall bring To my poor heart to die before my husband. | 80 | |
| SHERIFF | | |
| Bring her to death; she shall have her desire. | | |
| CLOWN BETTS | | |
| Sir, and I have a suit to you too. | | |
| SHERIFF | | |
| What is it? | | |
| CLOWN BETTS | | |
| That as you have hanged Lincoln first and will hang her next, so you will not hang me at all. | 85 | |
| SHERIFF | | |
| Nay, you set ope ¹¹³ the Counter gates and you must hang chiefly. ¹¹⁴ | | |
| CLOWN BETTS | | |
| Well then, so much for that. | | |
| DOLL [<i>To Sheriff,</i>] | | |
| Sir, your free bounty much contents my mind. Commend me to that good shrieve Master More, And tell him, had't not been for his persuasion, John Lincoln had not hung here as he does. We would first have locked up ¹¹⁵ in Leadenhall And there been burned to ashes with the roof. | 90 | |
| SHERIFF | | |
| Woman, what Master More did was a subject's duty, And hath so pleased our gracious lord the King That he is hence removed to higher place, And made of Council to his Majesty. | 95 | |
| DOLL | | |
| Well is he worthy of it, by my troth: An honest, wise, well-spoken gentleman; Yet would I praise his honesty much more If he had kept his word and saved our lives. | 100 | |

¹¹³ open

¹¹⁴ especially

¹¹⁵ *have locked up*: have been locked up

- But let that pass; men are but men, and so
 Words are but words, and pays not what men owe.
 Now, husband, since perhaps the world may say 105
 That through my means thou comest thus to thy end,
 Here I begin this cup of death to thee,
 Because thou shalt be sure to taste no worse
 Than I have taken, that must go before thee.
 What though I be a woman? That's no matter. 110
 I do owe God a death, and I must pay him.
 Husband, give me thy hand; be not dismayed.
 This chore being chored, then all our debt is paid.
 Only, two little babes we leave behind us,
 And all I can bequeath them at this time 115
 Is but the love of some good honest friend
 To bring them up in charitable sort.
 What, masters? He goes upright that never halts,
 And they may live to mend their parents' faults.
- WILLIAMSON
 Why, well said, wife; i'faith thou cheer'st my heart. 120
 Give me thy hand; let's kiss, and so let's part.
He kisses her on the ladder.
- DOLL
 The next kiss, Williamson, shall be in heaven.
 Now cheerly lads, George Betts, a hand with thee,
 And thine too, Ralph, and thine, good honest Sherwin.
 Now let me tell the women of this town 125
 No stranger yet brought Doll to lying down.
 So long as I an Englishman can see,
 Nor French nor Dutch shall get a kiss of me.
 And when that I am dead, for me yet say
 I died in scorn to be a stranger's prey. 130
A great shout and noise.
[Voices] within.
 Pardon, pardon, pardon, pardon!
 Room for the Earl of Surrey! Room there, room!
Enter Surrey.
- SURREY
 Save the man's life, if it be possible.
- SHERIFF
 It is too late, my lord; he's dead already.
- SURREY
 I tell ye, Master Sheriff, you are too forward 135
 To make such haste with men unto their death.
 I think your pains will merit little thanks
 Since that his Highness is so merciful
 As not to spill the blood of any subject.
- SHERIFF
 My noble lord, would we so much had known. 140
 The Council's warrant hastened our dispatch;
 It had not else been done so suddenly.
- SURREY
 Sir Thomas More humbly upon his knee
 Did beg the lives of all, since on his word
 They did so gently yield. The King hath granted it 145
 And made him Lord High Chancellor of England,

| | |
|--|-------------------|
| According as he worthily deserves. Since Lincoln's life cannot be had again, Then for the rest, from my dread ¹¹⁶ Sovereign's lips, I here pronounce free pardon for them all. | 2.4 150 |
| ALL (<i>Flinging up caps.</i>) God save the King! God save the King, My good Lord Chancellor and the Earl of Surrey! | |
| DOLL And Doll desires it from her very heart More's name may live for this right noble part. And whensoever we talk of ill May Day Praise More whose [word did sin and judgment stay]. ¹¹⁷ | 155 |
| SURREY In hope his Highness' clemency and mercy, Which in the arms of mild and meek compassion Would rather clip ¹¹⁸ you, as the loving nurse Oft doth the wayward infant, than to leave you To the sharp rod of justice, so to draw you To shun such lewd ¹¹⁹ assemblies as beget Unlawful riots and such traitorous acts That striking with the hand of private ¹²⁰ hate, Maim your dear country with a public wound. O God, that mercy, whose majestic brow Should be unwrinkled, and that awe-full justice Which looketh through a veil of sufferance Upon the frailty of the multitude, Should with the clamors of outrageous wrongs Be stirred and wakened thus to punishment! But your deserved death he doth forgive, Who gives you life, pray all he long may live. | 160 165 170 |
| ALL God save the King! God save the King, My good Lord Chancellor, and the Earl of Surrey! | 175 |
| <i>Exeunt.</i> | |

3.1

*A table being covered with a green carpet, a state
cushion on it, and the purse and mace lying
thereon. Enter Sir Thomas More.*

| | |
|---|---|
| MORE ¹²¹ It is in heaven that I am thus and thus, And that which we profanely ¹²² term our fortunes Is the provision of the power above, Fitted and shaped just to that strength of nature Which we are born with. Good God, good God, That I from such an humble bench ¹²³ of birth | 5 |
|---|---|

¹¹⁶ revered

¹¹⁷ Shirley's emendation

¹¹⁸ gently correct

¹¹⁹ ignorant, wicked

¹²⁰ personal, factional

¹²¹ This soliloquy is generally thought to be by Shakespeare.

¹²² impiously

¹²³ situation

Should step, as 'twere, up to my country's head
 And give the law out there; I, in my father's life,
 To take prerogative and tithe¹²⁴ of knees
 From elder kinsmen, and him, bind by my place 10
 To give the smooth and dexter¹²⁵ way to me
 That owe it him by nature: sure these things,
 Not physicked by respect,¹²⁶ might turn our blood
 To much corruption. But More, the more thou hast
 Either of honor, office, wealth, and calling, 15
 Which might accite¹²⁷ thee to embrace and hug them,
 The more do thou in serpents' natures think them;
 Fear their gay skins, with thought of their sharp state,
 And let this be thy maxim: to be great
 Is, when the thread of hazard is once spun, 20
 A bottom¹²⁸ great wound up, greatly undone.

Enter his man Randall attired like him.

Come on, sir, are you ready?

RANDALL

Yes, my lord, I stand¹²⁹ but on a few points. I shall have done presently.
 Before God, I have practised your lordship's shift¹³⁰ so well that I think I shall
 grow proud, my lord. 25

MORE

'Tis fit thou shouldst wax¹³¹ proud, or else thou'lt ne'er
 Be near allied to greatness. Observe me, sirrah:
 The learned clerk Erasmus is arrived
 Within our English Court. Last night I hear
 He feasted with our honored English poet 30
 The Earl of Surrey, and I learned today
 The famous clerk of Rotterdam will visit
 Sir Thomas More. Therefore, sir, take my seat:
 You are lord chancellor. [*Randall sits.*]
 Dress¹³² your behavior
 According to my carriage,¹³³ but beware 35
 You talk not over much, for 'twill betray thee.
 Who prates¹³⁴ not much seems wise, his wit few scan,¹³⁵
 While the tongue blabs tales of the imperfect man.
 I'll see if great Erasmus can distinguish
 Merit and outward ceremony. 40

RANDALL

If I do not deserve a share for playing of your lordship well, let me be
 yeoman usher to your sumpter,¹³⁶ and be banished from wearing of a gold
 chain for ever.

¹²⁴ tribute

¹²⁵ right hand (a position of honor)

¹²⁶ *physicked by respect*: tempered by reflection

¹²⁷ excite; induce

¹²⁸ a ball of wound thread

¹²⁹ wait

¹³⁰ contrivance

¹³¹ grow

¹³² arrange

¹³³ demeanor

¹³⁴ talks foolishly

¹³⁵ discern

¹³⁶ *let ... sumpter*: let me be demoted to serving your lowliest servant

MORE

Well, sir, I'll hide our motion.¹³⁷ Act my part
 With a firm boldness, and thou winst my heart.

45

Enter the Sheriff with Falkner (a ruffian) and officers.

How now? What's the matter?

FALKNER [*To Officers.*]

Tug me not; I'm no bear. 'Sblood,¹³⁸ if all the dogs in Paris Garden hung at my tail, I'd shake 'em off with this: that I'll appear before no king christened but my good Lord Chancellor.

SHERIFF

We'll christen you, sirrah. Bring him forward.

50

MORE [*To Falkner.*]

How now, what tumults make you?

FALKNER

The azured heavens protect my noble Lord Chancellor.

MORE [*To Sheriff.*]

What fellow's this?

SHERIFF

A ruffian, my lord, that hath set half the city in an uproar.

FALKNER

My lord—

55

SHERIFF

There was a fray in Paternoster Row, and because they would not be parted, the street was choked up with carts.

FALKNER

My noble lord, Panyer Alley's throat was open.

MORE

Sirrah, hold your peace.

FALKNER

I'll prove the street was not choked, but is as well as ever it was since it was a street.

60

SHERIFF

This fellow was a principal broacher¹³⁹ of the broil—

FALKNER

'Sblood, I broached none.¹⁴⁰ It was broached and half run out before I had a lick at it.

SHERIFF

—and would be brought before no justice but your honor.

65

FALKNER

I am haled,¹⁴¹ my noble lord.

MORE [*To Sheriff.*]

No ear to choose for every trivial noise
 But mine, and in so full¹⁴² a time? Away.

¹³⁷ show, entertainment

¹³⁸ God's blood

¹³⁹ instigator

¹⁴⁰ drew no liquor (playing on another sense of the word)

¹⁴¹ pulled along forcibly

¹⁴² busy

| | | |
|--|----|-----|
| You wrong me, Master Shrieve. Dispose of him At your own pleasure. Send the knave to Newgate. | 70 | 3.1 |
| FALKNER | | |
| To Newgate? 'Sblood, Sir Thomas More, I appeal, I appeal; from Newgate to any of the two worshipful Counters. ¹⁴³ | | |
| MORE | | |
| Fellow, whose man are you that are thus lusty? ¹⁴⁴ | | |
| FALKNER | | |
| My name's Jack Falkner. I serve, next under God and my prince, Master Morris, secretary to my Lord of Winchester. | | 75 |
| MORE | | |
| A fellow of your hair ¹⁴⁵ is very fit To be a secretary's follower! | | |
| FALKNER | | |
| I hope so, my lord. The fray was between the Bishops' men of Ely and Winchester, and I could not in honor but part them. I thought it stood not with my reputation and degree ¹⁴⁶ to come to my questions and answers before a city justice. I knew I should to the pot. ¹⁴⁷ | | 80 |
| MORE | | |
| Thou hast been there, it seems, too late already. ¹⁴⁸ | | |
| FALKNER | | |
| I know your honor is wise and so forth, and I desire to be only catechized ¹⁴⁹ or examined by you, my noble Lord Chancellor. | | |
| MORE | | |
| Sirrah, sirrah, you are a busy ¹⁵⁰ dangerous ruffian. | | 85 |
| FALKNER | | |
| Ruffian? | | |
| MORE | | |
| How long have you worn this hair? | | |
| FALKNER | | |
| I have worn this hair ever since I was born. | | |
| MORE | | |
| You know that's not my question. But how long Hath this shag fleece hung dangling on thy head? | | 90 |
| FALKNER | | |
| How long, my lord? Why, sometimes thus long, sometimes lower, as the Fates and humors please. | | |
| MORE | | |
| So quick, sir, with me, ha? I see, good fellow, Thou lovest plain dealing. Sirrah, tell me now, When were you last at barber's? How long time Have you upon your head worn this shag hair? | | 95 |

¹⁴³ debtors' prisons in London

¹⁴⁴ insolent

¹⁴⁵ double meaning of physical hair and other sense of the word as "kind" or "type"

¹⁴⁶ position

¹⁴⁷ *to the pot*: be ruined or destroyed

¹⁴⁸ *been there ... already*: More plays on the sense of a pot for drinking

¹⁴⁹ instructed

¹⁵⁰ meddling

FALKNER

My lord, Jack Falkner tells no Aesop's fables. Troth, I was not at barber's this three years. I have not been cut, nor will not be cut, upon a foolish vow which, as the destinies shall direct, I am sworn to keep.

MORE

When comes that vow out? 100

FALKNER

Why, when the humors are purged:¹⁵¹ not these three years.

MORE

Vows are recorded in the court of heaven,
 For they are holy acts. Young man, I charge thee,
 And do advise thee, start¹⁵² not from that vow,
 And for¹⁵³ I will be sure thou shalt not shear, 105
 Besides, because it is an odious sight
 To see a man thus hairy, thou shalt lie
 In Newgate till thy vow and thy three years
 Be full expired. Away with him.

FALKNER

My lord—

MORE

Cut off this fleece, and lie there but a month. 110

FALKNER

I'll not lose a hair to be lord chancellor of Europe.

MORE

To Newgate then. Sirrah, great sins are bred
 In all that body where there's a foul head.
 Away with him.

Exeunt [all except Randall].

Enter Surrey, Erasmus, and attendants.

SURREY

Now, great Erasmus, you approach the presence 115
 Of a most worthy learned gentleman.
 This little isle holds not a truer friend
 Unto the arts, nor doth his greatness add
 A feignèd flourish¹⁵⁴ to his worthy parts.
 He's great in study: that's the statist's grace,¹⁵⁵ 120
 That gains more reverence than the outward place.

ERASMUS

Report, my lord, hath crossed the narrow seas
 And to the several parts of Christendom
 Hath borne the fame of your lord chancellor.
 I long to see him whom with loving thoughts 125
 I in my study oft have visited.
 Is that Sir Thomas More?

SURREY

It is, Erasmus.

Now shall you view the honorablest scholar,
 The most religious politician,

¹⁵¹ *humors are purged*: dispositions are purified

¹⁵² break

¹⁵³ in order that

¹⁵⁴ *feigned flourish*: counterfeited embellishment

¹⁵⁵ *statist's grace*: statesman's virtue or excellence

| | | |
|--|---|------------|
| <p>The worthiest counselor that tends our state. That study is the general watch of England; In it, the prince's safety and the peace That shines upon our commonwealth are forged By loyal industry.</p> <p>ERASMUS</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">I doubt him not To be as near the life of excellence As you proclaim him, when his meanest servants Are of some weight. You saw, my lord, his porter Give entertainment to us at the gate In Latin good phrase. What's the master then, When such good parts shine in his meanest men?</p> <p>SURREY</p> <p>His lordship hath some weighty business, For see, as yet he takes no notice of us.</p> <p>ERASMUS</p> <p>I think 'twere best I did my duty to him In a short Latin speech:</p> <p style="padding-left: 80px;"><i>[Taking off his hat, Erasmus addresses Randall.]</i> <i>Qui in celeberrima patria natus est et gloriosa plus</i> <i>habet negotii ut in lucem veniat quam qui—</i>¹⁵⁶</p> <p>RANDALL</p> <p>I pray thee, good Erasmus, be covered.¹⁵⁷ I have forsworn speaking of Latin, else, as I am true councilor, I'd tickle¹⁵⁸ you with a speech. Nay, sit, Erasmus; sit, good my Lord of Surrey. I'll make my lady come to you anon,¹⁵⁹ if she will, and give you good entertainment.</p> <p>ERASMUS</p> <p>Is this Sir Thomas More?</p> <p>SURREY</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">O good Erasmus, You must conceive his vein:¹⁶⁰ he's ever furnished With these conceits.</p> <p>RANDALL</p> <p>Yes, faith, my learned poet doth not lie for that matter. I am neither more nor less merry Sir Thomas always. Wilt sup with me? By God, I love a parlous¹⁶¹ wise fellow that smells of a politician better than a long progress.¹⁶²</p> <p style="padding-left: 80px;"><i>Enter Sir Thomas More.</i></p> <p>SURREY</p> <p>We are deluded. This is not his lordship.</p> <p>RANDALL</p> <p>I pray you, Erasmus, how long will the Holland cheese in your country keep without maggots?</p> <p>MORE</p> <p>Fool, painted barbarism, retire thyself Into thy first creation. <i>[Exit Randall.]</i></p> | <p>130</p> <p>135</p> <p>140</p> <p>145</p> <p>150</p> <p>155</p> | <p>3.1</p> |
|--|---|------------|

¹⁵⁶ "Someone born in a very famous and glorious country has more difficulty in becoming famous than one who. . ."

¹⁵⁷ *be covered*: put your hat back on

¹⁵⁸ delight; beat up; make an end of something

¹⁵⁹ presently

¹⁶⁰ *conceive his vein*: understand his style

¹⁶¹ shrewd; mischievous

¹⁶² a journey made by a royal personage

- Thus you see,
- My loving learned friends, how far respect 160
 Waits often on the ceremonious train
 Of base, illiterate wealth, whilst men of schools,
 Shrouded in poverty, are counted fools.
 Pardon, thou reverend German. I have mixed
 So slight a jest to the fair entertainment 165
 Of thy most worthy self. For know, Erasmus,
 Mirth wrinkles up my face, and I still crave,
 When that forsakes me, I may hug my grave.
- ERASMUS
 Your honor's merry humor is best physic¹⁶³
 Unto your able body, for we learn, 170
 Where melancholy chokes the passages
 Of blood and breath, the erected spirit still
 Lengthens our days with sportful exercise.
 Study should be the saddest¹⁶⁴ time of life;
 The rest, a sport exempt from thought of strife. 175
- MORE
 Erasmus preacheth gospel against physic.
 My noble poet—
- SURREY
 O my lord, you tax¹⁶⁵ me
 In that word "poet" of much idleness.
 It is a study that makes poor our fate;
 Poets were ever thought unfit for state. 180
- MORE
 Oh, give not up fair poesy, sweet lord,
 To such contempt. That I may speak my heart,
 It is the sweetest heraldry of art
 That sets a difference 'tween the tough sharp holly¹⁶⁶
 And tender bay¹⁶⁷ tree.
- SURREY
 Yet, my lord, 185
 It is become the very lag i'number¹⁶⁸
 To all mechanic sciences.¹⁶⁹
- MORE
 Why, I'll show the reason.
 This is no age for poets: they should sing,
 To the loud canon,¹⁷⁰ *heroica facta*
*Qui faciunt reges heroica carmina laudant;*¹⁷¹ 190
 And as great subjects of their pen decay,
 Even so, unphysicked,¹⁷² they do melt away. *Enter Master Morris.*
 Come, will your lordship in? My dear Erasmus—
 I'll hear you, Master Morris presently.

¹⁶³ medicine

¹⁶⁴ most serious or grave

¹⁶⁵ blame

¹⁶⁶ In the art of heraldry, holly leaves represent truth or foresight and defense.

¹⁶⁷ or laurel leaves, a sign of victory, as in the laurel crown of the poet or the "poet laureate"

¹⁶⁸ *lag i'number*: last in order

¹⁶⁹ *mechanic sciences*: non-liberal disciplines; practical skills and arts

¹⁷⁰ musical composition; law or rule; standard of judgment

¹⁷¹ "Heroic poems praise the heroic deeds that kings perform."

¹⁷² unnurtured

- My lord, I make you master of my house; 195 3.1
 We'll banquet here with fresh and staid¹⁷³ delights;
 The Muses' music here shall cheer our sprites;¹⁷⁴
 The cates¹⁷⁵ must be but mean where scholars sit,
 For they're made all with courses of neat¹⁷⁶ wit.
 [Exeunt Surrey, Erasmus, and attendants.]
- How now, Master Morris? 200
- MORRIS
 I am a suitor to your lordship in behalf of a servant of mine.
- MORE
 The fellow with long hair, good Master Morris?
 Come to me three years hence and then I'll hear you.
- MORRIS
 I understand, your honor, but the foolish knave has submitted himself to the
 mercy of a barber, and is without, ready to make a new vow before your 205
 lordship, hereafter to live civil.
- MORE
 Nay then, let's talk with him. Pray, call him in.
 Enter Falkner and officers.
- FALKNER
 Bless your honor: a new man, my lord.
- MORE
 Why, sure, this' not he.
- FALKNER
 An¹⁷⁷ your lordship will, the barber shall give you a sample of my head. I am 210
 he in faith, my lord, I am *ipse*.¹⁷⁸
- MORE
 Why, now thy face is like an honest man's.
 Thou hast played well at this new cut,¹⁷⁹ and won.
- FALKNER
 No, my lord. Lost all that ever God sent me.
- MORE
 God sent thee into the world as thou art now, with short hair. How quickly 215
 are three years run out in Newgate.
- FALKNER
 I think so, my lord, for there was but a hair's length between my going thither
 and so long time.
- MORE
 Because I see some grace in thee, go free.
 Discharge him, fellows. Farewell, Master Morris. 220
 Thy head is for thy shoulders now more fit:
 Thou hast less hair upon it but more wit. *Exit*.
- MORRIS
 Did not I tell thee always of these locks?

¹⁷³ free from extravagance

¹⁷⁴ spirits

¹⁷⁵ provisions

¹⁷⁶ refined, well selected

¹⁷⁷ If

¹⁷⁸ he himself, the very man

¹⁷⁹ style; card game

FALKNER

An the locks were on again, all the goldsmiths in Cheapside should not pick them open. 'Sheart!¹⁸⁰ If my hair stand not on end when I look for my face in a glass,¹⁸¹ I am a polecat.¹⁸² Here's a lousy jest. But if I notch¹⁸³ not that rogue Tom barber that makes me look thus like a Brownist,¹⁸⁴ hang me. I'll be worse to the nittical¹⁸⁵ knave than ten tooth-drawings.¹⁸⁶ Here's a head with a pox!

MORRIS

What ail'st thou? Art thou mad now? 230

FALKNER

Mad, now? 'Nails!¹⁸⁷ If loss of hair cannot mad a man, what can? I am deposed; my crown is taken from me. More had been better a' scoured Moorditch than a' notched me thus. Does he begin sheep-shearing with Jack Falkner?

MORRIS

Nay, an you feed this vein, sir, fare you well. 235

FALKNER

Why, farewell, frost! I'll go hang myself out for the poll¹⁸⁸ head. Make a Sar'cen of Jack?

MORRIS

Thou desperate knave, for that I see the devil wholly gets hold of thee.

FALKNER

The devil's a damned rascal.

MORRIS

I charge thee wait on me no more; no more 240
Call me thy master.

FALKNER

Why then, a word, Master Morris.

MORRIS

I'll hear no words, sir. Fare you well.

FALKNER

'Sblood! Farewell?

MORRIS

Why dost thou follow me? 245

FALKNER

Because I'm an ass. Do you set your shavers¹⁸⁹ upon me, and then cast me off? Must I condole?¹⁹⁰ Have the Fates played the fools? [*Weps.*] Am I their cut? Now the poor sponce¹⁹¹ is taken, must Jack march with bag and baggage?

¹⁸⁰ God's heart (an oath)

¹⁸¹ mirror

¹⁸² vile person

¹⁸³ cut

¹⁸⁴ person in a political party whose members would wear short hair

¹⁸⁵ lice-infested

¹⁸⁶ extractions

¹⁸⁷ God's nails (an oath)

¹⁸⁸ shaved

¹⁸⁹ razors; swindlers

¹⁹⁰ grieve

¹⁹¹ a jocular term for head

Enter Lady More.

| | | |
|-----------|---|--------------------------|
| MORE | | 3.2 |
| | O welcome, wife. Give you direction How women should be placed. You know it best. For my Lord Mayor, his brethren, and the rest, Let me alone: men best can order men. | 30 |
| LADY MORE | | |
| | I warrant ye, my lord, all shall be well. There's one without that stays to speak with ye, And bade me tell ye that he is a player. | 35 |
| MORE | | |
| | A player, wife? One of ye bid him come in. <i>Exit one [servingman].</i> Nay, stir there, fellows. Fie; ye are too slow. See that your lights be in a readiness; The banquet shall be here. God's me, ¹⁹⁷ madam, Leave my Lady Mayoress? Both of us from the board? And my son Roper too? What may our guests think? | 40 |
| LADY MORE | | |
| | My lord, they are risen and sitting by the fire. | |
| MORE | | |
| | Why, yet go you and keep them company. It is not meet ¹⁹⁸ we should be absent both. <i>Exit Lady.</i> <i>Enter Player.</i> Welcome, good friend. What is your will with me? | 45 |
| PLAYER | | |
| | My lord, my fellows and myself Are come to tender ¹⁹⁹ ye our willing service, So please you to command us. | |
| MORE | | |
| | What, for a play, you mean? Whom do you serve? | |
| PLAYER | | |
| | My Lord Cardinal's grace. | |
| MORE | | |
| | My Lord Cardinal's players? Now trust me, welcome. You happen hither in a lucky time To pleasure me and benefit yourselves. The mayor of London and some aldermen, His lady and their wives, are my kind guests This night at supper. Now, to have a play Before the banquet will be excellent. How think you, son Roper? | 50 55 |
| ROPER | | |
| | 'Twill do well, my lord, And be right pleasing pastime to your guests. | |
| MORE | | |
| | I prithee tell me, what plays have ye? | |

¹⁹⁷ *God's me*: God bless me

¹⁹⁸ appropriate

¹⁹⁹ offer

| | | |
|-----------|--|-----|
| PLAYER | | 3.2 |
| | Diverse, my lord: <i>The Cradle of Security</i> , <i>Hit Nail o' th' Head, Impatient Poverty</i> , <i>The Play of Four Ps, Dives and Lazarus</i> , <i>Lusty Juventus</i> , and <i>The Marriage of Wit and Wisdom</i> . | 60 |
| MORE | | |
| | <i>The Marriage of Wit and Wisdom?</i> That, my lads. I'll none but that. The theme is very good, And may maintain a liberal ²⁰⁰ argument. To marry wit to wisdom asks some cunning; ²⁰¹ Many have wit that may come short of wisdom. We'll see how Master Poet plays his part, And whether wit or wisdom grace his art. | 65 |
| | [<i>To Servingmen.</i>] Go, make him drink, and all his fellows too. [<i>To Player.</i>] How many are ye? | 70 |
| PLAYER | | |
| | Four men and a boy, sir. | |
| MORE | | |
| | But one boy? Then I see, There's but few women in the play. | |
| PLAYER | | |
| | Three, my lord: Dame Science, Lady Vanity, And Wisdom, she herself. | 75 |
| MORE | | |
| | And one boy play them all? By'r Lady, he's loaden. Well, my good fellow, get ye straight together And make ye ready with what haste ye may. [<i>To Servingmen.</i>] Provide their supper 'gainst ²⁰² the play be done, Else shall we stay our guests here overlong. [<i>To Player.</i>] Make haste, I pray ye. | 80 |
| PLAYER | | |
| | We will, my lord. <i>Exeunt Servingmen and Player.</i> | |
| MORE | | |
| | Where are the waits? ²⁰³ [<i>To Roper.</i>] Go, bid them play, To spend the time awhile. | |
| | <i>Enter Lady More.</i> How now, madam? | |
| LADY MORE | | |
| | My lord, they're coming hither. | 85 |
| MORE | | |
| | They're welcome. Wife, I'll tell ye one thing: Our sport is somewhat mended; we shall have A play tonight, <i>The Marriage of Wit and Wisdom</i> , And acted by my good Lord Cardinal's players. How like ye that, wife? | |
| LADY MORE | | |
| | My lord, I like it well. | 90 |

²⁰⁰ humanistic

²⁰¹ skill

²⁰² when

²⁰³ musicians

See, they are coming.

*Waits play hautbois.*²⁰⁴ *Enter Lord Mayor,
so many aldermen as may, the Lady Mayoress
in scarlet, with other ladies and
Sir Thomas More's daughters, servants
carrying lighted torches by them.*

MORE

Once again, welcome. Welcome, my good Lord Mayor,
And brethren all, for once I was your brother
And so am still in heart. It is not state²⁰⁵
That can our love from London separate. 95
[There be, as I have oft of late espied,
In whom Dame Fortune's gifts breed]²⁰⁶ nought but pride,
But they that cast an eye still whence they came,
Know how they rose, and how to use the same.

MAYOR

My lord, you set a gloss²⁰⁷ on London's fame, 100
And make it happy ever by your name.
Needs must we say when we remember More,
'Twas he that drove rebellion from our door,
With grave discretion's mild and gentle breath
Shielding a many subjects' lives from death. 105
Oh, how our city is by you renowned,
And with your virtues our endeavors crowned.

MORE

No more, my good Lord Mayor; but thanks to all
That on so short a summons you would come
To visit him that holds your kindness dear. 110
[*To Lady More.*] Madam, you are not merry with my Lady Mayoress,
And these fair ladies; pray ye seat them all.
[*To Mayor.*] And here, my lord, let me appoint your place,
The rest to seat themselves. Nay, I'll weary ye;
You will not long in haste to visit me. 115

LADY MORE

Good madam, sit; in sooth you shall sit here.

MAYORESS

Good madam, pardon me; it may not be.

LADY MORE

In troth, I'll have it so; I'll sit here by ye.
Good ladies, sit; more stools here, ho!

MAYORESS

It is your favor, madam, makes me thus 120
Presume above my merit.

LADY MORE

When we come to you,
Then shall you rule us as we rule you here.
[*They sit.*]
Now must I tell ye, madam, we have a play
To welcome ye withal;²⁰⁸ how good soe'er

²⁰⁴ oboe-like instruments

²⁰⁵ rank

²⁰⁶ Shirley's emendation

²⁰⁷ glow

²⁰⁸ as well

| | | |
|--|-----|-----|
| That know not I; my lord will have it so. | 125 | 3.2 |
| MORE [<i>Aside.</i>] Wife, hope the best; I am sure they'll do their best. They that would better comes not at their feast. [<i>Aloud.</i>] My good Lord Cardinal's players, I thank them for it. Play us a play, to lengthen out your welcome. They say it is <i>The Marriage of Wit and Wisdom</i> , A theme of some import, howe'er it prove; But if art fail, we'll inch it out with love. What, are they ready? | 130 | |
| SERVANT My lord, one of the players craves to speak with you. | | |
| MORE With me? Where is he? <i>Enter Inclination, the Vice, ready [with bridle in hand].</i> | 135 | |
| INCLINATION Here, my lord. | | |
| MORE How now, what's the matter? | | |
| INCLINATION We would desire your honor but to stay a little; one of my fellows is but run to Ogle's for a long beard for young Wit, and he'll be here presently. | | |
| MORE A long beard for young Wit? Why, man, he may be without a beard till he come to marriage, for wit goes not all by the hair. When comes Wit in? | 140 | |
| INCLINATION In the second scene, next to the prologue, my lord. | | |
| MORE Why, play on till that scene come, and by that time Wit's beard will be grown, or else the fellow returned with it. And what part playst thou? | | |
| INCLINATION Inclination, the Vice, my lord. | 145 | |
| MORE Gramercies, ²⁰⁹ now I may take the Vice if I list. ²¹⁰ And wherefore hast thou that bridle in thy hand? | | |
| INCLINATION I must be bridled anon, my lord. | | |
| MORE An thou be'st not saddled too, it makes no matter, for then Wit's Inclination may gallop so fast that he will outstrip wisdom and fall to folly. | 150 | |
| INCLINATION Indeed, so he does to Lady Vanity; but we have no Folly in our play. | | |
| MORE Then there's no wit in't, I'll be sworn. Folly waits on wit as the shadow on the body, and where wit is ripest, there folly still is readiest. But begin, I prithee; we'll rather allow a beardless Wit than Wit, all beard, to have no brain. | | |

²⁰⁹ Many thanks

²¹⁰ wish to

INCLINATION

Nay, he has his apparel on too, my lord, and therefore he is the readier to enter. 155

MORE

Then, good Inclination, begin at a venture.²¹¹

Exit [Inclination].

My Lord Mayor, Wit lacks a beard, or else they would begin.

I'd lend him mine, but that it is too thin.

Silence, they come. 160

The trumpet sounds. Enter the Prologue.

PROLOGUE

Now forasmuch as in these latter days

Throughout the whole world in every land

Vice doth increase and virtue decays,

Iniquity having the upper hand,

We therefore intend, good gentle audience, 165

A pretty, short interlude to play at this present,

Desiring your leave and quiet silence

To show the same as is meet and expedient.

It is called *The Marriage of Wit and Wisdom*,

A matter right pithy and pleasing to hear, 170

Whereof in brief we will show the whole sum.

But I must be gone, for Wit doth appear. *Exit.*

Enter Wit ruffling²¹² and Inclination, the Vice.

WIT

In an arbor green, asleep whereas I lay,

The birds sang sweetly in the midst of the day;

I dreamed fast of mirth and play: 175

In youth is pleasure, in youth is pleasure.

Methought I walked still to and fro,

And from her company I could not go,

But when I waked it was not so:

In youth is pleasure, in youth is pleasure. 180

Therefore my heart is surely plight²¹³

Of her alone to have a sight

Which is my joy and heart's delight:

In youth is pleasure, in youth is pleasure.

MORE [*To Mayor.*]

Mark ye, my lord, this is Wit without a beard; what will he be by that time he 185

comes to the commodity of a beard?

INCLINATION

O sir, the ground is the better on which she doth go.

For she will make better cheer with a little she can get

Than many a one can with a great banquet of meat.

WIT

And is her name Wisdom?

INCLINATION

Ay, sir, a wife most fit 190

For you, my good master, my dainty sweet Wit.

²¹¹ *at a venture*: without further concern

²¹² swaggering

²¹³ pledged

WIT

To be in her company, my heart it is set.
Therefore I prithee to let us be gone,
For unto Wisdom, Wit hath inclination.

INCLINATION

O sir, she will come herself even anon, 195
For I told her before where we would stand,
And then she said she would beck²¹⁴ us with her hand.

Flourishing his dagger.

Back with those boys and saucy great knaves.
What, stand ye here so big in your braves?²¹⁵
My dagger about your coxcombs²¹⁶ shall walk 200
If I may but so much as hear ye chat or talk.

WIT

But will she take pains to come for us hither?

INCLINATION

I warrant²¹⁷ ye; therefore, you must be familiar with her.
When she cometh in place,
You must her embrace 205
Somewhat handsomely,
Lest she think it danger,
Because you are a stranger,
To come in your company.

WIT

I warrant thee, Inclination, I will be busy. 210
Oh, how Wit longs to be in Wisdom's company.
*Enter Lady Vanity singing
and beckoning with her hand.*

VANITY

Come hither, come hither, come hither, come!
Such cheer as I have, thou shalt have some.

MORE

This is Lady Vanity, I'll hold²¹⁸ my life.
Beware, good Wit, you take not her to wife. 215

INCLINATION [*To Vanity.*]

What, Unknown Honesty, a word in your ear.
She offers to depart.
You shall not be gone as yet, I swear.
Here's none but your friends; you need not to fray.²¹⁹
This young gentleman loves ye; therefore, you must stay.

WIT

I trust in me she will think no danger,
For I love well the company of fair women;
And though to you I am a stranger, 220
Yet Wit may pleasure you now and then.

VANITY

Who, you? Nay, you are such a holy man,

²¹⁴ beckon, call

²¹⁵ brave talk; bravado

²¹⁶ heads

²¹⁷ assure

²¹⁸ stake

²¹⁹ fear

That to touch one you dare not be bold.
 I think you would not kiss a young woman
 If one would give ye twenty pound in gold. 225

WIT

Yes, in good sadness,²²⁰ lady, that I would.
 I could find in my heart to kiss you in your smock.

VANITY

My back is broad enough to bear that mock,
 For it hath been told me many a time
 That you would be seen in no such company as mine. 230

WIT

Not Wit in the company of Lady Wisdom?
 O Jove, for what do I hither come?

INCLINATION

Sir, she did this nothing else but to prove
 Whether a little thing would you move
 To be angry and fret. 235
 What an if one said so?
 Let such trifling matters go,
 And with a kind kiss come out of her debt.

Enter another player.

PLAYER OF INCLINATION

Is Luggins come yet with the beard?

PLAYER

No, faith, he is not come. Alas, what shall we do? 240

PLAYER OF INCLINATION [*To More.*]

Forsooth, we can go no further till our fellow Luggins come, for he plays
 Good Counsel, and now he should enter to admonish Wit that this is Lady
 Vanity and not Lady Wisdom.

MORE

Nay, an²²¹ it be no more but so, ye shall not tarry at a stand²²² for that. We'll
 not have our play marred for lack of a little good counsel. Till your fellow 245
 come, I'll give him the best counsel that I can. Pardon me, my Lord Mayor—I
 love to be merry.

MORE [*As Good Counsel.*]

O good Mother Wit, thou art now on the bow hand,²²³
 And blindly in thine own opinion dost stand.
 I tell thee, this naughty lewd Inclination 250
 Does lead thee amiss in a very strange fashion.
 This is not Wisdom, but Lady Vanity;
 Therefore list²²⁴ to Good Counsel, and be ruled by me.

PLAYER OF INCLINATION

In troth, my lord, it is as right to Luggins's part as can be. Speak, Wit.

MORE

Nay, we will not have our audience disappointed, if I can help it. 255

²²⁰ *in good sadness*: in earnest; seriously

²²¹ If

²²² *tarry at a stand*: remain at a standstill

²²³ *on the bow hand*: wide of the mark

²²⁴ listen

WIT

Art thou Good Counsel, and wilt tell me so?
 Wouldst thou have Wit from Lady Wisdom to go?
 Thou art some deceiver, I tell thee verily,
 In saying that this is Lady Vanity.

MORE [*As Good Counsel.*]

Wit, judge not things by the outward show; 260
 The eye oft mistakes, right well you do know.
 Good Counsel assures thee upon his honesty
 That this is not Wisdom, but Lady Vanity.

Enter Luggins with the beard.

INCLINATION

O my lord, he is come; now we shall go forward.

MORE [*To Luggins.*]

Art thou come? Well, fellow, I have help²²⁵ to save thine honesty²²⁶ a little. 265
 Now, if thou canst give Wit any better counsel than I have done, spare not.
 There I leave him to thy mercy.

But by this time I am sure our banquet's ready.

My lord and ladies, we will taste that first

And then they shall begin the play again, 270

Which, through the fellow's absence, and by me,

Instead of helping, hath been hindered.

[*To Servants.*] Prepare against we come.²²⁷ Lights there, I say.

Thus fools oft times do help to mar the play.

Exeunt all but the players.

WIT

Fie, fellow Luggins, you serve us handsomely; do ye not, think ye? 275

LUGGINS

Why, Ogle was not within, and his wife would not let me have the beard,
 and, by my troth, I ran so fast that I sweat again.

INCLINATION

Do ye hear, fellows? Would not my lord make a rare player? Oh, he would
 uphold a company beyond all ho,²²⁸ better than Mason among the King's
 players. Did ye mark how extemp'rically he fell to the matter, and spake 280
 Luggins's part almost as it is in the very book set down?

WIT

Peace! Do ye know what ye say? My lord, a player? Let us not meddle with
 any such matters. Yet I may be a little proud that my lord hath answered me in
 my part. But come, let us go and be ready to begin the play again.

LUGGINS

Ay, that's the best, for now we lack nothing. 285

Enter a servingman to reward the players.

SERVINGMAN

Where be these players?

ALL

Here, sir.

SERVINGMAN

My lord is sent for to the Court,

²²⁵ helped

²²⁶ good name; honor

²²⁷ *against ... come:* for when we come [after dinner]

²²⁸ pause, intermission

| | | |
|---|------------|-----|
| And all the guests do after supper part. And for he will not trouble you again, By me for your reward 'a sends eight angels ²²⁹ With many thanks. But sup before you go. It is his will you should be fairly entreated. Follow, I pray ye. | 290 | 3.2 |
| WIT | | |
| This, Luggins, is your negligence. Wanting Wit's beard brought things into dislike, ²³⁰ For otherwise the play had been all seen, Where now some curious citizen disgraced it And, discommending it, all is dismissed. | 295 | |
| INCLINATION | | |
| 'Fore God, 'a says true. But hear ye, sirs, eight angels? Ha! My lord would never give's eight angels, more or less for twelvecence. Either it should be three pounds, five pounds or ten pounds. There's twenty shillings wanting, sure. | 300 | |
| WIT | | |
| Twenty to one 'tis so. I have a trick.—My lord comes; stand aside. <i>Enter More with attendants with purse and mace.</i> | | |
| MORE | | |
| In haste, to Council? What's the business now, That all so late his Highness sends for me? What seek'st thou, fellow? | 305 | |
| WIT | | |
| Nay, nothing. Your lordship sent eight angels by your man, And I have lost two of them in the rushes. | | |
| MORE | | |
| Wit, look to that. Eight angels? I did send them Ten. Who gave it them? | | |
| SERVINGMAN | | |
| I, my lord. I had no more about me, But by and by they shall receive the rest. | 310 | |
| MORE | | |
| Well, Wit, 'twas wisely done; thou playest Wit well indeed, Not to be thus deceivèd of thy right. Am I a man by office truly ordained Equally to divide true right his own, And shall I have deceivers in my house? Then what avails my bounty, when such servants Deceive the poor of what the master gives? Go one and pull his coat over his ears. ²³¹ There are too many such. Give them their right. Wit, let thy fellows thank thee; 'twas well done. Thou now deservest to match ²³² with Lady Wisdom. <i>[Exit with attendants.]</i> | 315 320 | |
| INCLINATION | | |
| God a' mercy, Wit. <i>[To the servingman.]</i> Sir, you had a master, Sir Thomas More. More? But now we shall have more. | | |

²²⁹ gold coins

²³⁰ discord

²³¹ *pull ... ears*: remove his livery; fire

²³² marry

LUGGINS

God bless him. I would there were more of his mind. 'A loves our quality,
and yet he's a learned man and knows what the world is. 325

3.2

INCLINATION

Well, a kind man and more loving than many other, but I think we ha' met
with the first—

LUGGINS

First served his man that had our angels, and he may chance dine with Duke
Humphrey²³³ tomorrow, being turned away today. Come, let's go. 330

INCLINATION

And many such rewards would make us all ride and horse us with the best
nags in Smithfield.

[*Exeunt.*]

4.1

*Enter the Earls of Shrewsbury and Surrey, the
Bishop of Rochester and other lords,
severally, doing courtesy to each other, the
Clerk of the Council waiting barebeaded.*

SURREY

Good morrow to my Lord of Shrewsbury.

SHREWSBURY

The like unto the honored Earl of Surrey.
Yond comes my Lord of Rochester.

ROCHESTER

Good morrow, my good lords.

SURREY

Clerk of the Council,
What time is't of day?

CLERK

Past eight of clock, my lord. 5

SHREWSBURY

I wonder that my good Lord Chancellor
Doth stay so long, considering there's matters
Of high importance to be scanned upon.²³⁴

SURREY

Clerk of the Council, certify his lordship
The lords expect him here.

ROCHESTER

It shall not need; 10
Yond comes his lordship.

*Enter Sir Thomas More,
with purse and mace borne before him.*

²³³ *dine*...*Humphrey*: proverbial for "go hungry"

²³⁴ *scanned upon*: examined

MORE

Good morrow to this fair assembly.

Come, my good lords, let's sit.

They sit.

O serious square,²³⁵

Upon this little board is daily scanned

The health and preservation of the land.

15

We, the physicians, that effect this good,

Now by choice diet, anon²³⁶ by letting blood.

Our toil and careful watching brings the King

In league with slumbers, to which peace doth sing.

—Avoid the room there!

20

What business, lords, today?

SHREWSBURY

This, my good lord:

About the entertainment²³⁷ of the Emperor

'Gainst the perfidious French into our pay.

SURREY

My lords, as 'tis the custom in this place

The youngest should speak first, so if I chance

25

In this case to speak youngly, pardon me.

I will agree France now hath her full strength,

As having new recovered the pale blood

Which war sluiced forth,²³⁸ and I consent to this:

That the conjunction of our English forces

30

With arms of Germany may sooner bring

This prize of conquest in. But then, my lords,

As in the moral hunting 'twixt the lion

And other beasts, force joined [with guile]²³⁹

Frighted the weaker sharers from their parts,

35

So if the Empire's Sovereign chance to put

His plea of partnership into war's court,

Swords should decide the difference, and our blood

In private tears lament his entertainment.

SHREWSBURY

To doubt²⁴⁰ the worst is still the wise man's shield

40

That arms him safely; but the world knows this:

The Emperor is a man of royal faith.

His love unto our Sovereign brings him down

From his imperial seat, to march in pay

Under our English flag, and wear the cross

45

Like some high order²⁴¹ on his manly breast.

Thus serving, he's not master of himself,

But like a colonel, commanding other,

Is by the general over-awed himself.

ROCHESTER

Yet, my good lord—

²³⁵ *serious square*: grave table (at which the Council sits)

²³⁶ straightway

²³⁷ employment

²³⁸ *sluiced forth*: drew out

²³⁹ Shirley's emendation

²⁴⁰ fear

²⁴¹ honor

| | | |
|------------|--|----------|
| SHREWSBURY | | 4.1 |
| | Let me conclude my speech. | 50 |
| | As subjects share no portion in the conquest Of their true sovereign, other than the merit That from the sovereign guerdons ²⁴² the true subject, So the good Emperor, in a friendly league Of amity with England, will not soil | 55 |
| MORE | | |
| | There is no question but this entertainment Will be most honorable, most commodious. ²⁴³ I have oft heard good captains wish to have Rich soldiers to attend them, such as would fight Both for their lives and livings. Such a one Is the good Emperor. I would to God We had ten thousand of such able men. Ha! Then there would appear no court, no city, But, where the wars were, they would pay themselves. | 60 65 |
| | Then to prevent in French wars England's loss, Let German flags wave with our English cross. <i>Enter Sir Thomas Palmer.</i> | |
| PALMER | | |
| | My lords, his Majesty hath sent by me These articles enclosed, first to be viewed And then to be subscribed to. <i>(With great reverence.)</i> I tender ²⁴⁴ them In that due reverence which befits this place. | 70 |
| MORE | | |
| | Subscribe these articles? Stay, let us pause. Our conscience first shall parley ²⁴⁵ with our laws. My Lord of Rochester, view you the paper. | 75 |
| ROCHESTER | | |
| | Subscribe to these? Now, good Sir Thomas Palmer, Beseech the King that he will pardon me. My heart will check my hand whilst I do write: Subscribing so, I were an hypocrite. | |
| PALMER | | |
| | Do you refuse it then, my lord? ²⁴⁶ | |
| ROCHESTER | | |
| | I do, Sir Thomas. | 80 |
| PALMER | | |
| | Then here I summon you forthwith t'appear Before his Majesty, to answer there This capital contempt. | |
| ROCHESTER | | |
| | I rise and part, In lieu of this, to tender him my heart. <i>He rises.</i> | |

²⁴² rewards

²⁴³ advantageous

²⁴⁴ offer for formal acceptance

²⁴⁵ hold conference

²⁴⁶ The following section (lines 82–104) was crossed out by Edmund Tilney.

| | | |
|---|-----|-----|
| PALMER | | |
| Will't please your honor to subscribe, my lord? | 85 | 4.1 |
| MORE | | |
| Sir, tell his Highness I entreat Some time for to bethink me of this task. In the meanwhile I do resign mine office Into my Sovereign's hands. | | |
| PALMER | | |
| Then, my lord, Hear the preparèd order from the King. On your refusal, you shall straight depart Unto your house at Chelsea, till you know Our Sovereign's further pleasure. | 90 | |
| MORE | | |
| Most willingly I go. My lords, if you will visit me at Chelsea, We'll go a-fishing, and with a cunning ²⁴⁷ net, Not like weak film, we'll catch none but the great. Farewell, my noble lords. Why, this is right. Good morrow to the sun, to state goodnight. <i>Exit.</i> | 95 | |
| PALMER | | |
| Will you subscribe, my lords? | | |
| SURREY | | |
| Instantly, good Sir Thomas. <i>They write.</i> We'll bring the writing unto our Sovereign. | 100 | |
| PALMER | | |
| My Lord of Rochester, You must with me, to answer this contempt. | | |
| ROCHESTER | | |
| This is the worst; Who's freed from life, is from all care exempt. <i>Exeunt Rochester and Palmer.</i> | | |
| SURREY | | |
| Now let us [bear this] ²⁴⁸ to our Sovereign. 'Tis strange that my Lord Chancellor should refuse The duty that the law of God bequeaths Unto the King. | 105 | |
| SHREWSBURY | | |
| Come, let us in. No doubt His mind will alter, and the bishop's too. Error in learned heads hath much to do. <i>[Exeunt.]</i> | 110 | |

²⁴⁷ skillfully made

²⁴⁸ Shirley's emendation

4.2

*Enter the Lady More, her two daughters,
and Master Roper, as walking.*

ROPER

Madam, what ails ye for to look so sad?

LADY MORE

Troth, son, I know not what. I am not sick,
And yet I am not well. I would be merry,
But somewhat²⁴⁹ lies so heavy on my heart,
I cannot choose but sigh. You are a scholar. 5
I pray ye tell me, may one credit²⁵⁰ dreams?

ROPER

Why ask you that, dear madam?

LADY MORE

Because tonight I had the strangest dream
That e'er my sleep was troubled with. 10
Methought 'twas night,
And that the King and Queen went on the Thames
In barges to hear music. My lord and I
Were in a little boat, methought. Lord, Lord,
What strange things live in slumbers! And being near,
We grappled²⁵¹ to the barge that bore the King. 15
But after many pleasing voices spent
In that still-moving music house, methought
The violence of the stream did sever us
Quite from the golden fleet, and hurried us
Unto the Bridge,²⁵² which with unused²⁵³ horror 20
We entered at full tide; thence some flight-shoot²⁵⁴
Being carried by the waves, our boat stood still
Just opposite the Tower, and there it turned
And turned about, as when a whirlpool sucks
The circled waters. Methought that we both cried 25
Till that we sunk, where arm in arm we died.

ROPER

Give no respect,²⁵⁵ dear madam, to fond dreams;
They are but slight illusions of the blood.

LADY MORE

Tell me not all are so, for often dreams
Are true diviners,²⁵⁶ either of good or ill. 30
I cannot be in quiet²⁵⁷ till I hear
How my lord fares.

ROPER (*Aside.*)

Nor I. [*Aside to his wife.*]
Come hither, wife.

I will not fright thy mother to interpret

²⁴⁹ something

²⁵⁰ trust

²⁵¹ attached our boats

²⁵² London Bridge

²⁵³ unusual

²⁵⁴ swift rush of water

²⁵⁵ regard

²⁵⁶ prophets, omens

²⁵⁷ peace

The nature of a dream; but trust me, sweet,
 This night I have been troubled with thy father
 Beyond all thought. 35 4.2

ROPER'S WIFE [*Aside to Roper.*]

Truly, and so have I.
 Methought I saw him here in Chelsea church,
 Standing upon the rood loft, now defaced,
 And whilst he kneeled and prayed before the image,
 It fell with him into the upper choir, 40
 Where my poor father lay all stained in blood.

ROPER [*Aside to his wife.*]

Our dreams all meet in one conclusion:
 Fatal, I fear.

LADY MORE

What's that you talk? I pray ye let me know it.

ROPER'S WIFE

Nothing, good mother. 45

LADY MORE

This is your fashion still; I must know nothing.
 Call Master Catesby; he shall straight to Court
 And see how my lord does. I shall not rest
 Until my heart lean panting on his breast.

Enter Sir Thomas More merrily, servants attending.

SECOND DAUGHTER

See where my father comes, joyful and merry. 50

MORE

As seamen, having passed a troubled storm,
 Dance on the pleasant shore, so I—Oh, I could speak
 Now like a poet. Now, afore God, I am passing light.²⁵⁸
 Wife, give me kind welcome. [*Kissing her.*]

Thou wast wont to blame
 My kissing, when my beard was in the stubble, 55
 But I have been trimmed of late; I have had
 A smooth Court shaving, in good faith I have.

Daughters kneel.

God bless ye. Son Roper, give me your hand.

ROPER

Your honor's welcome home.

MORE

Honor? Ha, ha!
 And how dost, wife?

ROPER

He bears himself most strangely. 60

LADY MORE

Will your lordship in?

MORE

Lordship? No, wife, that's gone.
 The ground was slight that we did lean upon.

LADY MORE

Lord, that your honor ne'er will leave these jests!

²⁵⁸ light-hearted

In faith, it ill becomes ye.

4.2

MORE

O good wife,
Honor and jests are both together fled;
The merriest councilor of England's dead. 65

LADY MORE

Who's that, my lord?

MORE

Still "lord?" The Lord Chancellor, wife.

LADY MORE

That's you.

MORE

Certain, but I have changed my life.
Am I not leaner than I was before?
The fat is gone; my title's only "More."
Contented with one style,²⁵⁹ I'll live at rest. 70
They that have many names are not still²⁶⁰ best.
I have resigned mine office; count'st me not wise?

LADY MORE

O God!

MORE

Come, breed not female children in your eyes.
The King will have it so. 75

LADY MORE

What's the offense?

MORE

Tush, let that pass; we'll talk of that anon.
The King seems a physician to my fate;
His princely mind would train me back to state.

ROPER

Then be his patient, my most honored father. 80

MORE

O son Roper,
*Ubi turpis est medicina, sanari piget.*²⁶¹
No, wife, be merry, and be merry all.
You smiled at rising; weep not at my fall.
Let's in, and here joy²⁶² like to private friends, 85
Since days of pleasure have repentant ends.
The light of greatness is with triumph borne;
It sets at midday oft, with public scorn. *Exeunt.*

4.3

*Enter the Bishop of Rochester, Surrey,
Shrewsbury, Lieutenant of the Tower
and warders with weapons.*

²⁵⁹ title

²⁶⁰ always

²⁶¹ Creon's words to King Oedipus from Seneca's *Oedipus*, 517: "When the remedy is shameful, one hates being cured." Tilney crossed out this quotation.

²⁶² *joy ... to:* have joy characteristic of

ROCHESTER

Your kind persuasions, honorable lords,
 I can but thank ye for, but in this breast
 There lives a soul that aims at higher things
 Than temporary pleasing earthly kings.
 God bless his Highness, even with all my heart; 5
 We shall meet one day, though that now we part.

SURREY

We not misdoubt²⁶³ your wisdom can discern
 What best befits it; yet in love and zeal
 We could entreat it might be otherwise.

SHREWSBURY

No doubt your fatherhood will by yourself 10
 Consider better of the present case,
 And grow as great in favor as before.

ROCHESTER

For that, as pleaseth God, in my restraint
 From worldly causes, I shall better see
 Into myself than at proud liberty. 15
 The Tower and I will privately confer
 Of things wherein at freedom I may err.
 But I am troublesome unto your honors,
 And hold ye longer than becomes my duty.
 Master Lieutenant, I am now your charge, 20
 And though you keep my body, yet my love
 Waits on my king and you while Fisher lives.

SURREY

Farewell, my Lord of Rochester. We'll pray
 For your release, and labor't as we may.

SHREWSBURY

Thereof assure yourself. So do we leave ye, 25
 And to your happy private thoughts bequeath ye.
Exeunt lords.

ROCHESTER

Now, Master Lieutenant, on; i' God's name, go.
 And with as glad a mind go I with you,
 As ever truant bade the school adieu.

Exeunt.

4.4

*Enter Sir Thomas More, his Lady, daughters,
 Master Roper, gentlemen and servants,
 as in his house at Chelsea. Low stools.*

MORE

Good morrow, good son Roper. [*To Lady More.*]
 Sit, good madam,
 Upon an humble seat; the time so craves.
 Rest your good heart on earth, the roof of graves.
 You see the floor of greatness is uneven,
 The cricket²⁶⁴ and high throne alike near heaven. 5
 Now, daughters, you that like to branches spread

²⁶³ (do not) doubt

²⁶⁴ low stool

And give best shadow to a private house,
Be comforted, my girls. Your hopes stand fair:
Virtue breeds gentry; she makes the best heir.

DAUGHTERS

Good morrow to your honor.

MORE

Nay, good night rather. 10
Your honor's crestfall'n with your happy father.

ROPER

O, what formality, what square²⁶⁵ observance
Lives in a little room! Here public care
Gags²⁶⁶ not the eyes of slumber; here fierce riot
Ruffles²⁶⁷ not proudly in a coat of trust, 15
Whilst like a pawn at chess he keeps in rank
With kings and mighty fellows. Yet indeed
Those men that stand on tiptoe smile to see
Him pawn his fortunes.

MORE

True, son, here['s not so,]²⁶⁸
Nor does the wanton tongue²⁶⁹ here screw itself 20
Into the ear, that like a vice drinks up
The iron instrument.

LADY MORE

We are here at peace.

MORE

Then peace,²⁷⁰ good wife.

LADY MORE

For keeping still in compass—a strange point
In time's new navigation—we have sailed 25
Beyond our course.

MORE

Have done.

LADY MORE

We are exiled the Court.

MORE

Still thou harp'st on that.
'Tis sin for to deserve that banishment;
But he that ne'er knew Court, courts sweet content.

LADY MORE

O, but, dear husband—

MORE

I will not hear thee, wife. 30
The winding labyrinth of thy strange discourse
Will ne'er have end. Sit still and, my good wife,
Entreat thy tongue be still, or credit me,

²⁶⁵ solemn, precise

²⁶⁶ props open

²⁶⁷ swaggers

²⁶⁸ Gabrieli and Melchiori's emendation

²⁶⁹ *wanton tongue*: lawless or insolent speech

²⁷⁰ hold your peace

Thou shalt not understand a word we speak; 4.4
 We'll talk in Latin. 35
 [*To Roper.*] *Humida vallis raros patitur fulminis ictus.*²⁷¹
 More rest enjoys the subject meanly bred
 Than he that bears the kingdom in his head.
 Great men are still musicians, else the world lies:
 They learn low strains after the notes that rise. 40

ROPER

Good sir, be still yourself, and but remember
 How in this general court of short-lived pleasure,
 The world, creation is the ample food
 That is digested in the maw²⁷² of time.
 If man himself be subject to such ruin, 45
 How shall his garment then, or the loose points
 That tie respect unto his awe-full place,
 Avoid destruction? Most honored father-in-law,
 The blood you have bequeathed these several hearts
 To nourish your posterity stands firm, 50
 And as with joy you led us first to rise,
 So with like hearts we'll lock preferment's eyes.²⁷³

MORE

Now will I speak like More in melancholy:
 For if grief's power could with her sharpest darts
 Pierce my firm bosom, here's sufficient cause 55
 To take my farewell of mirth's hurtless laws.
 Poor humbled lady, thou that wert of late
 Placed with the noblest women of the land,
 Invited to their angel companies,
 Seeming a bright star in the courtly sphere: 60
 Why shouldst thou like a widow sit thus low
 And all thy fair consorts move from the clouds
 That overdrip thy beauty and thy worth?
 I'll tell thee the true cause: the Court, like heaven,
 Examines not the anger of the prince, 65
 And being more frail compos'd of gilded earth,
 Shines upon them on whom the King doth shine,
 Smiles if he smile, declines if he decline.
 Yet seeing both are mortal, Court and King,
 Shed not one tear for any earthly thing; 70
 For, so God pardon me, in my saddest hour
 Thou hast no more occasion to lament—
 Nor these, nor those—my exile from the Court,
 No, nor this body's torture were't imposed—
 As commonly disgraces of great men 75
 Are the forewarnings of a hasty death—
 Than to behold me after many a toil
 Honor'd with endless rest. Perchance the King,
 Seeing the Court is full of vanity,
 Has pity lest our souls should be misled, 80
 And sends us to a life contemplative.
 O, happy banishment from worldly pride,
 When souls by private life are sanctified.

²⁷¹ From Seneca's *Hippolytus*, lines 1132–33: "The soggy lowland is rarely hit by lightning bolts."

²⁷² belly

²⁷³ *lock preferment's eyes*: close the eyes to advancement

LADY MORE

O, but I fear some plot against your life!

MORE

Why then, 'tis thus: the King of his high grace, 85
 Seeing my faithful service to his state,
 Intends to send me to the King of heaven
 For a rich present, where my soul shall prove
 A true rememb'rer of his Majesty.
 Come, prithee mourn not; the worst chance is death, 90
 And that brings endless joy for fickle breath.

LADY MORE

Ah, but your children!

MORE

Tush, let them alone.
 Say they be stripped from this poor painted cloth,
 This outside of the earth, left houseless, bare;
 They have minds instructed how to gather more. 95
 There's no man that's ingenuous can be poor.
 And therefore, do not weep, my little ones,
 Though you lose all the earth; keep your souls even
 And you shall find inheritance in heaven.
 But for my servants, there's my chiefest care. 100
 [*To Catesby.*] Come hither, faithful steward. Be not griev'd
 That in thy person I discharge both thee
 And all thy other fellow officers,
 For my great master hath discharged me.
 If thou by serving me hast suffer'd loss, 105
 Then benefit thyself by leaving me.
 I hope thou hast not, for such times as these
 Bring gain to officers, whoever leese.²⁷⁴
 Great lords have only name, but in their fall
 Lord Spend-All's steward's Master Gathers-All. 110
 But I suspect not thee. Admit thou hast.
 It's good the servants save when masters waste.
 But you, poor gentlemen, that had no place
 T'enrich yourselves but by loathed bribery,
 Which I abhorred and never found you loved, 115
 Think, when an oak falls, underwood shrinks down
 And yet may live, though bruised. I pray ye, strive
 To shun my ruin, for the axe is set
 Even at my root, to fell me to the ground.
 The best I can do to prefer you all 120
 With my mean store expect, for Heaven can tell
 That More loves all his followers more than well.

Enter a servant.

SERVANT

My lord, there are new-lighted²⁷⁵ at the gate
 The Earls of Surrey and of Shrewsbury,
 And they expect you in the inner court. 125

MORE

Entreat their lordships come into the hall.

²⁷⁴ lose

²⁷⁵ just dismantled

LADY MORE

O God, what news with them?

MORE

Why, how now, wife?

They are but come to visit their old friend.

LADY MORE

O God, I fear, I fear.

MORE

What shouldst thou fear, fond²⁷⁶ woman? 130*Iustum si fractus illabatur orbis, impavidum ferient ruinae.*²⁷⁷

Here let me live estranged from great men's looks:

They are like golden flies on leaden hooks.

*Enter the Earls of Surrey and Shrewsbury,
Downes with his mace, and attendants.*

SHREWSBURY

Good morrow, good Sir Thomas.

SURREY [*To Lady More.*]Good day, good madam. (*Kind salutations.*)

MORE

Welcome, my good lords. 135

What ails your lordships look so melancholy?

Oh, I know: you live in Court, and the Court diet

Is only friend to physic.²⁷⁸

SURREY

O Sir Thomas,

Our words are now the King's, and our sad²⁷⁹ looksThe interest²⁸⁰ of your love. We are sent to you 140

From our mild Sovereign, once more to demand

If you'll subscribe unto those articles

He sent ye th'other day. Be well advised,

For on mine honor, lord, grave Doctor Fisher,

Bishop of Rochester, at the selfsame instant 145

Attached²⁸¹ with you, is sent unto the Tower

For the like obstinacy; his Majesty

Hath only sent you prisoner to your house.

But if you now refuse for to subscribe,

A stricter course will follow.

LADY MORE

O dear husband! 150

Kneeling and weeping.

DAUGHTERS

Dear Father!

MORE

See, my lords,

This partner and these subjects to my flesh

Prove rebels to my conscience. But, my good lords,

²⁷⁶ foolish²⁷⁷ "Even if the world falls apart, the ruin will not strike fear in the heart of the just man." See Horace's ode on "Justice and Steadfastness of Purpose," 3.3.1, 7–8.²⁷⁸ medicine²⁷⁹ grave; unhappy²⁸⁰ concern for; claim upon²⁸¹ arrested

If I refuse, must I unto the Tower?

SHREWSBURY

You must, my lord. Here is an officer
Ready for to arrest you of high treason. 155

LADY MORE AND DAUGHTERS

O God, O God!

ROPER

Be patient, good madam.

MORE

Ay, Downes, is't thou? I once did save thy life,
When else by cruel riotous assault
Thou hadst been torn in pieces. Thou art reserved 160
To be my summoner to yond spiritual court.
Give me thy hand, good fellow. Smooth thy face.²⁸²
The diet that thou drink'st is spiced with mace,²⁸³
And I could ne'er abide it. 'Twill not digest;
'Twill lie too heavy, man, on my weak breast. 165

SHREWSBURY

Be brief, my lord, for we are limited
Unto an hour.

MORE

Unto an hour? 'Tis well,
The bell, earth's thunder, soon shall toll my knell.²⁸⁴

LADY MORE (*Kneeling.*)

Dear loving husband, if you respect²⁸⁵ not me,
Yet think upon your daughters.

MORE

Wife, stand up. 170
I have bethought me,
And I'll now satisfy the King's good pleasure.

DAUGHTERS

Oh, happy alteration!

SHREWSBURY

Come then, subscribe, my lord.

SURREY

I am right glad of this your fair conversion.

MORE

Oh, pardon me, 175
I will subscribe to go unto the Tower
With all submissive willingness, and thereto add
My bones to strengthen the foundation
Of Julius Caesar's palace. Now, my lord,
I'll satisfy the King even with my blood, 180
Nor will I wrong your patience. Friend, do thine office.²⁸⁶

DOWNES

Sir Thomas More, Lord Chancellor of England,

²⁸² *smooth thy face*: take a calm expression

²⁸³ a nutmeg spice; swindling

²⁸⁴ the toll of a funeral bell; death knell

²⁸⁵ show consideration for

²⁸⁶ duty

I arrest you in the King's name of high treason.

4.4

MORE

Gramercies,²⁸⁷ friend.

To a great prison, to discharge²⁸⁸ the strife 185

Commenced 'twixt conscience and my frailer life,

More now must march. Chelsea, adieu, adieu.

Strange farewell; thou shalt ne'er more see More true,

For I shall ne'er see thee more. Servants, farewell.

Wife, mar not thine indifferent²⁸⁹ face; be wise. 190

More's widow's husband, he must make thee rise.

Daughters, [. . .] what's here, what's here?

Mine eye had almost parted with a tear.

Dear son, possess my virtue, that I ne'er gave.

Grave More thus lightly walks to a quick grave. 195

ROPER

*Curae leves loquuntur, ingentes stupent.*²⁹⁰

MORE

You that way in; mind you my course in prayer.

By water I to prison, to heaven through air.

Exeunt.

5.1

Enter the Warders of the Tower with halberds.

FIRST WARDER

Ho, make a guard there!

SECOND WARDER

Master Lieutenant gives a strait command

The people be avoided²⁹¹ from the bridge.

THIRD WARDER

From whence is he committed,²⁹² who can tell?

FIRST WARDER

From Durham House, I hear. 5

SECOND WARDER

The guard were waiting there an hour ago.

THIRD WARDER

If he stay long, he'll not get near the wharf,

There's such a crowd of boats upon the Thames.

FIRST WARDER

Well, be it spoken without offense to any,

A wiser or more virtuous gentleman 10

Was never bred in England.

SECOND WARDER

I think the poor will bury him in tears.

I never heard a man since I was born

So generally bewailed of everyone.

²⁸⁷ Great thanks

²⁸⁸ relieve

²⁸⁹ unemotional

²⁹⁰ Seneca's *Hippolytus*, 607: "Silly worries speak, serious ones are silent."

²⁹¹ removed

²⁹² imprisoned

Enter a poor woman.

THIRD WARDER

What means this woman?—Whither dost thou press? 15

FIRST WARDER

This woman will be trod to death anon.

SECOND WARDER

What makest thou here?

WOMAN

To speak with that good man Sir Thomas More.

FIRST WARDER

To speak with him? He's not Lord Chancellor.

WOMAN

The more's the pity, sir, if it pleased God. 20

FIRST WARDER

Therefore if thou hast a petition to deliver,
Thou mayst keep it now, for anything I know.

WOMAN

I am a poor woman, and have had, God knows,
A suit this two year in the Chancery,²⁹³
And he hath all the evidence I have, 25
Which should I lose, I am utterly undone.

FIRST WARDER

Faith, and I fear thou'lt hardly come by 'em now.
I am sorry for thee even with all my heart.

*Enter the Lords of Shrewsbury and Surrey with
Sir Thomas More and attendants, and enter
Lieutenant and Gentleman Porter.*

SECOND WARDER

Woman, stand back; you must avoid this place.
The lords must pass this way into the Tower. 30

MORE

I thank your lordships for your pains thus far
To my strong house.

WOMAN

Now, good Sir Thomas More, for Christ's dear sake,
Deliver me my writings back again
That do concern my title. 35

MORE

What, my old client, art thou got hither too?
Poor silly²⁹⁴ wretch, I must confess indeed
I had such writings as concern thee near,
But the King has ta'en the matter into his own hand;
He has all I had. Then, woman, sue to him. 40
I cannot help thee; thou must bear with me.

WOMAN

Ah, gentle heart, my soul for thee is sad.
Farewell, the best friend that the poor e'er had.

Exit.

²⁹³ i.e., in the court of the Lord Chancellor

²⁹⁴ deserving of pity

HORSEKEEPER

5.2

To it, man? Why, he is now at it. God send him well to speed.²⁹⁶

PORTER

Amen. Even as I wish to mine own soul, so speed it with my honorable lord and master, Sir Thomas More. 5

BUTLER

I cannot tell; I have nothing to do with matters above my capacity,²⁹⁷ but as God judge me, if I might speak my mind, I think there lives not a more harmless gentleman in the universal world.

BREWER

Nor a wiser, nor a merrier, nor an honest. Go to; I'll put that in upon mine own knowledge. 10

PORTER

Nay, an ye bate him his due of²⁹⁸ his housekeeping, hang ye all. Have ye many lord chancellors comes in debt at the year's end, and for very housekeeping?

HORSEKEEPER

Well, he was too good a lord for us, and therefore, I fear, God himself will take him. But I'll be hanged if ever I have such another service. 15

BREWER

Soft, man, we are not discharged yet. My lord may come home again and all will be well.

BUTLER

I much mistrust²⁹⁹ it; when they go to 'rainging³⁰⁰ once, there's ever foul weather for a great while after. 20

Enter Gough and Catesby with a paper.

But soft, here comes Master Gough and Master Catesby. Now we shall hear more.

HORSEKEEPER

Before God, they are very sad; I doubt³⁰¹ my lord is condemned.

PORTER

God bless his soul, and a fig³⁰² then for all worldly condemnation!

GOUGH

Well said, Giles Porter; I commend thee for it; 25
 'Twas spoken like a well-affected³⁰³ servant
 Of him that was a kind lord to us all.

CATESBY

Which now no more he shall be, for, dear fellows,
 Now we are masterless. Though he may live
 So long as please the King, but law hath made him 30
 A dead man to the world, and given the axe his head,
 But his sweet soul to live among the saints.

GOUGH

Let us entreat ye to go call together

²⁹⁶ success; good fortune

²⁹⁷ competence, mental ability

²⁹⁸ *an ... due of*: if you don't give him credit for

²⁹⁹ doubt

³⁰⁰ arrainging, trying; puns on raining

³⁰¹ fear

³⁰² *a fig*: term of contempt

³⁰³ cherished

| | | |
|--|----|-----|
| The rest of your sad fellows—by the roll | | 5.2 |
| You're just seven score ³⁰⁴ —and tell them what ye hear | 35 | |
| A virtuous honorable lord hath done | | |
| Even for the meanest follower that he had. | | |
| This writing found my lady in his study | | |
| This instant ³⁰⁵ morning, wherein is set down | | |
| Each servant's name, according to his place | 40 | |
| And office in the house. On every man | | |
| He frankly ³⁰⁶ hath bestown twenty nobles, | | |
| The best and worst together, all alike, | | |
| Which Master Catesby here forth will pay ye. | | |
| CATESBY | | |
| Take it, as it is meant, a kind remembrance | 45 | |
| Of a far kinder lord, with whose sad fall | | |
| He gives up house, and farewell to us all. | | |
| Thus the fair-spreading oak falls not alone, | | |
| But all the neighbor plants and under-trees | | |
| Are crushed down with his weight. No more of this, | 50 | |
| Come and receive your due, and after go | | |
| Fellow-like hence, co-partners of one woe. | | |
| <i>Exeunt.</i> | | |

5.3

*Enter Sir Thomas More, the lieutenant, and a
servant attending, as in his chamber in the Tower.*

| | | |
|---|----|--|
| MORE | | |
| Master Lieutenant, is the warrant come? | | |
| If it be so, i' God's name, let us know it. | | |
| LIEUTENANT | | |
| My lord, it is. | | |
| MORE | | |
| 'Tis welcome, sir, to me, with all my heart. | | |
| His blessed will be done. | 5 | |
| LIEUTENANT | | |
| Your wisdom, sir, hath been so well approved, ³⁰⁷ | | |
| And your fair patience in imprisonment | | |
| Hath ever shown such constancy of mind | | |
| And Christian resolution in all troubles, | | |
| As warrants us you are not unprepared. | 10 | |
| MORE | | |
| No, Master Lieutenant, I thank my God | | |
| I have peace of conscience, though the world and I | | |
| Are at a little odds. But we'll be even now, I hope, | | |
| Ere long. When is the execution ³⁰⁸ of your warrant? | | |
| LIEUTENANT | | |
| Tomorrow morning. | | |

³⁰⁴ *seven score*: 140

³⁰⁵ very same

³⁰⁶ freely

³⁰⁷ demonstrated

³⁰⁸ issuance (with pun on a warrant of execution)

| | | |
|--------------------|---|-----|
| MORE | | 5.3 |
| | So, sir, I thank ye. | 15 |
| | I have not lived so ill I fear to die. | |
| | Master Lieutenant, | |
| | I have had a sore fit of the stone ³⁰⁹ tonight, | |
| | But the King hath sent me such a rare receipt, ³¹⁰ | |
| | I thank him, as I shall not need to fear it much. | 20 |
| LIEUTENANT | | |
| | In life and death, still merry Sir Thomas More. | |
| MORE [To Servant.] | | |
| | Sirrah, fellow, reach me the urinal. | |
| | <i>He gives it him.</i> | |
| | Ha, let me see. [There's] ³¹¹ gravel in the water, | |
| | [Faith, there's no instant jeopardy in that.] | |
| | The man were likely to live long enough, | 25 |
| | So pleased the King. Here, fellow, take it. | |
| SERVANT | | |
| | Shall I go with it to the doctor, sir? | |
| MORE | | |
| | No, save thy labor; we'll cozen ³¹² him of a fee. | |
| | Thou shalt see me take a dram ³¹³ tomorrow morning | |
| | Shall cure the stone I warrant, doubt it not. | 30 |
| | Master Lieutenant, what news of my Lord of Rochester? | |
| LIEUTENANT | | |
| | Yesterday morning was he put to death. | |
| MORE | | |
| | The peace of soul sleep with him. | |
| | He was a learned and a reverend prelate, | |
| | And a rich man, believe me. | 35 |
| LIEUTENANT | | |
| | If he were rich, what is Sir Thomas More, | |
| | That all this while hath been Lord Chancellor? | |
| MORE | | |
| | Say ye so, Master Lieutenant? What do you think | |
| | A man that with my time had held my place | |
| | Might purchase? ³¹⁴ | 40 |
| LIEUTENANT | | |
| | Perhaps, my lord, two thousand pound a year. | |
| MORE | | |
| | Master Lieutenant, I protest to you | |
| | I never had the means in all my life | |
| | To purchase one poor hundred pound a year. | |
| | I think I am the poorest chancellor | 45 |
| | That ever was in England, though I could wish, | |
| | For credit of the place, that my estate were better. | |

³⁰⁹ *sore ... stone*: grievous pain from kidney stones

³¹⁰ prescription

³¹¹ Shirley's emendation, and the next

³¹² cheat

³¹³ draught of medicine

³¹⁴ acquire

LIEUTENANT

It's very strange.

MORE

It will be found as true.

I think, sir, that with most part of my coin
I have purchased as strange commodities
As ever you heard tell of in your life.

50

LIEUTENANT

Commodities, my lord?

Might I, without offense, enquire of them?

MORE

Crutches, Master Lieutenant, and bare³¹⁵ cloaks,
For halting soldiers and poor needy scholars,
Have had my gettings in the Chancery.
To think but what a cheat³¹⁶ the Crown shall have
By my attainder!³¹⁷
I prithee, if thou beest a gentleman,
Get but a copy of my inventory.
That part of poet that was given me
Made me a very unthrift;
For this is the disease attends us all:
Poets were never thrifty, never shall.

55

60

*Enter Lady More mourning,
daughters, Master Roper.*

LIEUTENANT

O noble More—

My lord, your wife, your son-in-law, and daughters.

65

MORE

Son Roper, welcome; welcome, wife and girls.
Why do you weep? Because I live at ease?
Did you not see, when I was chancellor,
I was so cloyed³¹⁸ with suitors every hour
I could not sleep, nor dine, nor sup in quiet?
Here's none of this; here I can sit and talk
With my honest keeper half a day together,
Laugh and be merry. Why then should you weep?

70

ROPER

These tears, my lord, for this your long restraint
Hope had dried up with comfort that we yet,
Although imprisoned, might have had your life.

75

MORE

To live in prison, what a life were that?
The King, I thank him, loves me more than so.
Tomorrow I shall be at liberty
To go even whither I can,
After I have dispatched my business.

80

LADY MORE

Ah husband, husband, yet submit yourself.
Have care of your poor wife and children.

³¹⁵ threadbare

³¹⁶ escheat; reversion of property to a feudal lord

³¹⁷ legal consequences of a treason conviction—in this case, forfeiture of property

³¹⁸ encumbered

| | | |
|---|---|----|
| MORE | | |
| Wife, so I have, and I do leave you all To his protection hath the power to keep You safer than I can, The father of the widow and the orphan. | 85 | |
| ROPER | | |
| The world, my lord, hath ever held you wise, And 't shall be no distaste unto your wisdom To yield to the opinion of the state. | 90 | |
| MORE | | |
| I have deceived myself, I must acknowledge; And as you say, son Roper, to confess the same It will be no disparagement at all. | | |
| LADY MORE | | |
| His Highness shall be certified ³¹⁹ thereof, immediately. | <i>Offering to depart.</i> | 95 |
| MORE | | |
| Nay, hear me, wife; first let me tell ye how I thought to have had a barber for my beard. Now I remember that were labor lost: The headsman now shall cut off head and all. | | |
| ROPER'S WIFE | | |
| Father, his Majesty upon your meek submission Will yet, they say, receive you to his grace In as great credit ³²⁰ as you were before. | 100 | |
| MORE | | |
| ['Tis so indeed,] ³²¹ wench. Faith, my lord the King Has appointed me to do a little business. If that were past, my girl, thou then shouldst see What I would say to him about that matter. But I shall be so busy until then, I shall not tend it. | 105 | |
| DAUGHTERS | | |
| Ah, my dear father. | | |
| LADY MORE | | |
| Dear lord and husband. | | |
| MORE | | |
| Be comforted, good wife, to live and love my children, For with thee leave I all my care of them. Son Roper, for my sake that have loved thee well, And for her virtue's sake, cherish my child. Girl, be not proud, but of ³²² thy husband's love Ever retain thy virtuous modesty. That modesty is such a comely garment As it is never out of fashion, sits as fair Upon the meaner woman as the empress. No stuff that gold can buy is half so rich, Nor ornament that so becomes a woman. Live all, and love together, and thereby You give your father a rich obsequy. | 110 115 120 | |

³¹⁹ informed

³²⁰ favor

³²¹ Shirley's emendation

³²² on account of

DAUGHTERS

5.3

Your blessing, dear father.

MORE

I must be gone—

God bless you—to talk with God, who now doth call.

LADY MORE

Ah, my dear husband!

MORE

Sweet wife, good night, good night.

God send us all his everlasting light.

125

ROPER

I think before this hour,

More heavy hearts ne'er parted in the Tower.

Exeunt.

5.4

Enter the sheriffs of London and their officers at one door, the warders with their halberds at another.

FIRST SHERIFF

Officers, what time of day is 't?

OFFICER

Almost eight o'clock.

SECOND SHERIFF

We must make haste then, lest we stay too long.

FIRST WARDER

Good morrow, Master Shrieves of London. Master Lieutenant

Wills ye repair to the limits of the Tower,

There to receive your prisoner.

5

FIRST SHERIFF [*To Officer.*]

Go back, and tell his Worship we are ready.

SECOND SHERIFF

Go bid the officers make clear the way,

There may be passage for the prisoner.

Enter Lieutenant and his guard with More.

MORE

Yet God be thanked; here's a fair day toward³²³

To take our journey in. Master Lieutenant,

It were fair walking on the Tower leads.

10

LIEUTENANT

An so it might have liked my Sovereign Lord,

I would to God you might have walked there still. *He weeps.*

MORE

Sir, we are walking to a better place.

O sir, your kind and loving tears

Are like sweet odors to embalm your friend.

Thank your good lady; since I was your guest

She has made me a very wanton,³²⁴ in good sooth.

15

³²³ coming, about to be

³²⁴ spoilt child

LIEUTENANT

Oh, I had hoped we should not yet have parted.

MORE

But I must leave ye for a little while. 20
 Within an hour or two you may look for me,
 But there will be so many come to see me
 That I shall be so proud I will not speak.
 And sure my memory is grown so ill
 I fear I shall forget my head behind me. 25

LIEUTENANT

God and his blessed angels be about ye.
 Here, Master Shrieves, receive your prisoner.

MORE

Good morrow, Master Shrieves of London, to ye both.
 I thank ye that ye will vouchsafe³²⁵ to meet me.
 I see by this you have not quite forgot 30
 That I was in times past as you are now:
 A sheriff of London.

FIRST SHERIFF

Sir, then you know our duty doth require it.

MORE

I know it well, sir, else I would have been glad
 You might have saved a labor at this time. 35
 [*To Second Sheriff.*] Ah, Master Sheriff,
 You and I have been of old acquaintance.
 You were a patient auditor³²⁶ of mine
 When I read the divinity lecture at Saint Lawrence's.³²⁷

SECOND SHERIFF

Sir Thomas More, 40
 I have heard you oft, as many other did,
 To our great comfort.

MORE

Pray God, you may so now, with all my heart.
 And, as I call to mind,
 When I studied the law in Lincoln's Inn, 45
 I was of counsel³²⁸ with ye in a cause.

[FIRST] SHERIFF

I was about to say so, good Sir Thomas.
 []³²⁹

MORE

Oh, is this the place?
 I promise ye, it is a goodly scaffold. 50
 In sooth, I am come about a headless errand,
 For I have not much to say, now I am here.
 Well, let's ascend, i' God's name.
 [*To the Hangman.*] In troth, methinks your stair is somewhat weak.
 I prithee, honest friend, lend me thy hand 55
 To help me up. As for my coming down,

³²⁵ graciously agree

³²⁶ listener

³²⁷ More's delivered lectures on Augustine's *City of God*, at St. Lawrence Jewry in 1501.

³²⁸ *of counsel*: worked together in a legal capacity

³²⁹ This line was lost due to manuscript damage.

Let me alone; I'll look to that myself.

*As he is going up the stairs,
enters the Earls of Surrey and Shrewsbury.*

MORE

My lords of Surrey and of Shrewsbury, give me your hands yet before we part. Ye see, though it pleaseth the King to raise me thus high, yet I am not proud, for the higher I mount, the better I can see my friends about me. I am now on a far voyage, and this strange wooden horse must bear me thither; yet I perceive by your looks you like my bargain so ill that there's not one of ye all dare venture with me. (*Walking.*) Truly, here's a most sweet gallery; I like the air of it better than my garden at Chelsea. By your patience, good people that have pressed thus into my bedchamber, if you'll not trouble me, I'll take a sound sleep here. 60 65

SHREWSBURY

My lord, 'twere good you'd publish³³⁰ to the world
Your great offense unto his Majesty.

MORE

My lord, I'll bequeath this legacy to the hangman, and do it instantly. (*Gives him his gown.*) I confess his Majesty hath been ever good to me, and my offense to his Highness makes me, o^f³³¹ a state pleader, a stage player (though I am old, and have a bad voice) to act this last scene of my tragedy. I'll send him for my trespass a reverent head, somewhat bald, for it is not requisite any head should stand covered to so high majesty. If that content him not, because I think my body will then do me small pleasure, let him but bury it and take it. 70 75

SURREY

My lord, my lord, hold conference with your soul.
You see, my lord, the time of life is short.

MORE

I see it, my good lord; I dispatched that business the last night. I come hither only to be let blood;³³² my doctor here tells me it is good for the headache. 80

HANGMAN

I beseech ye, my lord, forgive me.

MORE

Forgive thee, honest fellow? Why?

HANGMAN

For your death, my lord.

MORE

Oh, my death. I had rather it were in thy power to forgive me, for thou hast the sharpest action against me. The law, my honest friend, lies in thy hands now. (*[Gives] his purse.*) Here's thy fee, and, my good fellow, let my suit be dispatched presently; for 'tis all one pain to die a lingering death and to live in the continual mill of a lawsuit. But I can tell thee, my neck is so short that if thou shouldst behead an hundred noblemen like myself, thou wouldst ne'er get credit³³³ by it. Therefore—look ye, sir—do it handsomely,³³⁴ or of my word thou shalt never deal with me hereafter. 85 90

HANGMAN

I'll take an order for that, my lord.

³³⁰ formally acknowledge

³³¹ out of, i.e., from having been

³³² *let blood*: releasing blood was a common prescription for ill patients

³³³ payment; appreciation

³³⁴ properly

| | | |
|--|-----|--------------------|
| MORE | | 5.4 |
| One thing more: take heed thou cut'st not off my beard. Oh, I forgot; execution passed upon that last night, and the body of it lies buried in the Tower.—Stay. Is't not possible to make a scape ³³⁵ from all this strong guard? | 95 | |
| It is. | | |
| There is a thing within me that will raise And elevate my better part 'bove sight Of these same weaker eyes. And, Master Shrieves, For all this troop of steel that tends ³³⁶ my death, I shall break from you, and fly up to heaven. Let's seek the means for this. | 100 | |
| HANGMAN | | |
| My lord, I pray ye, put off your doublet. | | |
| MORE | | |
| Speak not so coldly to me; I am hoarse already; I would be loath, good fellow, to take more. Point me the block; I ne'er was here before. | 105 | |
| HANGMAN | | |
| To the east side, my lord. | | |
| MORE | | |
| Then to the east, We go to sigh; that o'er, to sleep in rest. Here More forsakes all mirth, good reason why: The fool of flesh must with her frail life die. No eye salute my trunk ³³⁷ with a sad tear. Our birth to heaven should be thus: void of fear. | 110 | |
| | | <i>Exit.</i> |
| SURREY | | |
| A very learned worthy gentleman Seals error with his blood. Come, we'll to Court. Let's sadly hence to perfect ³³⁸ unknown fates, Whilst he tends progress ³³⁹ to the state of states. | 115 | |
| | | [<i>Exeunt.</i>] |
| | | Finis. |

SYNOPSIS – *Sir Thomas More*

Act 1

Scene 1: A London Street.

The play opens in London with two privileged Frenchmen taking property and even a wife from London citizens. In response, some of the aggrieved decide to have a bill of wrongs read publicly against the foreigners.

Scene 2: The Court of Sessions

Master Sheriff Thomas More has a merry jest at the expense of Justice Suresby.

Scene 3: At Court

Some English nobles remark upon the abuses of foreigners. In retaliation for these wrongs, a mob of English commoners then forms, leading to the decision by the authorities to summon More as a peacemaker.

³³⁵ escape

³³⁶ attends

³³⁷ headless body

³³⁸ fulfill

³³⁹ *tends progress*: makes his way—alluding to a royal progress or journey

Act 2*Scene 1: St. Martin's Lane in London*

The mob, seething with anti-French sentiment, becomes violent and threatens to destroy some foreigners' homes.

Scene 2: In the Guildhall

More, Surrey, Palmer and Shrewsbury confer on how best to handle the situation, as the mob releases a number of criminals from the main London prison. More decides to attempt pacifying the crowd with diplomacy.

Scene 3: St. Martin's Lane in London [This scene is commonly attributed to Shakespeare.]

More's diplomacy succeeds in quelling the London rioters, who submit themselves to More and the authorities. In recognition of this capable service, the King knights More and grants him a court appointment to the Privy Council.

Scene 4: The Standard in Cheapside

More manages to obtain clemency from the King for the rioters and is then appointed Lord Chancellor.

Act 3*Scene 1: Within More's Home in Chelsea [The opening soliloquy is commonly attributed to Shakespeare.]*

More's soliloquy. More orders street-brawler Falkner be shaved, and plays a prank on his friend Erasmus; Surrey praised More to Erasmus.

Scene 2: More's Home

More entertains his guests with *The Marriage of Wit and Wisdom*, playing Good Counsel to Wit, warning him not to mistake Lady Vanity for Lady Wisdom.

Act 4*Scene 1: The Privy Council Chamber in Westminster*

More chairs a council meeting, and is then committed to house arrest for his refusal to sign unspecified Articles drawn up by the King.

Scene 2: The Garden at More's Chelsea Home

More's family is concerned; More informs them of his loss of the chancellorship and enjoins them to be merry.

Scene 3: A Room in the Tower of London

Bishop John Fisher, also declining to sign the articles, retains good cheer as he is placed in the Tower.

Scene 4: Within More's Home at Chelsea

More continues to encourage his family. When Shrewsbury and Surrey arrive to arrest him, he agrees to be taken to the Tower.

Act 5*Scene 1: The Tower Gate*

A poor woman laments the arrest of More. As More approaches his prison, he welcomes it as a place of comfort.

Scene 2: More's Home

More's servants bewail his imprisonment.

Scene 3: More's Chamber in the Tower

More gives final farewells and injunctions to his family.

Scene 4: Tower Hill

More goes to his death with good humor.