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, be haling her by the arm.

DOLL
Whither wilt thou hale 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!

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.

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

Enter Caveler 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, 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.

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


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 jotted6 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 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 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 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.

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

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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, 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 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 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.

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. 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 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

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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
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
neediness. Wherefore, the premises considered, the redress must be of the
commons,\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{19}

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 Day\textsuperscript{18} next in the
morning we'll go forth a-Maying, but make it the worst May Day for the
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 of\textsuperscript{19} for ever after.

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

GEORGE BETTS
There spake an angel; come, let us along then. \textit{Exeunt.}

\textbf{1.2}
\textit{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.

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.

\footnotesize{17 commoners
\footnotesize{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.
\footnotesize{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,
One that can lift a purse right cunningly.

LORD MAYOR
And is that he\(^{21}\) accuses him?

SURESBY
The same, my lord, whom, by your honor's leave,
I must say somewhat to,\(^{22}\) because I find
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,
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
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
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 odd\(^{23}\) money, this is a pretty sum
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, soothe\(^{25}\) a [little jest]\(^{26}\) for once,
Only to try conclusions\(^{27}\) 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.

Exit Lord Mayor and justices.

MORE
   Nay, plaintiff, go you too;
   Exit Smart.

and, officers,

Stand you aside, and leave the prisoner
To me awhile.

Exit all but More and Lifter

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.

LIFTER
   Good Master Shrieve, 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.

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 maintain 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 circumvent thee.
   All that I aim at is a merry jest.
   Perform it, Lifter, and expect my best.

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
25 uphold
30 entrap
MORE
    Let me alone for that; I'll be thy setter.  
    I'll send him hither to thee presently  
    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  
    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.  
    I see the purpose of this gentleman  
    Is but to check the folly of the Justice  
    For blaming others in a desperate case  
    Wherein himself may fall as soon as any.  
    To save my life it is a good adventure.  
    Silence there, ho! Now doth the Justice enter.

SURESBY
    Now, sirrah, now what is your will with me?  
    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?

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,  
    More than a true man should be charged withal.  
    Thou art a varlet; 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—

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.

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. There’s one, indeed,
Goes by my name; he puts down all for purses
[ ]
[ ]

SURESBY
Be as familiar as thou wilt, my knave.
’Tis this I long to know.

LIFTER (Aside.)
And you shall have your longing ere ye go.
This fellow, sir, perhaps will meet ye thus,
(Actions [of greeting, embracing].)
Or thus, or thus, and in kind compliment
Pretend acquaintance, somewhat doubtfully,
And these embraces serve—

SURESBY (Shrugging gladly.)
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.

SURESBY
In plainer English, Lifter, if my purse
Be stored 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.

SURESBY
But in this time has he my purse or no?

LIFTER
Not yet, sir, fie! [Aside] No, nor I have not yours.
[He takes Suresby’s purse]
Enter Lord Mayor, etc.

But now we must forbear; my lords return.
SURESBY

A murrain 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.
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.

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
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?

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?

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?

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,
May be provoked to that he never thought.
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.

SURESBY
Well, Master More, you are a merry man.
I find ye, sir, I find ye well enough.

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.

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.

MORE
Well, Master Suresby, there's your purse again,
And all your money. Fear nothing of More:
Wisdom still [doth bid ye watch] the door.
"Exeunt.

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 displeased commons of the city.

SURREY
'Tis strange, that from his princely clemency,
So well a tempered mercy and a grace
To all the aliens in this fruitful land,
That this high crested\textsuperscript{42} insolence should spring
From them that breathe from his majestic bounty,
That, fattened with the traffic\textsuperscript{43} of our country,
Already leap into his subjects’ face.\textsuperscript{15}

\textbf{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,
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.

\textbf{SURREY}

The more knave Barde, that, using Sherwin’s goods,
Doth ask him interest for the occupation.\textsuperscript{44}
I like not that, my Lord of Shrewsbury.
He’s ill bestead\textsuperscript{45} that lends a well paced horse
Unto a man that will not find him meat.

\textbf{CHOLMLEY}

My Lord of Surrey will be pleasant still.

\textbf{PALMER}

I being then employed by your honors
To stay the broil\textsuperscript{46} 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,
That, if he had the Mayor of London’s wife,
He would keep her in despite of any English.\textsuperscript{47}

\textbf{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,
I am glad, Sir Thomas Palmer, I have none.

\textbf{CHOLMLEY}

If a\textsuperscript{48} take my wife, a shall find her meat.

\textbf{SURREY}

And reason good, Sir Roger Cholmley, too.
If these hot Frenchmen needsly\textsuperscript{49} will have sport,
They should in kindness yet defray the charge.
‘Tis hard when men possess our wives in quiet
And yet leave us in to discharge\textsuperscript{50} their diet.

\textsuperscript{42} proud
\textsuperscript{43} commerce
\textsuperscript{44} use
\textsuperscript{45} situated
\textsuperscript{46} quarrel
\textsuperscript{47} Tilney strikes out “English” and adds “man.”
\textsuperscript{48} he
\textsuperscript{49} necessarily
\textsuperscript{50} pay for
SHREWSBURY
My lord, our caterers shall not use the market
For our provision, but some stranger now
Will take the victuals from him he hath bought.
A carpenter, as I was late informed,
Who, having bought a pair of doves in Cheap,
Immediately a Frenchman took them from him
And beat the poor man for resisting him;
And when the fellow did complain his wrongs,
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
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—
I tell ye true, my lords—in that his Majesty
Is not informal 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.

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.
A number of poor artificers [are out
Inflamed to kill the hated aliens.]

[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.

SHREWSBURY
That Doctor Beale may chance beshrew 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.

SURREY
Now I bethink myself of Master More,
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.

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 Betts,
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,
And Doll my true breeder,
With the rest of our crew
Shall ran-tan-tar-ran.
Do all they what they can,
Shall we be bobbed, braved?60 No.
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!
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' enforc'd wrongs of aliens,
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,

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.

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

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.

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.

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.

[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.
*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.

Enter Sherwin and the rest.

---
⁶² June 24, when lighting bonfires was traditional
⁶³ main persons responsible
A purchase, a purchase! We have found, we ha’ found—

What?

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

How now, have you found any?

No, not one; they’re all fled.

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.

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

Exeunt.

Enter Sheriff More and the Lord Mayor.

What, Sir John Munday, are you hurt?

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.

The captains of this insurrection
Have ta’en themselves to arms, and came but now
To both the Counters, 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,
’Tis time that force or parley do encounter
With these displeasèd men.

Enter a messenger.

How now, what news?

plundered prize
Tilney marks these opening lines for deletion.
debtors’ prisons in London
MESSENGER
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.

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.

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.

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.

MORE
My lords, I doubt not but we shall appease
With a calm breath this flux68 of discontent.

PALMER
To call them to a parley questionless
May fall out good. 'Tis well said, Master More.

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 silly69 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.
I' God's name on, to calm our private foes
With breath of gravity, not dangerous blows.

Exeunt.

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 nobles\textsuperscript{72}\textsuperscript{2.3} a stone, list to me.

GEORGE BETTS

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

LINCOLN

Our country is a great eating country; \textit{ergo},\textsuperscript{73} they eat more in our country than they do in their own.

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,\textsuperscript{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.

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.

SERGEANT

What say you to the mercy of the King?

Do you refuse it?

LINCOLN

You would have us upon th’ hip,\textsuperscript{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.

LINCOLN

How say you now? Prentices “simple”? Down with him!

ALL

Prentices simple? Prentices simple?

\textit{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.

SHREWSBURY

My masters, countrymen—

\textsuperscript{72} English gold coins
\textsuperscript{73} Lincoln’s mistake for the Latin \textit{ergo} (therefore)
\textsuperscript{74} apprentices
\textsuperscript{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.

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!

MORE
While 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!

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!

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,

---

76 Sheriff
77 He
78 Doll mispronounces “shrievalty,” 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!

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 topped the peace as now you would,
The peace wherein you have till now grown up
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, which cannot choose but much advantage the poor handicrafts of the city.

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
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 ruff of your opinions clothed:
What had you got? I'll tell you. You had taught
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—
Would shark 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,
One supposition, which if you will mark
You shall perceive how horrible a shape
Your innovation bears. First, 'tis a sin
Which oft th'apostle did forewarn us of,
Urging obedience to authority;

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
Marly, God forbid that!

More
Nay, certainly you are.
For, to the king, God hath his office lent
Of dread, 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,
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
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.

In, in, to your obedience! Why, even your hurly
Cannot proceed but by obedience.
Tell me but this: What rebel captain,
As mutinies are incident, by his name
Can still the rout? Who will obey a traitor?
Or how can well that proclamation sound
When there is no addition but "a rebel"
To qualify a rebel? You'll put down strangers,
Kill them, cut their throats, possess their houses,
And lead the majesty of law in lyam
To slip 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?
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
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
Owed not nor made not you, nor that the elements

85 respect, reverence
86 To kneel ... rents: 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, 2.3
But chartered unto\(^{94}\) 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. 150

*They lay by their weapons.*

**MORE.**

No doubt his Majesty will grant it you.
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 stay\(^{98}\) of further mutiny,
And for the apprehending of such persons
As shall contend.

**SURREY.**

I go, my noble lord. 160

*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

*Exit 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

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
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
Enjoined me to; which, since it thus prevails,
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
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.

SHREWSBURY
My lord, his Majesty sends loving thanks
To you, your brethren, and his faithful subjects,
Your careful citizens. But Master More, to you
A rougher, yet as kind a salutation:
Your name is yet too short; nay, you must kneel.

[More kneels.]

A knight’s creation is this knightly steel.

[He knights More.]

Rise up, Sir Thomas More.

---

100 cheat
101 double honestly: not honestly at all (as in double-dealing)
102 Compelled
103 solicitous; concerned
MORE

I thank his Highness for thus honoring me.

SHREWSBURY

This is but first taste of his princely favor,
For it hath pleased his high Majesty,
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
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.

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:
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
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.

SHREWSBURY

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

MORE [To Mayor.]

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

Exeunt severally.

¹⁰⁴ Shirley’s emendation
¹⁰⁵ private blood: common origins
¹⁰⁶ go quickly
Enter Sheriff and meet a messenger.

SHERIFF
Messenger, what news?

MESSINGER
Is execution yet performed?

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

MESSINGER
Stay, Master Shrieve; it is the Council's pleasure, For more example in so bad a case, 5
A gibbet\(^{107}\) 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.

SHERIFF
It shall be done, sir. Exit messenger.

Officers, be speedy.

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 slackened.

OFFICERS
We go, sir. Exit 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. 20
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.

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, 30 They cannot bring the carts unto the stairs To take the prisoners in.

\(^{107}\) 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
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.
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.”¹⁰⁷
I’ God’s name, let’s to work:

[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.

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
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.
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
Henceforth be warned to attempt¹¹¹ the like
‘Gainst any alien that repaireth¹¹² hither.
Fare ye well, all; the next time that we meet
I trust in heaven we shall each other greet.

He leaps off.

¹⁰⁸ gallows
¹⁰⁹ cry lag: request to be last
¹¹⁰ wish
¹¹¹ to attempt: against attempting
¹¹² comes
Farewell, John—Lincoln; say all what they can: 70
Thou lived'st a good fellow, and died'st an honest man.

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, 75
And, as you are a man, deny't me not.

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. 80
You know not what a comfort you shall bring
To my poor heart to die before my husband.

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.

SHERIFF
Nay, you set open the Counter gates and you must hang chiefly.

CLOWN BETTS
Well then, so much for that.

DOLL [To Sheriff]
Sir, your free bounty much contents my mind. 90
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 in Leadenhall
And there been burned to ashes with the roof.

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.

DOLL
Well is he worthy of it, by my troth: 100
An honest, wise, well-spoken gentleman;
Yet would I praise his honesty much more
If he had kept his word and saved our lives.

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
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.
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
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.
Give me thy hand; let's kiss, and so let's part.

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
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.

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
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.
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
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. 150

ALL. (Flinging up caps.)
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 whensoe'er we talk of ill May Day
Praise More whose [word did sin and judgment stay]. 117

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 deservèd death he doth forgive,
Who gives you life, pray all he long may live.

ALL
God save the King! God save the King,
My good Lord Chancellor, and the Earl of Surrey!

Exeunt.

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

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 tithe\textsuperscript{124} of knees
From elder kinsmen, and him, bind by my place
To give the smooth and dexter\textsuperscript{125} way to me
That owe it him by nature: sure these things,
Not physicked by respect,\textsuperscript{126} might turn our blood
To much corruption. But More, the more thou hast
Either of honor, office, wealth, and calling,
Which might accite\textsuperscript{127} 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,
A bottom\textsuperscript{128} great wound up, greatly undone.

Enter his man Randall attired like him.

Come on, sir, are you ready?

RAN\textsc{dall}

Yes, my lord, I stand\textsuperscript{129} but on a few points. I shall have done presently.
Before God, I have practised your lordship's shift\textsuperscript{130} so well that I think I shall
grow proud, my lord.

MORE

'Tis fit thou shouldst wax\textsuperscript{131} proud, or else thou'l 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
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.]

Dress\textsuperscript{132} your behavior

According to my carriage,\textsuperscript{133} but beware
You talk not over much, for 'twill betray thee.
Who prates\textsuperscript{134} not much seems wise, his wit few scan,\textsuperscript{135}
While the tongue blabs tales of the imperfect man.
I'll see if great Erasmus can distinguish
Merit and outward ceremony.

RAN\textsc{dall}

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

\textsuperscript{124} tribute\textsuperscript{125} right hand (a position of honor)
\textsuperscript{126} physicked by respect: tempered by reflection
\textsuperscript{127} excite; induce
\textsuperscript{128} a ball of wound thread
\textsuperscript{129} wait
\textsuperscript{130} contrivance
\textsuperscript{131} grow
\textsuperscript{132} arrange
\textsuperscript{133} demeanor
\textsuperscript{134} talks foolishly
\textsuperscript{135} discern
\textsuperscript{136} let ... sumpter: let me be demoted to serving your lowliest servant
MORE
    Well, sir, I'll hide our motion. Act my part
    With a firm boldness, and thou winst my heart.  45

    How now? What's the matter?

FALKNER [To Officers.]
    Tug me not; I'm no bear. 'Sblood, 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 broacher of the broil—

FALKNER
    'Sblood, I broached none. 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, my noble lord.

MORE [To Sheriff.]
    No ear to choose for every trivial noise
    But mine, and in so full 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.

FALKNER
To Newgate? 'Sblood, Sir Thomas More, I appeal, I appeal; from Newgate to any of the two worshipful Counters.\textsuperscript{143}

MORE
Fellow, whose man are you that are thus lusty\textsuperscript{2144}

FALKNER
My name's Jack Falkner. I serve, next under God and my prince, Master Morris, secretary to my Lord of Winchester.

MORE
A fellow of your hair\textsuperscript{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\textsuperscript{146} to come to my questions and answers before a city justice. I knew I should to the pot.\textsuperscript{147}

MORE
Thou hast been there, it seems, too late already.\textsuperscript{148}

FALKNER
I know your honor is wise and so forth, and I desire to be only catechized\textsuperscript{149} or examined by you, my noble Lord Chancellor.

MORE
Sirrah, sirrah, you are a busy\textsuperscript{150} dangerous ruffian.

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?

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?

\textsuperscript{143} debtors' prisons in London
\textsuperscript{144} insolent
\textsuperscript{145} double meaning of physical hair and other sense of the word as "kind" or "type"
\textsuperscript{146} position
\textsuperscript{147} \textit{To the pot}: be ruined or destroyed
\textsuperscript{148} \textit{been there ... already}: More plays on the sense of a pot for drinking
\textsuperscript{149} instructed
\textsuperscript{150} meddlesome
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?

FALKNER

Why, when the humors are purged: 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, start not from that vow,
And for I will be sure thou shalt not shear,
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.

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
Of a most worthy learned gentleman.
This little isle holds not a truer friend
Unto the arts, nor doth his greatness add
A feigned flourish to his worthy parts.
He’s great in study: that’s the statist’s grace,
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
I in my study oft have visited.
Is that Sir Thomas More?

SURREY

It is, Erasmus.
Now shall you view the honorablist 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
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.

ERASMUS

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?

SURREY

His lordship hath some weighty business,
For see, as yet he takes no notice of us.

ERASMUS

I think 'twere best I did my duty to him
In a short Latin speech:

[Taking off his hat, Erasmus addresses Randall.]

Qui in celeberrima patria natus est et gloriosa plus
habet negotii ut in lucem veniat quam qui—

RANDALL

I pray thee, good Erasmus, be covered. I have forsworn speaking of Latin, else, as I am true councilor, I’d tickle you with a speech. Nay, sit, Erasmus; sit, good my Lord of Surrey. I'll make my lady come to you anon, if she will, and give you good entertainment.

ERASMUS

Is this Sir Thomas More?

SURREY

O good Erasmus, you must conceive his vein: he’s ever furnished with these conceits.

RANDALL

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 parlous wise fellow that smells of a politician better than a long progress.

Enter Sir Thomas More.

SURREY

We are deluded. This is not his lordship.

RANDALL

I pray you, Erasmus, how long will the Holland cheese in your country keep without maggots?

MORE

Fool, painted barbarism, retire thyself
Into thy first creation.  [Exit Randall.]

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 shrwed; mischievous
162 a journey made by a royal personage
Thus you see,
My loving learned friends, how far respect
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
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 physic
Unto your able body, for we learn,
Where melancholy chokes the passages
Of blood and breath, the erected spirit still
Lengthens our days with sportful exercise.
Study should be the saddest time of life;
The rest, a sport exempt from thought of strife.

MORE
Erasmus preacheth gospel against physic.
My noble poet—

SURREY
O my lord, you tax me
In that word “poet” of much idleness.
It is a study that makes poor our fate;
Poets were ever thought unfit for state.

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 holly
And tender bay tree.

SURREY
Yet, my lord,
It is become the very lag i’number
To all mechanic sciences.

MORE
Why, I’ll show the reason.
This is no age for poets: they should sing,
To the loud canon, heroic facts
Qui faciunt reges heroic carmina laudant;
And as great subjects of their pen decay,
Even so, unphysicked, they do melt away. Enter Master Morris.

end

163 medicine
164 most serious or grave
165 blame
166 In the art of heraldry, holly leaves represent truth or foresight and defense.
167 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; We'll banquet here with fresh and staid delights; The Muses' music here shall cheer our sprites; The cates must be but mean where scholars sit, For they're made all with courses of neat wit. How now, Master Morris?

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 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
An your lordship will, the barber shall give you a sample of my head. I am he in faith, my lord, I am ipse.

MORE
Why, now thy face is like an honest man's. Thou hast played well at this new cut, and won.

FALKNER
No, my lord. -ost all that ever God sent me.

MORE
God sent thee into the world as thou art now, with short hair. How quickly 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. 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!\textsuperscript{180} If my hair stand not on end when I look for my face in
a glass,\textsuperscript{181} I am a polecat.\textsuperscript{182} Here's a lousy jest. But if I notch\textsuperscript{183} not that
rogue Tom barber that makes me look thus like a Brownist,\textsuperscript{184} hang me. I'll
be worse to the nittical\textsuperscript{185} knave than ten tooth-drawings.\textsuperscript{186} Here's a head with
a pox!

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

FALKNER
  Mad, now? 'Nails!\textsuperscript{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.

FALKNER
  Why, farewell, frost! I'll go hang myself out for the poll\textsuperscript{188} 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
     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?

FALKNER
  Because I'm an ass. Do you set your shavers\textsuperscript{189} upon me, and then cast me
off? Must I condole?\textsuperscript{190} Have the Fates played the fools? [Il'	extit{eft.}] Am I
their cut? Now the poor sconce\textsuperscript{191} is taken, must Jack march with bag and
baggage?

\textsuperscript{180} God's heart (an oath)
\textsuperscript{181} mirror
\textsuperscript{182} vile person
\textsuperscript{183} cut
\textsuperscript{184} person in a political party whose members would wear short hair
\textsuperscript{185} lice-infested
\textsuperscript{186} extractions
\textsuperscript{187} God's nails (an oath)
\textsuperscript{188} shaved
\textsuperscript{189} razors; swindlers
\textsuperscript{190} grieve
\textsuperscript{191} a jocular term for head
MORRIS
    You coxcomb! 192
FALKNER
    Nay, you ha' poached me; you ha' given me a hair. It's here, here.
MORRIS
    Away, you kind ass. Come, sir, dry your eyes. Keep your old place, and mend these fooleries.
FALKNER
    I care not to be turned off, 194 and 'twere a ladder, so it be in my humor, or the Fates beckon to me. Nay, pray, sir, if the Destinies spin me a fine thread, Falkner flies another pitch. 195 And to avoid the headache, hereafter before I'll be a hairmonger I'll be a whoremonger.  
    Exeunt.

3.2

Enter a messenger to More.

MESSENGER
    My honorable lord, the Mayor of London, Accompanied with his lady and her train, Are coming hither, and are hard at hand, To feast with you. A sergeant's come before To tell your lordship of their near approach. 5
MORE
    Why, this is cheerful news. Friends go and come; Reverend Erasmus, whose delicious words Express the very soul and life of wit, Newly took sad leave of me, with tears Troubled the silver channel of the Thames, Which, glad of such a burden, proudly swelled And on her bosom bore him toward the sea. He's gone to Rotterdam; peace go with him. He left me heavy when he went from hence, But this recomforts me: the kind Lord Mayor, His brethren aldermen with their fair wives, Will feast this night with us. Why, so't should be; More's merry heart lives by good company.  
    [Enter Master Roper and servingmen.]
Good gentlemen, be careful; give great charge Our diet be made dainty for the taste, For of all people that the earth affords The Londoners fare richest at their boards, 196 Come, my good fellows, stir, be diligent! Sloth is an idle fellow; leave him now. The time requires your expeditious service. Place me here stools to set the ladies on.  
    [Servingmen set stools.]
Son Roper, you have given order for the banquet?
ROPER
    I have, my lord, and everything is ready.

192 fool; ludicrous term for the head
193 have
194 turned off: dismissed; turned off the ladder to be hanged
195 height
196 tables
Enter Lady More.

MORE
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.

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.

MORE
A player, wife? One of ye bid him come in.
Exit one [servingman].
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?

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.

Enter Player.
Welcome, good friend. What is your will with me?

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?

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

More

The Marriage of Wit and Wisdom? That, my lads. I’ll none but that. The theme is very good, And may maintain a liberal argument. To marry wit to wisdom asks some cunning: 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.

[To Servingmen.] Go, make him drink, and all his fellows too.
[To Player.] How many are ye?

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.

More

And one boy play them all? By’r Lady, he’s laden. Well, my good fellow, get ye straight together And make ye ready with what haste ye may.

[To Servingmen.] Provide their supper ’gainst the play be done, Else shall we stay our guests here overlong.

[To Player.] Make haste, I pray ye.

Player

We will, my lord.

Exeunt Servingmen and Player.

More

Where are the waits? [To Roper.] Go, bid them play, To spend the time awhile.

Enter Lady More.

How now, madam?

Lady More

My lord, they’re coming hither.

More

They’re welcome. Wife, I’ll tell ye one thing: Our sport is somewhat mended; we shall have A play tonight, The Marriage of Wit and Wisdom, And acted by my good Lord Cardinal’s players. How like ye that, wife?

Lady More

My lord, I like it well.

---

humanistic
skill
when
musicians
See, they are coming.

_More_ play hautbois._

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 state
That can our love from London separate.
[There be, as I have oft of late espied,
In whom Dame Fortune’s gifts breed] 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 gloss on London’s fame,
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.
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.
[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.

**Lady More**

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

**Lady 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!

**Lady Mayoress**

It is your favor, madam, makes me thus
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; 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.

MORE [Aside.]
Wife, hope the best; I am sure they’ll do their best.
They that would better comes not at their feast.
[Aside.]
My good Lord Cardinal’s players, I thank them for it.
Play us a play, to lengthen out your welcome.
They say it is *The Marriage of Wit and Wisdom,*
A theme of some import, how’er it prove;
But if art fail, we’ll inch it out with love.
What, are they ready?

SERVANT
My lord, one of the players craves to speak with you.

MORE
With me? Where is he?

Enter Inclination, the Vice, ready

[with bridle in hand].

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?

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.

MORE
Gramercies, now I may take the Vice if I list. 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.

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.

MORE
Then, good Inclination, begin at a venture.\textsuperscript{211}
\textit{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.

\textit{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,
A pretty, short interlude to play at this present,
To show the same as is meet and expedient.
it is called \textit{The Marriage of Wit and Wisdom},
Whereof in brief we will show the whole sum.
But I must be gone, for Wit doth appear. \textit{Exit.}

\textit{Enter Wit ruffling\textsuperscript{212} 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:
In youth is pleasure, in youth is pleasure.

\textit{Enter Wit ruffling\textsuperscript{212} and Inclination, the Vice.}

MORE \textit{[To Mayor.]}\textsuperscript{213}
Mark ye, my lord, this is Wit without a beard; what will he be by that time he 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
\textit{Ay, sir, a wife most fit}
For you, my good master, my dainty sweet Wit.

\textsuperscript{211} at a venture: without further concern
\textsuperscript{212} swaggering
\textsuperscript{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,
For I told her before where we would stand,
And then she said she would beck\textsuperscript{214} us with her hand.

\textit{Flourishing his dagger.}

Back with those boys and saucy great knaves.
What, stand ye here so big in your braves\textsuperscript{215}
My dagger about your coxcombs\textsuperscript{216} shall walk
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 warrant\textsuperscript{217} ye; therefore, you must be familiar with her.
When she cometh in place,
You must her embrace
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.
Oh, how Wit longs to be in Wisdom’s company.

\textit{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 hold\textsuperscript{218} my life.
Beware, good Wit, you take not her to wife.

INCLINATION \textit{[To Vanity.]}
What, Unknown Honesty, a word in your ear.

\textit{She offers to depart.}
You shall not be gone as yet, I swear.
Here's none but your friends; you need not to fray\textsuperscript{210}
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,
Yet Wit may pleasure you now and then.

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

\textsuperscript{214} beckon, call
\textsuperscript{215} brave talk; bravado
\textsuperscript{216} heads
\textsuperscript{217} assure
\textsuperscript{218} stake
\textsuperscript{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.

WIT
Yes, in good sadness, 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.

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.
What an if one said so?
Let such trilling 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?

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, an it be no more but so, ye shall not tarry at a stand for that. We'll
not have our play marred for lack of a little good counsel. Till your fellow
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,
And blindly in thine own opinion dost stand.
I tell thee, this naughty lewd Inclination
Does lead thee amiss in a very strange fashion.
This is not Wisdom, but Lady Vanity;
Therefore list 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.

---

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;
The eye oft mistakes, right well you do know.
Good Counsel assures thee upon his honesty
That this is not Wisdom, but Lady Vanity.

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

MORE [To Luggins.]
Art thou come? Well, fellow, I have holp to save thine honesty a little.
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,
Which, through the fellow’s absence, and by me,
Instead of helping, hath been hindered.
[To Servants.] Prepare against we come. Lights there, I say.
Thus fools oft times do help to mar the play.

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

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,
better than Mason among the King’s players. Did ye mark how extemp’rally he fell to the matter, and spake 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.

SERVINGMAN
Where be these players?

ALL
Here, sir.

SERVINGMAN
My lord is sent for to the Court,
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.

**WIT**

This, Laggins, 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.

**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 twelvepence. Either it should be
three pounds, five pounds or ten pounds. There’s twenty shillings wanting,
sure.

**WIT**

Twenty to one 'tis so. I have a trick.—My lord comes; stand aside.

*Enter More with attendants with purse and mace.*

**MORE**

In haste, to Council? What’s the business now,
That all so late his Highness sends for me?
What seek’st thou, fellow?

**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.

**MORE**

Well, Wit, 'twas wisely done; thou playest Wit well indeed,
Not to be thus deceived 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 match²³² with Lady Wisdom.

[Exit with attendants.]

**INCLINATION**

God a' mercy, Wit. [To the servingman.] 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.

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 Humphrey\textsuperscript{233} tomorrow, being turned away today. Come, let’s go.

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

    [Exeunt.]

4.1

\textit{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 bareheaded.}

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.

SHREWSBURY
    I wonder that my good Lord Chancellor doth stay so long, considering there’s matters of high importance to be scanned upon.\textsuperscript{234}

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

ROCHESTER
    It shall not need; Yond comes his lordship.

\textit{Enter Sir Thomas More, with purse and mace borne before him.}

\textsuperscript{233} dine...Humphrey: proverbial for “go hungry”
\textsuperscript{234} scanned upon: examined
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.
We, the physicians, that effect this good,
Now by choice diet, anon\(^{236}\) by letting blood.
Our toil and careful watching brings the King
In league with slumbers, to which peace doth sing.

—Avoid the room there!
What business, lords, today?

SHREWSBURY

This, my good lord:

About the entertainment\(^{237}\) 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
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
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,
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 doubt\(^{240}\) the worst is still the wise man’s shield
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
Like some high order\(^{241}\) 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
Let me conclude my speech.

As subjects share no portion in the conquest
Of their true sovereign, other than the merit
That from the sovereign guerdons⁴² the true subject,
So the good Emperor, in a friendly league
Of amity with England, will not soil
His honor with the theft of English spoil.

There is no question but this entertainment
Will be most honorable, most commodious.⁴³
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.
Then to prevent in French wars England's loss,
Let German flags wave with our English cross.

Enter Sir Thomas Palmer.

My lords, his Majesty hath sent by me
These articles enclosed, first to be viewed
And then to be subscribed to.⁴⁴
(With great reverence.) I tender⁴⁴ them
In that due reverence which befits this place.

Subscribe these articles? Stay, let us pause.
Our conscience first shall parley⁴⁵ with our laws.
My Lord of Rochester, view you the paper.

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.

Do you refuse it then, my lord?⁴⁶

I do, Sir Thomas.

Then here I summon you forthwith t'appear
Before his Majesty, to answer there
This capital contempt.

I rise and part,
In lieu of this, to tender him my heart.

Enter Sir Thomas Palmer.

---

⁴² rewards
⁴³ advantageous
⁴⁴ offer for formal acceptance
⁴⁵ hold conference
⁴⁶ The following section (lines 82–104) was crossed out by Edmund Tilney.
PALMER

Will’t please your honor to subscribe, my lord? 85

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. 90
On your refusal, you shall straight depart
Unto your house at Chelsea, till you know
Our Sovereign’s further pleasure.

MORE

Most willingly I go.

My lords, if you will visit me at Chelsea,
We’ll go a-fishing, and with a cunning247 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. 95
Exit.

PALMER

Will you subscribe, my lords?

SURREY

Instantly, good Sir Thomas. 100
They write.

We’ll bring the writing unto our Sovereign.

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. 105
Exit Rochester and Palmer.

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.

SHERWESBURY

Come, let us in. No doubt
His mind will alter, and the bishop’s too.
Error in learned heads hath much to do. 110
[Exit.]

247 skillfully made
248 Shirley’s emendation
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 somewhat lies so heavy on my heart,
   I cannot choose but sigh. You are a scholar.
   I pray ye tell me, may one credit 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.
   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 grappled to the barge that bore the King.
   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, which with unusual horror
   We entered at full tide; thence some flight-shot
   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
   Till that we sunk, where arm in arm we died.

Roper
   Give no respect, 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, either of good or ill.
   I cannot be in quiet 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.

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,
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.

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.

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,
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.

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.

MORE

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

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, I’ll live at rest.
They that have many names are not still 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.

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.

MORE

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

---

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;
We shall meet one day, though that now we part.

SURREY
We not misdoubt 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
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.
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,
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,
And to your happy private thoughts bequeath ye.

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.

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 cricket and high throne alike near heaven.
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.
Your honor's crestfall'n with your happy father.

ROPER
O, what formality, what square observance
Lives in a little room! Here public care
Gags not the eyes of slumber; here fierce riot
Ruffles not proudly in a coat of trust,
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,
Nor does the wanton tongue here screw itself
Into the ear, that like a vice drinks up
The iron instrument.

LADY MORE
We are here at peace.

MORE
Then peace, good wife.

LADY MORE
For keeping still in compass—a strange point
In time's new navigation—we have sailed
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.

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,
Thou shalt not understand a word we speak; We’ll talk in Latin.

[To Roper.] *Humida vallis raros patitur fulminis ictus.*

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.

**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 maw of time.

If man himself be subject to such ruin, 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, And as with joy you led us first to rise, So with like hearts we’ll lock preferment’s eyes.

**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 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: 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, 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; 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 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, 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,
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 remembrancer of his Majesty.
Come, prithee mourn not; the worst chance is death,
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.
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.

[To Catesby.] Come hither, faithful steward. Be not grieved
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 suffered loss,
Then benefit thyself by leaving me.
I hope thou hast not, for such times as these
Bring gain to officers, whoever lose.

Great lords have only name, but in their fall
Lord Spend-All's steward's Master Gathers-All.
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,
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
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-lighted at the gate
The Earls of Surrey and of Shrewsbury,
And they expect you in the inner court.

MORE
Entreat their lordships come into the hall.

---

274 lose
275 just dismounted
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, fond woman?
*Iustum si fractus illabatur orbis, impavidum ferient ruinae.*
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.

What ails your lordships look so melancholy?
Oh, I know: you live in Court, and the Court diet
Is only friend to physic.

SURREY
O Sir Thomas,
Our words are now the King’s, and our sad looks
The interest of your love. We are sent to you
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
Attached 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!

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 foolish
277 “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 medicine
279 grave; unhappy
280 concern for; claim upon
281 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.

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
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 disgest;
’Twill lie too heavy, man, on my weak breast.

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 respect not me,
Yet think upon your daughters.

MORE
Wife, stand up.
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,
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,
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.

MORE

Gramercies, friend.
To a great prison, to discharge the strife
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 indifferent face; be wise.
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.

ROPER

Curae leves loquantur, ingentes stupent.

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 avoided from the bridge.

THIRD WARDER

From whence is he committed, who can tell?

FIRST WARDER

From Durham House, I hear.

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
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?  

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.

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,  
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.

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

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.

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.  
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
GENTLEMAN PORTER

Before you enter through the Tower gate,
Your upper garment, sir, belongs to me.

45

MORE

Sir, you shall have it; there it is.

He gives him his cap.

GENTLEMAN PORTER

The upmost on your back, sir. You mistake me.

MORE

Sir, now I understand ye very well.
But that you name my back,

[He gives him his cloak.]

Sure else my cap had been the uppermost.

SHREWSBURY

Farewell, kind lord. God send us merry meeting.

MORE

Amen, my lord.

SURREY

Farewell, dear friend. I hope your safe return.

MORE

My lord, and my dear fellow in the Muses,
Farewell. Farewell, most noble poet.

LIEUTENANT

Adieu, most honored lords.

Exeunt lords.

MORE

Fair prison, welcome. Yet methinks,
For thy fair building, 'tis too foul a name.
Many a guilty soul, and many an innocent,
Have breathed their farewell to thy hollow rooms.
I oft have entered into thee this way,
Yet, I thank God, ne'er with a clearer conscience
Than at this hour.
This is my comfort yet: how hard soe'er
My lodging prove, the cry of the poor suitor,
Fatherless orphan or distressèd widow
Shall not disturb me in my quiet sleep.
On then, i' God's name, to our close abode;
God is as strong here as he is abroad. Exeunt.

5.2

Enter Butler, Brewer, Porter, and Horsekeeper several ways.

BUTLER

Robin Brewer, how now, man? What cheer, what cheer?

BREWER

Faith, Ned Butler, sick of thy disease, and these our other fellows here, Ralph Horsekeeper and Giles Porter: sad, sad. They say my lord goes to his trial today.

205 closed up, secret, hidden
HORSEKEEPER

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

PORTER

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

BUTLER

I cannot tell; I have nothing to do with matters above my capacity,\textsuperscript{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 honester. Go to; I'll put that in upon mine own knowledge.

PORTER

Nay, an ye bate him his due of\textsuperscript{298} 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.

BREWER

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

BUTLER

I much mistrust\textsuperscript{299} it; when they go to 'raigning\textsuperscript{300} once, there's ever foul weather for a great while after.\textsuperscript{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 doubt\textsuperscript{301} my lord is condemned.

PORTER

God bless his soul, and a fig\textsuperscript{302} then for all worldly condemnation!

GOUGH

Well said, Giles Porter; I commend thee for it; 'Twas spoken like a well-affected\textsuperscript{303} 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 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

\textsuperscript{296} success; good fortune
\textsuperscript{297} competence, mental ability
\textsuperscript{298} an ... due of: if you don't give him credit for
\textsuperscript{299} doubt
\textsuperscript{300} arraigning, trying; puns on raining
\textsuperscript{301} fear
\textsuperscript{302} a fig: term of contempt
\textsuperscript{303} cherished
The rest of your sad fellows—by the roll
You’re just seven score\(^{304}\)—and tell them what ye hear
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
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
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,
Come and receive your due, and after go
Fellow-like hence, co-partners of one woe.

Exeunt.

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.

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.

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

So, sir, I thank ye.
I have not lived so ill I fear to die.
Master Lieutenant,
I have had a sore fit of the stone\textsuperscript{309} tonight,
But the King hath sent me such a rare receipt,\textsuperscript{310}
I thank him, as I shall not need to fear it much.

LIEUTENANT
In life and death, still merry Sir Thomas More.

MORE [To Servant.]
Sirrah, fellow, reach me the urinal.
\textit{He gives it him.}
Ha, let me see. [There's]\textsuperscript{311} gravel in the water,
[Faith, there's no instant jeopardy in that.]
The man were likely to live long enough,
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\textsuperscript{312} him of a fee.
Thou shalt see me take a dram\textsuperscript{313} tomorrow morning
Shall cure the stone I warrant, doubt it not.
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.

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\textsuperscript{314}

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
That ever was in England, though I could wish,
For credit of the place, that my estate were better.

\textsuperscript{309} sore ... stone: grievous pain from kidney stones
\textsuperscript{310} prescription
\textsuperscript{311} Shirley’s emendation, and the next
\textsuperscript{312} cheat
\textsuperscript{313} draught of medicine
\textsuperscript{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.

LIEUTENANT
   Commodities, my lord?
   Might I, without offense, enquire of them?

MORE
   Crutches, Master Lieutenant, and bare cloaks,
   For halting soldiers and poor needy scholars,
   Have had my gettings in the Chancery.
   To think but what acheat the Crown shall have
   By my attainder!
   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.

   Enter Lady More mourning,
   daughters, Master Roper.

LIEUTENANT
   O noble More—
   My lord, your wife, your son-in-law, and daughters.

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 cloyed 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?

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.

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.

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.

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.

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 thereof, immediately. Offering to depart.

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 headsmen 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 as you were before.

MORE
[Tis so indeed,] 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.

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 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.
DAUGHTERS
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.

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.

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 toward
To take our journey in. Master Lieutenant,
It were fair walking on the Tower leads.

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, in good sooth.
LIEUTENANT
Oh, I had hoped we should not yet have parted.

MORE
But I must leave ye for a little while.
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.

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 vouchsafe
To meet me.
I see by this you have not quite forgot
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.
[To Second Sheriff] Ah, Master Sheriff,
You and I have been of old acquaintance.
You were a patient auditor\(^{326}\) of mine
When I read the divinity lecture at Saint Lawrence’s.\(^{327}\)

SECOND SHERIFF
Sir Thomas More,
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,
I was of counsel\(^{328}\) with ye in a cause.

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

MORE
Oh, is this the place?
I promise ye, it is a goodly scaffold.
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’t God’s name.
[To the Hangman:] In troth, methinks your stair is somewhat weak.
I prithee, honest friend, lend me thy hand
To help me up. As for my coming down,

---

\(^{321}\) 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.
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.

SHREWSBURY
My lord, ’twere good you’d publish 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, of 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.

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; my doctor here tells me it is good for the headache.

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 credit by it. Therefore—look ye, sir—do it handsomely, or of my word thou shalt never deal with me hereafter.

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

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 escape\textsuperscript{335} from all this strong guard? 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\textsuperscript{336} my death,
I shall break from you, and fly up to heaven.
Let's seek the means for this.

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.

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\textsuperscript{337} with a sad tear.
Our birth to heaven should be thus: void of fear.

Exit.

SURREY

A very learned worthy gentleman
Seals error with his blood. Come, we'll to Court.
Let's sadly hence to perfect\textsuperscript{338} unknown fates,
Whilst he tends progress\textsuperscript{339} to the state of states.

[Exeunt]

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.

\textsuperscript{335} escape
\textsuperscript{336} attends
\textsuperscript{337} headless body
\textsuperscript{338} fulfill
\textsuperscript{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.