

Venice Preserv'd,
OR,
A Plot Discover'd.

A
TRAGEDY.

As it is Acted at the
DUKE'S THEATRE.

Written by *THOMAS OTWAY.*

LONDON,
Printed for *Jos. Hindmarsh* at the Sign of the
Black Bull, over against the Royal
Exchange in *Cornhill.* 1682.

Dramatis Personae

Duke of *Venice*

Priuli, Father to *Belvidera*, a Senator

Antonio, a fine speaker in the Senate

Jaffeir

Pierre

Renault

Bedamar

Spinosa

Theodore

Eliot

Revillido

Durand — Conspirators

Mazzana

Brainveil

Ternon

Brabe

Restrosi

Belvidera

Aquilina

Two Women, Attendants on *Belvidera*

Two Women, Servants to *Aquilina*

The Council of Ten

Officer

Guards

Friar

Executioner and Rabble

PROLOGUE

In these distracted times, when each man dreads
 The bloody stratagems of busy heads;
 When we have feared three years we know not what,
 Till witnesses begin to die o' the rot,
 What made our poet meddle with a plot?¹ } 5
 Was't that he fancied, for the very sake
 And name of plot, his trifling play might take?
 For there's not in't one inch-board evidence,² }
 But 'tis, he says, to reason and plain sense,
 And that he thinks a plausible defence. } 10
 Were truth by sense and reason to be tried,
 Sure all our swearers might be laid aside.
 No, of such tools our author has no need,
 To make his plot, or make his play succeed;
 He of black bills³ has no prodigious tales, } 15
 Of Spanish pilgrims cast ashore in Wales;⁴
 Here's not one murdered magistrate at least,
 Kept rank like ven'son for a city feast,
 Grown four days stiff, the better to prepare
 An fit his pliant limbs to ride in chair.⁵ } 20
 Yet here's an army raised, though underground,
 But no man seen, nor one commission found;
 Here's a traitor⁶ too, that's very old,
 Turbulent, subtle, mischievous, and bold,

¹ These lines allude to the tensions of the “Popish Plot,” the existence of which was first alleged by Titus Oates in 1678.

² **inch-board evidence:** hard-sworn evidence; by implication, perjury.

³ **black bills:** a type of halberd with a black head; a halberd is a combination battle-axe and pike.

⁴ The Jesuits were supposedly planning to land Irish soldiers disguised as Spanish pilgrims in Wales.

⁵ **...chair:** a sedan chair; an allusion to Sir Edmund Berry Godfrey, found murdered in October 1678, having been missing for 5 days. Godfrey had taken a deposition from Titus Oates, and it was presumed by many that he had been murdered by Catholic conspirators.

⁶ Renault.

Bloody, revengeful, and to crown his part, 25
Loves fumbling with a wench, with all his heart;
Till after having many changes passed,
In spite of age (thanks Heaven) is hanged at last.
Next is a senator¹ who keeps a whore;
In Venice none a higher office bore; 30
To lewdness every night the lecher ran, }
Show me, all London, such another man, }
Match him at Mother Cresswold's,² if you can. }
O Poland, Poland!³ had it been thy lot
T'have heard in time of this Venetian plot, 35
Thou surely chosen hadst one king from thence,
And honoured them as thou has England since.

¹ Antonio. Both Renault and Antonio are satiric reflections on the Whig leader, the Earl of Shaftesbury.

² Elizabeth Cresswell, a notorious brothel keeper.

³ A mocking allusion to Shaftesbury's supposed aspirations to the elective throne of Poland.

ACT I

SCENE I

Enter PRIULI and JAFFEIR

PRIULI.

No more! I'll hear no more; begone and leave.

JAFFEIR.

Not hear me! by my sufferings, but you shall!

My lord, my lord! I'm not that abject wretch

You think me. Patience! where's the distance throws

Me back so far, but I may boldly speak

5

In right, though proud oppression will not hear me!

PRIULI.

Have you not wronged me?

JAFFEIR.

Could my nature e'er

Have brooked injustice or the doing wrongs,

I need not now thus low have bent myself

To gain a hearing from a cruel father!

10

Wronged you?

PRIULI.

Yes! wronged me, in the nicest¹ point,

The honour of my house; you have done me wrong.

You may remember (for now I will speak

And urge its baseness) when you first came home

From travel, with such hopes as made you looked on

15

By all men's eyes, a youth of expectation;

Pleased with your growing virtue, I received you,

Courted, and sought to raise you to your merits.

My house, my table, nay, my fortune, too,

My very self was yours; you might have used me

20

To your best service. Like an open friend,

I treated, trusted you, and thought you mine;

¹ **nicest:** most precise, especially in matters of reputation or conduct.

When in requital of my best endeavours,
 You treacherously practiced to undo me,
 Seduced the weakness of my age's darling, 25
 My only child, and stole her from my bosom.
 Oh, Belvidera!

JAFFEIR. 'Tis to me you owe her;
 Childless you had been else, and in the grave,
 Your name extinct, nor no more Priuli heard of.
 You may remember, scarce five years are past 30
 Since in your brigandine¹ you sailed to see
 The Adriatic wedded by our Duke,²
 And I was with you: your unskillful pilot
 Dashed us upon a rock; when to your boat
 You made for safety, entered first yourself. 35
 The affrighted Belvidera following next,
 As she stood trembling on the vessel's side,
 Was by a wave washed off into the deep;
 When instantly I plunged into the sea,
 And buffeting the billows to her rescue, 40
 Redeemed her life with half the loss of mine.
 Like a rich conquest in one hand I bore her,
 And with the other dashed the saucy waves
 That thronged and pressed to rob me of my prize.
 I brought her, gave her to your despairing arms. 45
 Indeed you thanked me; but a nobler gratitude
 Rose in her soul: for from that hour she loved me,
 Till for her life she paid me with herself.

PRIULI.
 You stole her from me; like a thief you stole her
 At dead of night; that cursèd hour you chose 50
 To rifle me of all my heart held dear.
 May all your joys in her prove false like mine;

¹ **brigandine:** a coat of mail.

² An annual ritual in which the Doge (Duke) of Venice celebrated the wedding of the city and the sea.

A sterile fortune and a barren bed
 Attend you both; continual discord make
 Your days and nights bitter and grievous; still 55
 May the hard hand of a vexatious need
 Oppress and grind you; till at last you find
 The curse of disobedience all your portion.

JAFFEIR.

Half of your curse you have bestowed in vain;
 Heav'n has already crowned our faithful loves 60
 With a young boy, sweet as his mother's beauty.
 May he live to prove more gentle than his grandsire,
 And happier than his father!

PRIULI.

Rather live

To bait¹ thee for his bread, and din your ears
 With hungry cries, whilst his unhappy mother 65
 Sits down and weeps in bitterness of want.

JAFFEIR.

You talk as if 'twould please you.

PRIULI.

'Twould by heav'n!

Once she was dear indeed; the drops that fell
 From my sad heart when she forgot her duty,
 The fountain of my life was not so precious. 70
 But she is gone, and if I am a man
 I will forget her.

JAFFEIR.

Would I were in my grave.

PRIULI.

And she, too, with thee;

For, living here, you're but my cursed remembrancers
 I once was happy. 75

JAFFEIR.

You use me thus because you know my soul
 Is fond of Belvidera. You perceive
 My life feeds on her, therefore thus you treat me;
 Oh! could my soul ever have known satiety:

¹ **bait:** torment.

Were I that thief, the doer of such wrongs 80
 As you upbraid me with, what hinders me
 But I might send her back to you with contumely,¹
 And court my fortune where she would be kinder!

PRIULI.

You dare not do't.—

JAFFEIR. Indeed, my lord, I dare not.

My heart, that awes me, is too much my master. 85
 Three years are past since first our vows were plighted,
 During which time, the world must bear me witness,
 I have treated Belvidera like your daughter,
 The daughter of a senator of Venice;
 Distinction, place, attendance, and observance² 90
 Due to her birth, she has always commanded;
 Out of my little fortune I have done this,
 Because (though hopeless e'er to win your nature)
 The world might see I loved her for herself,
 Not as the heiress of the great Priuli.— 95

PRIULI.

No more!

JAFFEIR. Yes! all, and then adieu forever.

There's not a wretch that lives on common charity
 But's happier than me: for I have known
 The luscious sweets of plenty; every night
 Have slept with soft content about my head, 100
 And never waked but to a joyful morning;
 Yet now must fall like a full ear of corn,
 Whose blossom 'scaped,³ yet's withered in the ripening.

PRIULI.

Home and be humble; study to retrench;⁴

¹ **contumely:** insult, dishonour.

² **Distinction, place, attendance, and observance:** Honour, an esteemed position, servants, and attentive care.

³ **'scaped:** escaped; i.e. escaped harm.

⁴ **study to retrench:** think how to reduce your expenses.

Discharge the lazy vermin¹ of thy hall, 105
 Those pageants of thy folly;
 Reduce the glittering trappings² of thy wife
 To humble weeds³ fit for thy little state;
 Then to some suburb cottage both retire;
 Drudge to feed loathsome life; get brats,⁴ and starve— 110
 Home, home I say.

Exit PRIULI

JAFFEIR. Yes, if my heart would let me—
 This proud, this swelling heart. Home I would go,
 But that my doors are hateful to my eyes,
 Filled and dammed up with gaping creditors,
 Watchful as fowlers⁵ when their game will spring; 115
 I have now not fifty ducats in the world,
 Yet still I am in love, and pleased with ruin.
 Oh Belvidera! oh, she's my wife—
 And we will bear our wayward fate together,
 But ne'er know comfort more.

Enter PIERRE

PIERRE. My friend, good morrow! 120
 How fares the honest partner of my heart?
 What, melancholy! not a word to spare me?

JAFFEIR.
 I'm thinking, Pierre, how that damned starving quality
 Called honesty, got footing in the world.

PIERRE.
 Why, pow'rful villainy first set it up, 125

¹ **lazy vermin:** servants and attendants.

² **trappings:** ornaments.

³ **weeds:** garments.

⁴ **get:** beget; **brats:** contemptuous term for the children of beggars.

⁵ **fowlers:** hunters.

For its own ease and safety: honest men
 Are the soft, easy cushions on which knaves
 Repose and fatten. Were all mankind villains,
 They'd starve each other; lawyers would want practice,
 Cut-throats rewards; each man would kill his brother 130
 Himself; none would be paid or hanged for murder.
 Honesty was a cheat invented first
 To bind the hands of bold deserving rogues,
 That fools and cowards might sit safe in power,
 And lord it uncontrolled above their betters. 135

JAFFEIR.

Then honesty is but a notion.

PIERRE.

Nothing else,
 Like wit, much talked of, not to be defined:
 He that pretends to most, too, has least share in't;
 'Tis a ragged virtue. Honesty! no more on't.

JAFFEIR.

Sure, thou art honest?

PIERRE.

So indeed men think me. 140
 But they're mistaken, Jaffeir: I am a rogue
 As well as they;
 A fine, gay, bold-faced villain, as thou seest me.
 'Tis true, I pay my debts when they're contracted;
 I steal from no man; would not cut a throat 145
 To gain admission to a great man's purse,
 Or a whore's bed; I'd not betray my friend,
 To get his place or fortune; I scorn to flatter
 A blown-up fool above me, or crush the wretch beneath me;
 Yet, Jaffeir, for all this, I am a villain! 150

JAFFEIR.

A villain—

PIERRE.

Yes, a most notorious villain:
 To see the suff'rings of my fellow creatures,
 And own myself a man; to see our senators
 Cheat the deluded people with a show

Of liberty, which they ne'er must taste of; 155
 They say by them our hands are free from fetters,
 Yet whom they please they lay in basest bonds;
 Bring whom they please to infamy and sorrow;
 Drive us like wracks¹ down the rough tide of power,
 Whilst no hold's left to save us from destruction. 160
 All that bear this are villains; and I one,
 Not to rouse up at the great call of nature,
 And check the growth of these domestic spoilers,
 That make us slaves, and tell us 'tis our charter²

JAFFEIR.

Oh Aquilina! Friend, to lose such beauty, 165
 The dearest purchase of thy noble labours;
 She was thy right by conquest, as by love.

PIERRE.

Oh Jaffeir! I'd so fixed my heart upon her,
 That wheresoe'er I framed a scheme of life
 For time to come, she was my only joy 170
 With which I wished to sweeten future cares;
 I fancied pleasures, none but one that loves
 And dotes as I did, can imagine like 'em:
 When in the extremity of all these hopes,
 In the most charming hour of expectation, 175
 Then when our eager wishes soar the highest,
 Ready to stoop and grasp the lovely game,
 A haggard owl, a worthless kite³ of prey,
 With his foul wings sailed in and spoiled my quarry.⁴

JAFFEIR.

I know the wretch, and scorn him as thou hat'st him. 180

PIERRE.

Curse on the common good that's so protected,
 Where every slave that heaps up wealth enough

¹ **wracks:** shipwrecks.

² **our charter:** our rights.

³ **kite:** a kind of falcon.

⁴ **quarry:** prey.

To do much wrong, becomes a lord of right:
 I, who believed no ill could e'er come near me,
 Found in the embraces of my Aquilina 185
 A wretched, old, but itching senator;
 A wealthy fool, that had bought out my title,
 A rogue that uses beauty like a lambskin,
 Barely to keep him warm. That filthy cuckoo, too,
 Was in my absence crept into my nest, 190
 And spoiling all my brood of noble pleasure.¹

JAFFEIR.

Didst thou not chase him thence?

PIERRE.

I did, and drove

The rank old bearded Hirco stinking home.²
 The matter was complained of in the Senate;
 I summoned to appear, and censured³ basely, 195
 For violating something they call *privilege* –
 This was the recompense of my service.
 Would I'd been rather beaten by a coward!
 A soldier's mistress, Jaffeir, is his religion;
 When that's profaned, all other ties are broken; 200
 That even dissolves all former bonds of service,
 And from that hour I think myself as free
 To be the foe as ere the friend of Venice.
 Nay, dear Revenge, whene'er thou call'st, I am ready.

JAFFEIR.

I think no safety can be here for virtue, 205
 And grieve, my friend, as much as thou to live
 In such a wretched state as this of Venice,
 Where all agree to spoil the public good,
 And villains fatten with the brave man's labours.

PIERRE.

We have neither safety, unity, nor peace, 210

¹ The cuckoo was thought to lay its eggs in the nests of other birds.

² **Hirco:** *Hircus*, a goat; i.e. a lecher.

³ **censured:** denounced.

For the foundation's lost of common good;
 Justice is lame as well as blind amongst us;
 The laws (corrupted to their ends that make 'em)
 Serve but for instruments of some new tyranny,
 That every day starts up t'enslave us deeper. 215
 Now could this glorious cause but find out friends
 To do it right! Oh Jaffeir! then mightst thou
 Not wear these seals¹ of woe upon thy face;
 The proud Priuli should be taught humanity,
 And learn to value such a son as thou art. 220
 I dare not speak! But my heart bleeds at this moment.

JAFFEIR.

Curst be the cause, though I thy friend be part on't:
 Let me partake the troubles of thy bosom,
 For I am used to misery, and perhaps
 May find a way to sweeten't to thy spirit. 225

PIERRE.

Too soon it will reach thy knowledge —

JAFFEIR.

Then from thee

Let it proceed. There's virtue in thy friendship
 Would make the saddest tale of sorrow pleasing,
 Strengthen my constancy, and welcome ruin.

PIERRE.

Then thou art ruined!

JAFFEIR.

That I long since knew; 230

I and ill fortune have been long acquaintance.

PIERRE.

I passed this very moment by thy doors,
 And found them guarded by a troop of villains;
 The sons of public rapine were destroying;
 They told me, by the sentence of the law, 235
 They had commission to seize all thy fortune;
 Nay, more, Priuli's cruel hand hath signed it.
 Here stood a ruffian with a horrid face

¹ seals: emblems.

Lording it o'er a pile of massy plate¹
 Tumbled into a heap for public sale. 240
 There was another making villainous jests
 At thy undoing; he had ta'en possession
 Of all thy ancient, most domestic ornaments,
 Rich hangings intermixed and wrought with gold;
 The very bed which on thy wedding night 245
 Received thee to the arms of Belvidera,
 The scene of all thy joys, was violated
 By the coarse hands of filthy dungeon villains,
 And thrown among the common lumber.²

JAFFEIR.

Now thanks, heav'n— 250

PIERRE. Thank heav'n! for what?

JAFFEIR. That I'm not worth a ducat.

PIERRE.

Curse thy dull stars and the worse fate of Venice,
 Where brothers, friends, and fathers, all are false;
 Where there's no trust, no truth; where innocence
 Stoops under vile oppression, and vice lords it. 255
 Hadst thou but seen, as I did, how at last
 Thy beauteous Belvidera, like a wretch
 That's doomed to banishment, came weeping forth,
 Shining through tears, like April suns in showers
 That labour to o'ercome the cloud that loads 'em; 260
 Whilst two young virgins, on whose arms she leaned,
 Kindly looked up, and at her grief grew sad,
 As if they caught the sorrows that fell from her.
 Even the lewd rabble that were gathered round
 To see the sight, stood mute when they beheld her, 265
 Governed their roaring throats, and grumbled pity.
 I could have hugged the greasy rogues; they pleased me.

¹ **massy plate:** weighty vessels and tableware.

² **lumber:** useless items, junk.

JAFFEIR.

I thank thee for this story from my soul,
 Since now I know the worst that can befall me.
 Ah, Pierre! I have a heart that could have borne 270
 The roughest wrong my fortune could have done me;
 But when I think what Belvidera feels,
 The bitterness her tender spirit tastes of,
 I own myself a coward. Bear my weakness,
 If throwing thus my arms about thy neck, 275
 I play the boy and blubber in thy bosom.
 Oh, I shall drown thee with my sorrows!

PIERRE.

Burn!

First burn, and level Venice to thy ruin!
 What, starve like beggar's brats in frosty weather 280
 Under a hedge, and whine ourselves to death!
 Thou, or thy cause, shall never want assistance
 Whilst I have blood or fortune fit to serve thee.
 Command my heart: thou art every way its master.

JAFFEIR.

No, there's a secret pride in bravely dying. 285

PIERRE.

Rats die in holes and corners, dogs run mad;
 Man knows a braver remedy for sorrow:
 Revenge! the attribute of the gods; they stamped it
 With their great image on our natures. Die!
 Consider well the cause that calls upon thee, 290
 And if thou art base enough, die then; remember
 Thy Belvidera suffers. Belvidera!
 Die—damn first! What, be decently interred
 In a church-yard, and mingle thy brave dust
 With stinking rogues that rot in dirty winding sheets,¹ 295
 Surfeit-slain² fools, the common dung o'th'soil?

¹ **winding sheets:** shrouds.

² **Surfeit-slain:** killed by excessive indulgence.

JAFFEIR.

Oh!

PIERRE. Well said! out with't; swear a little –

JAFFEIR. Swear!

By sea and air! by earth, by heaven and hell,

I will revenge my Belvidera's tears!

Hark thee, my friend: Priuli—is—a senator! 300

PIERRE.

A dog!

JAFFEIR. Agreed.

PIERRE. Shoot him.

JAFFEIR. With all my heart.

No more. Where shall we meet at night?

PIERRE. I'll tell thee;

On the Rialto¹ every night at twelve

I take my evening's walk of meditation;

There we two will meet, and talk of precious 305

Mischief —

JAFFEIR.

Farewell.

PIERRE. At twelve.

JAFFEIR. At any hour; my plagues

Will keep me waking.

Exit PIERRE

Tell me why, good Heaven,

Thou mad'st me what I am, with all the spirit,

Aspiring thoughts, and elegant desires 310

That fill the happiest man? Ah! rather why

Didst thou not form me sordid as my fate,

Base-minded, dull, and fit to carry burdens?

Why have I sense to know the curse that's on me?

¹ **Rialto:** the commercial centre of Venice.

Is this just dealing, Nature?¹ — Belvidera! 315

Enter BELVIDERA [with Attendants]

Poor Belvidera!

BELVIDERA. Lead me, lead me, my virgins,
To that kind voice! My lord, my love, my refuge!
Happy my eyes when they behold thy face;
My heavy heart will leave its doleful beating
At sight of thee, and bound with sprightful joys. 320
Oh smile, as when our loves were in their spring,
And cheer my fainting soul.

JAFFEIR. As when our loves
Were in their spring? has then my fortune changed?
Art thou not Belvidera, still the same—
Kind, good, and tender, as my arms first found thee? 325
If thou art altered, where shall I have harbour?
Where ease my loaded heart? oh! where complain?

BELVIDERA.
Does this appear like change, or love decaying,
When thus I throw myself into thy bosom
With all the resolution of a strong truth? 330
Beats not my heart as 'twould alarm thine
To a new charge of bliss? I joy more in thee
Than did thy mother when she hugged thee first,
And blessed the gods for all her travail² past.

JAFFEIR.
Can there in woman be such glorious faith? 335
Sure, all ill stories of thy sex are false.
Oh, woman! lovely woman! Nature made thee
To temper man: we had been brutes without you.
Angels are painted fair, to look like you;
There's in you all that we believe of heaven, 340

¹ **Is this just dealing:** Is this dealing with me fairly?

² **travail:** the labour of childbirth.

Amazing brightness, purity, and truth,
Eternal joy, and everlasting love.

BELVIDERA.

If love be treasure, we'll be wondrous rich;
I have so much, my heart will surely break with't.
Vows cannot express it. When I would declare 345
How great's my joy, I'm dumb¹ with the big thought;
I swell, and sigh, and labour with my longing.
Oh lead me to some desert wide and wild,
Barren as our misfortunes, where my soul
May have its vent; where I may tell aloud 350
To the high heavens and every listening planet,
With what a boundless stock my bosom's fraught;
Where I may throw my eager arms about thee,
Give loose to love with kisses, kindling joy,
And let off all the fire that's in my heart. 355

JAFFEIR.

Oh Belvidera! double I am a beggar,
Undone by fortune, and in debt to thee.
Want! worldly want! that hungry meager fiend
Is at my heels, and chases me in view.
Canst thou bear cold and hunger? Can these limbs, 360
Framed for the tender offices of love,
Endure the bitter gripes of smarting poverty?
When banished by our miseries abroad,
(As suddenly we shall be) to seek out
(In some far climate where our names are strangers) 365
For charitable succour; wilt thou then,
When in a bed of straw we shrink together,
And the bleak winds shall whistle round our heads,
Wilt thou then talk thus to me? Wilt thou then
Hush my cares thus, and shelter me with love? 370

¹ **dumb:** mute.

BELVIDERA.

Oh, I will love thee, even in madness love thee.
 Though my distracted senses should forsake me,
 I'd find some intervals when my poor heart
 Should 'suage¹ itself and be let loose to thine.
 Though the bare earth be all our resting-place, 375
 Its roots our food, some cliff our habitation,
 I'll make this arm a pillow for thy head;
 As thou sighing li'st, and swelled with sorrow,
 Creep to thy bosom, pour the balm of love
 Into thy soul, and kiss thee to thy rest; 380
 Then praise our God, and watch thee till the morning.

JAFFEIR.

Hear this, you heavens, and wonder how you made her!
 Reign, reign, ye monarchs that divide the world!
 Busy rebellion ne'er will let you know
 Tranquility and happiness like mine. 385
 Like gaudy ships, th'obsequious² billows fall
 And rise again, to lift you in your pride;
 They wait but for a storm, and then devour you;
 I, in my private bark³ already wrecked,
 Like a poor merchant driven on unknown land, 390
 That had by chance packed up his choicest treasure
 In one dear casket, and saved only that,
 Since I must wonder further on the shore,
 Thus hug my little, but my precious store;
 Resolved to scorn, and trust my fate no more. } 395

Exeunt

¹ **'suage:** i.e. assuage; calm.

² **obsequious:** compliant.

³ **bark:** a small boat.

Act II

Scene I. AQUILINA'S house

Enter PIERRE and AQUILINA

AQUILINA.

By all thy wrongs, thou'rt dearer to my arms
Than all the wealth of Venice; prithee, stay
And let us love tonight.

PIERRE.

No: there's fool,

There's fool about thee. When a woman sells
Her flesh to fools, her beauty's lost to me; 5
They leave a taint, a sully¹ where th'ave passed;
There's such a baneful quality about 'em,
Even spoils complexions with their own nauseousness.
They infect all they touch; I cannot think
Of tasting anything a fool has palled.² 10

AQUILINA.

I loathe and scorn that fool thou mean'st, as much
Or more than thou canst. But the beast has gold
That makes him necessary; power too,
To qualify my character, and poise me
Equal with peevish virtue, that beholds 15
My liberty with envy. In their hearts
Are loose as I am; but an ugly power
Sits in their faces, and frights pleasures from 'em.

PIERRE.

Much good may't do you, madam, with your senator.

AQUILINA.

My senator! why, canst thou think that wretch 20
E'er filled thy Aquilina's arms with pleasure?
Think'st thou, because I sometimes give him leave

¹ **sully**: a stain or blemish.

² **palled**: impaired.

To foil¹ himself at what he is unfit for,
 Because I force myself to endure and suffer him,
 Think'st thou I love him? No, by all the joys 25
 Thou ever gav'st me, his presence is my penance;
 The worst thing an old man can be's a lover —
 A mere *memento mori*² to poor woman.
 I never lay by his decrepit side
 But all that night I pondered on my grave. 30

PIERRE.

Would he were well sent thither.

AQUILINA.

That's my wish too,

For then, my Pierre, I might have cause with pleasure
 To play the hypocrite. Oh! how I could weep
 Over the dying dotard, and kiss him too,
 In hopes to smother him quite; then, when the time 35
 Was come to pay my sorrows at his funeral,
 (For he has already made me heir to treasures
 Would make me out-act a real widow's whining)
 How could I frame a face to fit my mourning!
 With wringing hands attend him to his grave; 40
 Fall swooning on his hearse; take mad possession
 Even of the dismal vault where he lay buried;
 There like the Ephesian matron dwell, till thou,
 My lovely soldier, comest to my deliverance;³
 Then throwing up my veil, with open arms 45
 And laughing eyes, run to new dawning joy.

PIERRE.

No more! I have friends to meet me here tonight,
 And must be private. As you prize my friendship,
 Keep up your coxcomb:⁴ Let him not pry nor listen

¹ **foil**: frustrate or baffle.

² **memento mori**: a reminder of death.

³ The story of the Ephesian matron is told in the *Satyricon* of Petronius Arbiter. She follows her husband to his tomb where she grieves and vows to die with him, becoming a model of wifely love. However, a handsome soldier passing by quickly woos her back to life and sex.

⁴ **Keep up your coxcomb**: Keep your fool away from us.

Nor fisk¹ about the house as I have seen him, 50
 Like a tame mumping² squirrel with a bell on.
 Curs will be abroad to bite him, if you do.

AQUILINA.

What friends to meet? may I not be of your council?

PIERRE.

How! a woman ask questions out of bed?
 Go to your senator; ask him what passes 55
 Amongst his brethren; he'll hide nothing from you.
 But pump not me for politics. No more!
 Give order that whoever in my name
 Comes here, receive admittance. So, good night.

AQUILINA.

Must we ne'er meet again? Embrace no more? 60
 Is love so soon and utterly forgotten?

PIERRE.

As you henceforward treat your fool, I'll think on't

AQUILINA. (*Aside*)

Cursed be all fools, and doubly cursed myself,
 The worst of fools. I die if he forsakes me;
 And how to keep him, heaven or hell instruct me. 65

Exeunt

Scene II. The Rialto

Enter JAFFEIR

JAFFEIR.

I am here; and thus, the shades of night around me,
 I look as if all hell were in my heart,
 And I in hell. Nay, surely, 'tis so with me;

¹ **fisk**: frisk, scamper.

² **mumping**: mumbling.

For every step I tread, methinks¹ some fiend
 Knocks at my breast, and bids it not be quiet. 5
 I've heard how desperate wretches, like myself,
 Have wandered out at this dead time of night
 To meet the foe of mankind in his walk;
 Sure, I'm so cursed that, though of heaven forsaken,
 No minister of darkness cares to tempt me. 10
 Hell! Hell! why sleep'st thou?

Enter PIERRE

PIERRE. (*Aside*) Sure, I have stayed² too long:
 The clock has struck, and I may lose my proselyte.³
 — Speak, who goes there?

JAFFEIR. A dog that comes to howl
 At yonder moon. What's he that asks the question?

PIERRE. A friend to dogs, for they are honest creatures, 15
 And ne'er betray their masters; never fawn
 On any that they love not. Well met, friend —
 Jaffeir!

JAFFEIR. The same. Oh Pierre, thou art come in season:
 I was just going to pray.

PIERRE. Ah, that's mechanic;⁴ 20
 Priests make a trade on't, and yet starve by't, too.
 No praying; it spoils business, and time is precious.
 Where's Belvidera?

JAFFEIR. For a day or two
 I've lodged her privately, till I see farther
 What fortune will do with me. Prithee friend, 25
 If thou wouldst have me fit to hear good council,

¹ **methinks**: it seems to me.

² **stayed**: waited, delayed.

³ **proselyte**: convert.

⁴ **mechanic**: low, vulgar.

Speak not of Belvidera—

PIERRE. Speak not of her?

JAFFEIR.

Oh, no!

PIERRE. Nor name her? May be I wish her well.

JAFFEIR.

Whom well?

PIERRE. Thy wife, thy lovely Belvidera.

I hope a man may wish his friend's wife well 30

And no harm done!

JAFFEIR. Y'are merry, Pierre!

PIERRE. I am so.

Thou shalt smile too, and Belvidera smile;

We'll all rejoice. Here's something to buy pins;

(Gives him a purse)

Marriage is chargeable.¹

JAFFEIR. *(Aside)* I but half wished

To see the devil, and he's here already. 35

—Well!

What must this buy: rebellion, murder, treason?

Tell me which way I must be damned for this.

PIERRE.

When last we parted, we had no qualms like these,

But entertained each other's thoughts like men 40

Whose souls were well acquainted. Is the world

Reformed since our last meeting? What new miracles

Have happened? Has Priuli's heart relented?

Can he be honest?

JAFFEIR. Kind heaven! let heavy curses

Gall his old age! cramps, aches, rack his bones, 45

And bitterest disquiet wring his heart;

Oh, let him live till life become his burden!

Let him groan under't long, linger an age

In the worst agonies and pangs of death,

¹ **chargeable:** expensive.

And find its ease but late.

PIERRE. Nay, couldst thou not 50
As well, my friend, have stretched the curse to all
The Senate round as to one single villain?

JAFFIER.
But curses stick not. Could I kill with cursing,
By heaven, I know not thirty heads in Venice
Should not be blasted; senators should rot 55
Like dogs on dunghills, but their wives and daughters
Die of their own diseases. Oh, for a curse
To kill with!

PIERRE. Daggers, daggers are much better.

JAFFEIR.
Ha!

PIERRE.
Daggers.

JAFFEIR. But where are they?

PIERRE. Oh, a thousand 60
May be disposed in honest hands in Venice.

JAFFEIR.
Thou talk'st in clouds.

PIERRE. But yet a heart half wronged
As thine has been would find the meaning, Jaffeir.

JAFFEIR.
A thousand daggers, all in honest hands,
And have not I a friend will stick one here? 65

PIERRE.
Yes, if I thought thou wert not to be cherished
To a nobler purpose, I'd be that friend.
But thou has better friends, friends whom thy wrongs
Have made thy friends, friends worthy to be called so.
I'll trust thee with a secret: there are spirits 70
This hour at work. But as thou art a man
Whom I have picked and chosen from the world,
Swear that thou wilt be true to what I utter;

And when I've told thee that which only gods
 And men like gods are privy to, then swear 75
 No chance or change shall wrest it from thy bosom.

JAFFEIR.

When thou wouldst bind me, is there need of oaths?
 (Green-sickness girls lose maiden-heads with such counters!)¹
 For thou art so near my heart that thou mayst see
 Its bottom, sound its strength and firmness to thee. 80
 Is coward, fool, or villain in my face?
 If I seem none of these, I dare believe
 Thou wouldst not use me in a little cause,
 For I am fit for honour's toughest task,
 Nor ever yet found fooling was my province; 85
 And for a villainous, inglorious enterprise,
 I know thy heart so well, I dare lay mine
 Before thee, set it to what point thou wilt.

PIERRE.

Nay, it's a cause thou wilt be fond of, Jaffeir,
 For it is founded on the noblest basis: 90
 Our liberties, our natural inheritance.
 There's no religion, no hypocrisy in't;
 We'll do the business, and ne'er fast and pray for't;
 Openly act a deed the world shall gaze
 With wonder at, and envy when 'tis done. 95

JAFFEIR.

For liberty!

PIERRE.

For liberty, my friend!

Thou shalt be freed from base Priuli's tyranny,
 And thy sequestered fortunes healed again.
 I shall be freed from opprobrious² wrongs
 That press me now, and bend my spirit downward. 100
 All Venice free, and every growing merit

¹ **Green-sickness:** a form of anemia thought to affect young women; since the cause was thought to be virginity, the cure was sexual experience. **Maiden-head:** virginity. **Counters:** counterfeit coins. I.e.: Oaths are good only for duping foolish people.

² **opprobrious:** shameful.

Succeed to its just right; fools shall be pulled
 From wisdom's seat; those baleful unclean birds,
 Those lazy owls, who (perched near fortune's top)
 Sit only watchful with their heavy wings 105
 To cuff down new-fledged virtues, that would rise
 To nobler heights, and make the grove harmonious.

JAFFEIR.

What can I do?

PIERRE. Canst thou not kill a senator?

JAFFEIR.

Were there one wise or honest, I could kill him
 For herding with that nest of fools and knaves. 110
 By all my wrongs, thou talk'st as if revenge
 Were to be had, and the brave story warms me.

PIERRE.

Swear then!

JAFFEIR. I do, by all those glittering stars
 And yon great ruling planet of the night!
 By all good powers above, and ill below, 115
 By love and friendship, dearer than my life,
 No pow'r or death shall make me false to thee!

PIERRE.

Here we embrace, and I'll unlock my heart.
 A council's held hard by, where the destruction
 Of this great empire's hatching: there I'll lead thee! 120
 But be a man, for thou art to mix with men
 Fit to disturb the peace of all the world,
 And rule it when it's wildest.

JAFFEIR. I give thee thanks
 For this kind warning. Yes, I will be a man,
 And charge thee, Pierre, whene'er thou see'st my fears 125
 Betray me less,¹ to rip this heart of mine
 Out of my breast, and show it for a coward's.

¹ **whene'er thou see'st my fears betray me less:** when you see my fears make me less than a man.

Come, let's be gone, for from this hour I chase
All little thoughts, all tender human follies
Out of my bosom. Vengeance shall have room: 130
Revenge!

PIERRE. And liberty!

JAFFEIR. Revenge! Revenge—

Exeunt

Scene III.

The Scene changes to AQUILINA'S House, the Greek Courtesan.

Enter RENAULT

RENAULT.

Why was my choice ambition, the worst ground
A wretch can build on? It's indeed at distance
A good prospect, tempting to the view,
The height delights us, and the mountain top
Looks beautiful because it's nigh to heaven. 5
But we ne'er think how sandy's the foundation,
What storm will batter, and what tempest shake us!
— Who's there?

Enter SPINOSA

SPINOSA. Renault, good morrow! for by this time
I think the scale of night has turned the balance
And weighs up morning. Has the clock struck twelve? 10

RENAULT.

Yes, clocks will go as they are set. But man,
Irregular man's ne'er constant, never certain.
I've spent at least three precious hours of darkness

In waiting dull attendance; 'tis the curse
Of diligent virtue to be mixed, like mine, 15
With giddy tempers, souls but half resolved.

SPINOSA.

Hell seize that soul amongst us it can frighten.

RENAULT.

What's then the cause that I am here alone?
Why are we not together?

Enter ELIOT

— Oh sir, welcome!

You are an Englishman: when treason's hatching, 20
One might have thought you'd not have been behindhand.
In what whore's lap have you been lolling?
Give but an Englishman his whore and ease,
Beef and a sea-coal fire,¹ he's yours forever.

ELIOT.

Frenchman, you are saucy.

RENAULT. How!

Enter BEDAMAR, the Ambassador, THEODORE,
BRAINVEIL, DURAND, BRABE, REVILLIDO,
MEZZANA, TERNON, RESTROSI, Conspirators

BEDAMAR. At difference, fie! 25

Is this a time for quarrels? Thieves and rogues
Fall out and brawl. Should men of your high calling,
Men separated by the choice of providence
From the gross heap of mankind, and set here
In this great assembly as in one great jewel, 30
T'adorn the bravest purpose it e'er smiled on,
Should you like boys wrangle for trifles?

RENAULT. Boys!

¹ **sea-coal:** mineral coal, as distinguished from charcoal.

BEDAMAR.

Renault, thy hand!

RENAULT.

I thought I'd given my heart

Long since to every man that mingles here,

But grieve to find it trusted with such tempers

35

That can't forgive my froward¹ age its weakness.

BEDAMAR.

Eliot, thou once hadst virtue; I have seen

Thy stubborn temper bend with godlike goodness,

Not half thus courted. 'Tis thy nation's glory,

To hug the foe that offers brave alliance.

40

Once more embrace, my friends—we'll all embrace.

United thus, we are the mighty engine

Must twist this rooted empire from its basis!

Totters it not already?

ELIOT.

Would it were tumbling.

BEDAMAR.

Nay, it shall down; this night we seal its ruin.

45

Enter PIERRE

—Oh Pierre, thou art welcome!

Come to my breast, for by its hopes thou look'st

Lovelily² dreadful, and the fate of Venice

Seems on thy sword already. Oh, my Mars!

The poets that first feigned³ a god of war

50

Sure prophesied of thee.

PIERRE.

Friends! was not Brutus,

(I mean that Brutus who in open Senate

Stabbed the first Caesar that usurped the world)⁴

A gallant man?

¹ **forward:** ill-humoured.

² **Lovelily:** Admirably.

³ **feigned:** fashioned, contrived.

⁴ Pierre here distinguishes Marcus Brutus, the assassin of Julius Caesar, from Lucius Junius Brutus who avenged the rape of Lucrece and helped to establish a Roman republic.

RENAULT. Yes, and Cataline¹ too,
 Though story wrong his fame; for he conspired 55
 To prop the reeling glory of his country.
 His cause was good.

BEDAMAR. And ours as much above it
 As, Renault, thou art superior to Cethegus
 Or Pierre to Cassius.²

PIERRE. Then to what we aim at.
 When do we start? or must we talk forever? 60

BEDAMAR.
 No, Pierre, the deed's near birth: fate seems to have set
 The business up and given it to our care.
 I hope there's not a heart nor hand amongst us
 But is firm and ready.

ALL.
 All! We'll die with Bedamar

BEDAMAR. Oh men, 65
 Matchless, as will your glory be hereafter.
 The game is for a matchless prize, if won;
 If lost, disgraceful ruin.

RENAULT. What can lose it?
 The public stock's a beggar; one Venetian
 Trusts not another. Look into their stores 70
 Of general safety: empty magazines,³
 A tattered fleet, a murmuring unpaid army,
 Bankrupt nobility, a harassed commonality,
 A factious, giddy, and divided Senate
 Is all the strength of Venice. Let's destroy it. 75
 Let's fill their magazines with arms to awe them,
 Man out their fleet, and make their trade maintain it;
 Let loose the murmuring army on their masters

¹ **Cataline:** Lucius Sergius Catilina; he led an unsuccessful conspiracy against the Roman republic in the 1st century BCE.

² **Cethegus:** an associate of Cataline. **Cassius:** another of Julius Caesar's assassins.

³ **magazines:** stores of arms and ammunition.

To pay themselves with plunder; lop their nobles
 To the base roots, whence most of 'em first sprung; 80
 Enslave the rout,¹ whom smarting will make humble;
 Turn out their droning Senate, and possess
 That seat of empire which our souls were framed for.

PIERRE.

Ten thousand men are armed at your nod,
 Commanded all by leaders fit to guide 85
 A battle for the freedom of the world;
 This wretched state has starved them in its service,
 And by your bounty quickened,² they're resolved
 To serve your glory and revenge their own.
 They've all their different quarters in the city, 90
 Watch for th'alarm, and grumble 'tis so tardy.

BEDAMAR.

I doubt not, friend, but thy unwearied diligence
 Has still kept waking, and it shall have ease.
 After this night, it is resolved we meet
 No more, till Venice own us for her lords. 95

PIERRE.

How lovely the Adriatic whore,
 Dressed in her flames, will shine! devouring flames,
 Such as shall burn her to the watery bottom
 And hiss in her foundation!

BEDAMAR.

Now if any

Amongst us that owns this glorious cause 100
 Have friends or interest he'd wish to save,
 Let it be told. The general doom is sealed,
 But I'd forego the hopes of a world's empire,
 Rather than wound the bowels³ of my friend.

PIERRE.

I must confess, you there have touched my weakness. 105

¹ **rout:** the crowd.

² **quickened:** revived.

³ **bowels:** traditionally, the seat of compassion and mercy.

I have a friend; hear it, such a friend!
 My heart was ne'er shut to him. Nay, I'll tell you,
 He knows the very business of this hour,
 But he rejoices in the cause, and loves it.
 W'have changed a vow to live and die together, 110
 And he's at hand to ratify it here.

RENAULT. How! all betrayed?

PIERRE.

No—I've dealt nobly with you.
 I've brought my all into the public stock;
 I had but one friend, and him I'll share amongst you!
 Receive and cherish him; or if, when seen 115
 And searched, you find him worthless, as my tongue
 Has lodged this secret in his faithful breast,
 To ease your fears I wear a dagger here,
 Shall rip it out again, and give you rest.
 —Come forth, thou only good I e'er could boast of! 120

Enter JAFFEIR with a dagger

BEDAMAR.

His presence bears the show of manly virtue.

JAFFEIR.

I know you'll wonder all, that thus uncalled
 I dare approach this place of fatal councils;
 But I am amongst you, and by heaven it glads me
 To see so many virtues thus united 125
 To restore justice and dethrone oppression.
 Command this sword, if you would have it quiet,
 Into this breast; but if you think it worthy
 To cut the throats of reverend rogues in robes,
 Send me into the cursed, assembled Senate; 130
 It shrinks not, though I meet a father there.
 Would you behold this city flaming? Here's
 A hand shall bear a lighted torch at noon

To the arsenal,¹ and set its gates on fire.

RENAULT.

You talk this well, sir.

JAFFEIR. Nay—by heaven, I'll do this! 135

Come, come, I read distrust in all your faces;

You fear me a villain, and indeed it's odd

To hear a stranger talk thus at first meeting

Of matters that have been so well debated;

But I come ripe with wrongs, as you with councils. 140

I hate this Senate, am a foe to Venice,

A friend to none but men resolved like me

To push on mischief. Oh, did you but know me,

I need not talk thus!

BEDAMAR. Pierre! I must embrace him;

My heart beats to this man as if it knew him. 145

RENAULT. (*Aside*)

I never loved these huggers.

JAFFEIR. Still I see

The cause delights me not.² Your friends survey me

As I were dang'rous—but I come armed

Against all doubts, and to your trust will give

A pledge worth more than all the world can pay for. 150

—My Belvidera! Ho! My Belvidera!

BEDAMAR.

What wonder next?

JAFFEIR. Let me entreat you,

As I have henceforth hopes to call ye friends,

That all but the ambassador, this

Grave guide of councils, with my friend that owns me, 155

Withdraw a while to spare a woman's blushes.

Exeunt all but BEDAMAR, RENAULT,
JAFFEIR, PIERRE

¹ **arsenal:** the arsenal (Arsenale) was the centre of the Venetian navy.

² **The cause delights me not:** The conspirators ("the cause") do not seem to like me.

BEDAMAR.

Pierre, whither will this ceremony lead us?

JAFFEIR.

My Belvidera! Belvidera!

Enter BELVIDERA

BELVIDERA.

Who?

Who calls so loud at this late peaceful hour?

That voice was wont¹ to come in gentle whispers, 160

And fill my ears with the soft breath of love.

Thou hourly image of my thoughts, where art thou?

JAFFEIR.

Indeed, 'tis late.

BELVIDERA.

Oh, I have slept and dreamt,

And dreamt again. Where hast thou been, thou loiterer?

Though my eyes closed, my arms have still been opened, 165

Stretched every way betwixt my broken slumbers,

To search if thou wert come to crown my rest.

There's no repose without thee: oh the day

Too soon will break, and wake us to our sorrow;

Come, come to bed, and bid thy cares good night. 170

JAFFEIR.

Oh Belvidera! we must change the scene

In which the past delights of life were tasted.

The poor sleep little; we must learn to watch

Our labours late, and early every morning.

Midst winter frosts, thin clad and fed with sparing, 175

Rise to our toils, and drudge away the day.

BELVIDERA.

Alas! where am I? whither is't you lead me?

Methinks I read distraction in your face,

Something less gentle than the fate you tell me!

¹ **wont:** was accustomed to; used to.

You shake and tremble too! your blood runs cold! 180
 Heavens, guard my love, and bless his heart with patience.

JAFFEIR.

That I have patience, let our fate bear witness,
 Who has ordained it so that thou and I
 (Thou the divinest good man e'er possessed,
 And I the wretched'st of the race of man) 185
 This very hour, without one tear, must part.

BELVIDERA.

Part! must we part? Oh! am I then forsaken?
 Will my love cast me off? have my misfortunes
 Offended him so highly that he'll leave me?
 Why drag you from me? whither are you going? 190
 My dear! my life! my love!

JAFFEIR.

Oh, friends!

BELVIDERA.

Speak to me.

JAFFEIR.

Take her from my heart,
 She'll gain such hold else, I shall ne'er get loose.
 I charge thee take her, but with tender'st care,
 Relieve her troubles, and assuage her sorrows. 195

RENAULT.

Rise, madam! and command amongst your servants.

JAFFEIR.

To you, sirs, and your honours, I bequeath her,
 And with her this: when I prove unworthy—
(*Gives a dagger*)
 You know the rest—then strike it to her heart;
 And tell her, he who three whole happy years 200
 Lay in her arms, and each kind night repeated
 The passionate vows of still increasing love,
 Sent that reward for all her truth and sufferings.

BELVIDERA.

Nay, take my life, since he has sold it cheaply;
 Or send me to some distant clime your slave; 205
 But let it be far off, lest my complaining

Should reach his guilty ears, and shake his peace.

JAFFEIR.

No, Belvidera, I've contrived thy honour;
 Trust to my faith, and be but fortune kind
 To me, as I'll preserve that faith unbroken, 210
 When next we meet, I'll lift thee to a height
 Shall gather all the gazing world about thee
 To wonder what strange virtue placed thee there.
 But if we ne'er meet more—

BELVIDERA.

Oh, thou unkind one,

Never meet more! Have I deserved this from you? 215
 Look on me, tell me, tell me; speak thou dear deceiver:
 Why am I separated from thy love?
 If I am false, accuse me; but if true,
 Don't, prithee, don't in poverty forsake me,
 But pity the sad heart that's torn with parting. 220
 Yet hear me! yet recall me—

Exeunt RENAULT, BEDAMAR, and
 BELVIDERA

JAFFEIR.

Oh my eyes,

Look not that way, but turn yourselves awhile
 Into my heart, and be weaned altogether.
 My friend, where art thou?

PIERRE.

Here, my honour's brother.

JAFFEIR.

Is Belvidera gone?

PIERRE.

Renault has led her 225

Back to her own apartment. But, by heaven!
 Thou must not see her more till our work's over.

JAFFEIR.

No.

PIERRE.

Not for your life.

JAFFEIR.

Oh Pierre, wert thou but she,

How I could pull thee down into my heart,
Gaze on thee till my eye-strings cracked with love, 230
Till all my sinews with its fire extended,
Fixed me upon the rack of ardent longing;
Then swelling, sighing, raging to be blest,
Come like a panting turtle¹ to thy breast;
On thy soft bosom, hovering, bill and play, 235
Confess the cause why last I fled away;
Own 'twas a fault, but swear to give it o'er,
And never follow false ambition more.

Exeunt ambo²

¹ **turtle:** turtle-dove.

² **Exeunt ambo:** They both exit.

ACT III

Scene I. AQUILINA'S house

Enter AQUILINA and her Maid

AQUILINA.

Tell him I am gone to bed; tell him I am not at home; tell him I've better company with me, or anything; tell him in short I will not see him, the eternal troublesome, vexatious fool! He's worse company than an ignorant physician. I'll not be disturbed at these unseasonable hours! 5

MAID.

But, madam, he's here already, just entered the doors.

AQUILINA.

Turn him out again, you unnecessary, useless, giddy-brained ass! If he will not be gone, set the house afire and burn us both. I'd rather meet a toad in my dish than that old hideous animal in my chamber tonight. 10

Enter ANTONIO

ANTONIO.

Nacky, Nacky, Nacky—how dost do, Nacky? Hurry durry. I am come, Nacky; past eleven a-clock, a late hour; time in all conscience to go to bed, Nacky — Nacky, did I say? Aye, Nacky; Aquilina, lina, lina, quilina, quilina, quilina, Aquilina, Naquilina, Naquilina, Acky, Acky, Nacky, Nacky, 15 queen Nacky — come, let's to bed — you fubbs, you pugg, you — you little puss — purree tuzzey — I am a senator.

AQUILINA.

You're a fool, I am sure.

ANTONIO.

May be so, too, sweetheart. Never the worse senator for all that. Come Nacky, Nacky, let's have a game at rump, Nacky. 20

AQUILINA.

You would do well, signor, to be troublesome here no longer, but leave me to myself, be sober, and go home, sir.

ANTONIO.

Home, Madonna!

AQUILINA.

Aye, home, sir. Who am I?

ANTONIO.

Madonna, as I take it you are my — you are — thou art my little Nicky Nacky — that's all! 25

AQUILINA.

I find you are resolved to be troublesome; and so to make short of the matter in few words, I hate you, detest you, loathe you, I am weary of you, sick of you — hang you, you are an old, silly, impertinent impotent, solicitous coxcomb, crazy in your head and lazy in your body, love to be meddling with everything, and if you had not money, you are good for nothing. 30

ANTONIO.

Good for nothing! Hurry durry, I'll try that presently. Sixty-one years old, and good for nothing; that's brave! 35

(To the Maid)

—Come, come, come, Mistress Fiddle-faddle, turn you out for a season. Go, turn out, I say, it is our will and pleasure to be private some moments— *(Puts her out and locks the door)* out, out when you are bid to— Good for nothing, you say?

AQUILINA.

Why, what are you good for? 40

ANTONIO.

In the first place, madam, I am old, and consequently very wise, very wise, Madonna, d'ye mark that? In the second place, take notice, if you please, that I am a senator, and when I think fit can make speeches, Madonna. Hurry durry, I can make a speech in the Senate-house now and then—would make your hair stand on end, Madonna. 45

AQUILINA.

What care I for your speeches in the Senate-house? If you would be silent here, I should thank you.

ANTONIO.

Why, I can make speeches to thee, too, my lovely Madonna; for example: 50

(Takes out a purse of gold, and at every pause shakes it)

My fair cruel one, since it is my fate that you should with your servant angry prove; though late at night — I hope 'tis not too late with this to gain reception for my love. — There's for thee, my little Nicky Nacky — take it, here take it — I say take it, or I'll throw it at your head — How now, rebel! 55

AQUILINA.

Truly, my illustrious senator, I must confess you honour is at present most profoundly eloquent indeed.

ANTONIO.

Very well; come now, let's sit down and think upon't a little. Come sit, I say — sit down by me a little, my Nicky Nacky, hah — *(Sits down)* Hurry durry, “good for nothing.” 60

AQUILINA.

No, sir; if you please, I can know my distance and stand.

ANTONIO.

Stand! How, Nacky up, and I down? Nay, then, let me exclaim with the poet, 65
*Show me a case more pitiful who can,
A standing woman, and a falling man.*¹

Hurry durry — not sit down! — see this, ye gods. — You won't sit down?

AQUILINA.

No, sir.

ANTONIO.

Then look you now, suppose me a bull, a Basan-bull,² 70

¹ The source of these lines has not been identified; they are likely by Otway. “Standing” is a term for an erection.

² Psalms 22:12: “Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round.”

the bull of bulls, or any bull. Thus up I get and with my
brows thus bent — I broo, I say I broo, I broo, I broo.
You won't sit down, will you? —I broo—

(Bellows like a bull, and drives her about)

AQUILINA.

Well, sir, I must endure this. *(She sits down)* Now your honour
has been a bull, pray what beast will your worship please to 75
be next?

ANTONIO.

Now I'll be a senator again, and thy lover, little Nicky Nacky!
(He sits by her) Ah, toad, toad, toad, toad! spit in my face a
little, Nacky — spit in my face, prithee, spit in my face,
never so little. Spit but a little bit — spit, spit, spit, spit when 80
you are bid, I say; do, prithee spit — now, now, now, spit.
What, you won't spit, will you? Then I'll be a dog.

AQUILINA.

A dog, my lord?

ANTONIO.

Aye, a dog — and I'll give thee this t'other purse to let me
be a dog — and to use me like a dog a little. Hurry durry — 85
I will —here 'tis. *(Gives the purse)*

AQUILINA.

Well, with all my heart. But let me beseech your dogship
to play your tricks over as fast as you can, that you may
come to stinking the sooner and be turned out of doors as
you deserve. 90

ANTONIO.

Aye, aye — no matter for that — that shan't move me.
(He gets under the table) Now, bough waugh waugh, bough
waugh — *(Barks like a dog)*

AQUILINA.

Hold, hold, hold, sir. I beseech you, what is't you do? If
curs bite, they must be kicked, sir. — Do you see, kicked 95
thus!

ANTONIO.

Aye, with all my heart. Do kick, kick on; now I am under

the table, kick again — kick harder — harder yet, bough
 waugh waugh, waugh, bough — 'odd,¹ I'll have a snap at
 thy shins — bough waugh wough, waugh, bough! — 100
 'Odd, she kicks bravely. —

AQUILINA.

Nay, then, I'll go another way to work with you; and
 I think here's an instrument fit for the purpose.

(Fetches a whip and bell)

— What, bite your mistress, sirrah!² out, out of doors, you
 dog, to kennel and be hanged — bite your mistress by the 105
 legs, your rogue! *(She whips him)*

ANTONIO.

Nay, prithee Nacky, now thou art too loving! Hurry durry,
 'odd! I'll be a dog no longer.

AQUILINA.

Nay, none of your fawning and grinning, but be gone, or
 here's the discipline. What, bite your mistress by the legs, 110
 you mongrel? Out of doors — hout hout,³ to kennel,
 sirrah! go!

ANTONIO.

This is very barbarous usage, Nacky, very barbarous. Look
 you, I will not go — I will not stir from the door, that I
 resolve — hurry durry — what, shut me out? 115

(She whips him out)

AQUILINA.

Aye, and if you come here anymore tonight, I'll have my
 footman lug you, you cur. What, bite your poor mistress
 Nacky, sirrah?

Enter MAID

MAID.

Heavens, Madam! what's the matter?

¹ 'odd: i.e. "God" – a minced oath.

² sirrah: a term of address used to men, expressing contempt.

³ hout: an expression of impatience.

(He howls at the door like a dog)

AQUILINA.

Call my footmen hither presently. 120

Enter two Footmen

MAID.

They are here already, madam; the house is all alarmed
with a stange noise that nobody knows what to make of.

AQUILINA.

Go, all of you, and turn that troublesome beast in the next
room out of my house — if I ever see him within these walls
again without my leave for his admittance, you sneaking 125
rogues, I'll have you poisoned all — poisoned like rats!
Every corner of the house shall stink of one of you. Go,
and learn hereafter to know my pleasure. So now for my
Pierre:

Thus when the godlike lover was displeas'd, 130
We sacrifice our fool and he's appeas'd.

Exeunt

SCENE II

Enter BELVIDERA

BELVIDERA.

I'm sacrific'd! I am sold! betray'd to shame!
Inevitable ruin has enclosed me!
No sooner was I to my bed repaired,
To weigh, and (weeping) ponder my condition,
But the old hoary wretch to whose false care 5
My peace and honour was entrusted, came
(Like Tarquin) ghastly with infernal lust.

O thou Roman Lucrece!¹
 Thou couldst find friends to vindicate thy wrong;
 I never had but one, and he's proved false; 10
 He that should guard my virtue has betrayed it;
 Left me! undone me! Oh, that I could hate him!
 Where shall I go? oh, whither, whither wonder?

Enter JAFFEIR

JAFFEIR.

Can Belvidera want a resting place
 When these poor arms are open to receive her? 15
 Oh, 'tis in vain to struggle with desires
 Strong as my love to thee; for every moment
 I am from thy sight, the heart within my bosom
 Moans like a tender infant in its cradle,
 Whose nurse had left it. Come, and with songs 20
 Of gentle love persuade it to its peace.

BELVIDERA.

I fear the stubborn wanderer will not own me;
 'Tis grown a rebel to be ruled no longer,
 Scorns the indulgent bosom that first lulled it,
 And like a disobedient child, disdains 25
 The soft authority of Belvidera.

JAFFEIR.

There was a time—

BELVIDERA. Yes, yes, there was a time
 When Belvidera's tears, her cries, and sorrows
 Were not despised; when if she chanced to sigh,
 Or look but sad—there was indeed a time 30
 When Jaffeir would have ta'en her in his arms,
 Eased her declining head upon his breast,

¹ Lucrece was raped by Tarquin, the son of the last Roman king. Her subsequent suicide provoked rebellion and the establishment of a republic. The story is dramatized in Nathaniel Lee's *Lucius Junius Brutus* (1681) which appeared the year before *Venice Preserv'd*.

And never left her till he found the cause.
 But let her now weep seas,
 Cry till she rend the earth, sigh till she burst 35
 Her heart asunder; still he bears it all,
 Deaf as the wind, and as the rocks unshaken.

JAFFEIR.

Have I been deaf? Am I that rock unmoved,
 Against whose root tears beat and sighs are sent
 In vain? Have I beheld thy sorrows calmly? 40
 Witness against me, heavens: have I done this?
 Then bear me in a whirlwind back again,
 And let that angry dear one ne'er forgive me!
 Oh, thou too rashly censur'st of my love!
 Couldst thou but think how I have spent this night, 45
 Dark and alone, no pillow to my head,
 Rest in my eyes, nor quiet in my heart,
 Thou wouldst not, Belvidera, sure thou wouldst not
 Talk to me thus, but like a pitying angel
 Spreading thy wings, come settle on my breast 50
 And hatch warm comfort there, ere sorrow freeze it.

BELVIDERA.

Why then, poor mourner, in what baleful corner
 Hast thou been talking with that witch, the Night?
 On what cold stone hast thou been stretched along,
 Gathering the grumbling winds about thy head, 55
 To mix with theirs the accents of thy woes?
 Oh, now I find the cause my love forsakes me!
 I am no longer fit to bear a share
 In his concernments; my weak, female virtue
 Must not be trusted; 'tis too frail and tender. 60

JAFFEIR.

Oh Portia! Portia!¹ what a soul was thine!

¹ The wife of Marcus Brutus and daughter of Cato. Portia wounded herself in the thigh to prove to Brutus that she was worthy of being trusted with a secret.

BELIVDERA.

That Portia was a woman, and when Brutus,
Big with the fate of Rome (Heaven guard thy safety!),
Concealed from her the labours of his mind,
She let him see her blood was great as his, 65
Flowed from a spring as noble, and a heart
Fit to partake his troubles, as his love.
Fetch, fetch that dagger back, the dreadful dower¹
Thou gav'st last night in parting with me. Strike it
Here to my heart, and as the blood flows from it, 70
Judge if it run not pure as Cato's daughter's.

JAFFEIR.

Thou art too good, and I indeed unworthy,
Unworthy so much virtue. Teach me how
I may deserve such matchless love as thine,
And see with what attention I'll obey thee. 75

BELVIDERA.

Do not despise me; that's all I ask.

JAFFEIR.

Despise thee! hear me—

BELVIDERA.

Oh, thy charming tongue
Is but too well acquainted with my weakness;
Knows, let it name but love, my melting heart
Dissolves within my breast, till with closed eyes 80
I reel into thy arms and all's forgotten.

JAFFEIR.

What shall I do?

BELVIDERA.

Tell me! be just, and tell me
Why dwells that busy cloud upon thy face?
Why am I made a stranger? Why that sigh,
And I not know the cause? Why, when the world 85
Is wrapped in rest, why chooses then my love
To wander up and down in horrid darkness,
Loathing his bed and these desiring arms?

¹ **dower:** technically, the portion of a deceased husband's estate allowed to his widow.

Why are these eyes bloodshot with tedious watching?
 Why starts he now? and looks as if he wished 90
 His fate were finished? Tell me, ease my fears,
 Lest when we next time meet I want the power
 To search into the sickness of thy mind,
 But talk as wildly then as thou look'st now.

JAFFEIR.

Oh, Belvidera! 95

BELVIDERA.

Why was I last night delivered to a villain?

JAFFEIR.

Hah, a villain!

BELVIDERA.

Yes! to a villain! Why at such an hour
 Meets that assembly all made up of wretches
 That look as hell had drawn 'em into league? 100

Why, I in this hand, and in that a dagger,
 Was I delivered with such dreadful ceremonies?
 “*To you, sirs, and to your honour I bequeath her,
 And with her this. Whene'er I prove unworthy —
 You know the rest—then strike it to her heart.*” 105

Oh, why's that *rest* concealed from me? Must I
 Be made the hostage of a hellish trust?
 For such I know I am; that's all my value!

But by the love and loyalty I owe thee,
 I'll free thee from the bondage of these slaves; 110
 Straight to the Senate, tell 'em all I know,
 And that I think, all that my fears inform me.

JAFFEIR.

Is this the Roman virtue? this the blood
 That boasts its purity with Cato's daughter?
 Would she have e'er betrayed her Brutus?

BELVIDERA. No. 115

For Brutus trusted her. Wert thou so kind,
 What would not Belvidera suffer for thee!

Is damned. How rich and beauteous will the face
 Of ruin look, when these wide streets run blood;
 I and the glorious partners of my fortune 145
 Shouting, and striding o'er the prostrate dead
 Still to new waste; whilst thou, far off in safety
 Smiling, shall see the wonders of our daring;
 And, when night comes, with praise and love receive me.

BELVIDERA.

Oh!

JAFFEIR. Have a care, and shrink not even in thought, 150
 For if thou dost—

BELVIDERA. I know it — thou wilt kill me.

Do, strike thy sword into this bosom. Lay me
 Dead on earth, and then thou wilt be safe.

Murder my father! Though his cruel nature
 Has persecuted me to my undoing, 155

Driven me to basest wants, can I behold him
 With smiles of vengeance, butchered in his age?

The sacred fountain of my life destroyed?
 And canst thou shed the blood that gave me being?

Nay, be a traitor, too, and sell thy country? 160
 Can thy great heart descend so vilely low,

Mix with hired slaves, bravo¹s, and common stabbers,
 Nose-slitters, alley-lurking villains? join

With such a crew, and take a ruffian's wages
 To cut the throats of wretches as they sleep? 165

JAFFEIR.

Thou wrong'st me, Belvidera! I've engaged
 With men of souls, fit to reform the ill

Of all mankind. There's not a heart amongst them
 But's stout as death, yet honest as the nature

Of man first made, ere fraud and vice were fashions. 170

BELVIDERA.

What's he to whose cursed hands last night thou gav'st me?

¹ **bravo**s: hired thugs.

Was that well done? Oh! I could tell a story
Would rouse thy lion heart out of its den,
And make it rage with terrifying fury.

JAFFEIR.

Speak on, I charge thee!

BELVIDERA. Oh my love! if e'er 175
Thy Belvidera's peace deserved thy care,
Remove me from this place. Last night, last night!

JAFFEIR.

Distract me not, but give me all the truth.

BELVIDERA.

No sooner wert thou gone, and I alone,
Left in the power of that old son of mischief; 180
No sooner was I lain on my sad bed,
But that vile wretch approached me; loose, unbuttoned,
Ready for violation. Then my heart
Throbb'd with its fears. Oh, how I wept and sighed,
And shrunk and trembled; wished in vain for him 185
That should protect me. Thou, alas, wert gone!

JAFFEIR.

Patience, sweet Heaven! till I make vengeance sure.

BELVIDERA.

He drew the hideous dagger forth thou gav'st him,
And with upbraiding smiles he said, "Behold it;
This is the pledge of a false husband's love." 190
And in my arms then pressed, and would have clasped me;
But with my cries I scared his coward heart,
Till he withdrew, and muttered vows to hell.
These are thy friends! with these, thy life, thy honour,
Thy love — all's staked, and all will go to ruin. 195

JAFFEIR.

No more. I charge thee keep this secret close.
Clear up thy sorrows; look as if thy wrongs
Were all forgot, and treat him like a friend,
As no complaint were made. No more; retire,

Retire, my life, and doubt not of my honour; 200
I'll heal its failings and deserve thy love.

BELVIDERA.

Oh, should I part with thee, I fear thou wilt
In anger leave me, and return no more.

JAFFEIR.

Return no more! I would not live without thee
Another night to purchase the creation. 205

BELVIDERA.

When shall we meet again?

JAFFEIR.

Anon at twelve!

I'll steal myself to thy expecting arms,
Come like a travelled dove, and bring thee peace.

BELVIDERA.

Indeed!

JAFFEIR.

By all our loves!

BELVIDERA.

'Tis hard to part:

But sure, no falsehood e'er looked so fairly. 210
Farewell — Remember twelve.

Exit BELVIDERA

JAFFEIR.

Let heaven forget me

When I remember not thy truth, thy love.
How cursed is my condition, tossed and jostled
From every corner; Fortune's common fool,
The jest of rogues, an instrumental ass 215
For villains to lay loads of shame upon,
And drive about just for their ease and scorn.

Enter PIERRE

PIERRE.

Jaffeir!

JAFFEIR.

Who calls?

PIERRE.

A friend, that could have wished

T'have found thee otherwise employed. What, hunt
 A wife on the dull foil!¹ sure, a staunch husband 220
 Of all hounds is the dullest! Wilt thou never
 Be weaned from caudles² and confections?
 What feminine tale hast thou been listening to,
 Of unaired shirts, catarrhs,³ and tooth-ache got
 By thin-soled shoes? Damnation! that a fellow 225
 Chosen to be a sharer in the destruction
 Of a whole people, should sneak thus in corners
 To ease his fulsome lusts and fool his mind.

JAFFEIR.

May not a man, then, trifle out an hour
 With a kind woman and not wrong his calling? 230

PIERRE.

Not in a cause like ours.

JAFFEIR.

Then, friend, our cause
 Is in a damned condition; for I'll tell thee,
 That canker-worm called lechery has touched it;
 'Tis tainted vilely. Wouldst thou think it? Renault
 (That mortified, old, withered, winter rogue) 235
 Loves simple fornication like a priest.
 I found him out for watering⁴ at my wife;
 He visited her last night like a kind guardian.
 Faith, she has some temptations, that's the truth on't.

PIERRE.

He durst not wrong his trust!

JAFFEIR.

'Twas something late, though, 240
 To take the freedom of a lady's chamber.

PIERRE.

Was she in bed?

JAFFEIR.

Yes, faith, in virgin sheets
 White as her bosom, Pierre, dished neatly up,

¹ **foil:** track of a hunted animal.

² **caudles:** warm drinks given to the sick.

³ **catarrh:** head cold.

⁴ **watering:** salivating; i.e. desiring.

Might tempt a weaker appetite to taste.
 Oh, how the old fox stunk, I warrant thee, 245
 When the rank fit was on him.

PIERRE. Patience guide me!
 He used no violence?

JAFFEIR. No, no! out on't, violence!
 Played with her neck, brushed her with his gray beard,
 Struggled and towzled,¹ tickled her till she squeaked a little,
 Maybe, or so — but not a jot of violence— 250

PIERRE.
 Damn him.

JAFFEIR. Aye, so say I; but hush, no more on't;
 All hitherto is well, and I believe
 Myself no monster² yet, though no man knows
 What fate he's born to. Sure, 'tis near the hour
 We all should meet for our concluding orders. 255
 Will the ambassador be here in person?

PIERRE.
 No, he has sent commission to that villain, Renault,
 To give the executing charge.
 I'd have thee be a man if possible,
 And keep thy temper; for a brave revenge 260
 Ne'er comes too late.

JAFFEIR. Fear not; I am as cool as patience.
 Had he completed my dishonour, rather
 Than hazard the success our hopes are ripe for,
 I'd bear it all with mortifying virtue.

PIERRE.
 He's yonder, coming this way through the hall; 265
 His thoughts seem full.

JAFFEIR. Prithee retire, and leave me
 With him alone. I'll put him to some trial,
 See how his rotten part will bear the touching.

¹ **towzled:** handled roughly.

² **monster:** cuckold.

PIERRE.

Be careful then.

Exit PIERRE

JAFFEIR.

Nay, never doubt, but trust me.

What, be a devil? take a damning oath 270
For shedding native blood? can there be a sin
In merciful repentance? Oh, this villain!

Enter RENAULT

RENAULT.

Perverse and peevish! What a slave is man!
To let his itching flesh thus get the better of him!
Dispatch the tool, her husband — that were well. 275
—Who's there?

JAFFEIR.

A man.

RENAULT.

My friend, my near ally!

The hostage of your faith, my beauteous charge,
Is very well.

JAFFEIR.

Sir, are you sure of that?

Stands she in perfect health? beats her pulse even?
Neither too hot nor cold?

RENAULT.

What means that question? 280

JAFFEIR.

Oh, women have fantastic¹ constitutions,
Inconstant as their wishes, always wavering,
And ne'er fixed. Was it not boldly done,
Even at first sight to trust the thing I loved
(A tempting treasure too!) with youth so fierce 285
And vigorous as thine? But thou art honest.

RENAULT.

Who dares accuse me?

JAFFEIR.

Cursed be him that doubts

¹ **fantastic:** fanciful, impulsive.

Thy virtue! I have tried it, and declare,
 Were I to choose a guardian of my honour,
 I'd put it into thy keeping: for I know thee. 290

RENAULT.

Know me!

JAFFEIR. Aye, know thee. There's no falsehood in thee.
 Thou look'st just as thou art. Let us embrace.
 Now wouldst thou cut my throat or I cut thine?

RENAULT.

You dare not do't.

JAFFEIR. You lie, sir.

RENAULT. How!

JAFFEIR. No more.

'Tis a base world, and must reform, that's all. 295

Enter SPINOSA, THEODORE, ELIOT, REVILLIDO,
 DURAND, BRAINVEIL, and the rest of the Conspirators

RENAULT.

Spinosa! Theodore!

SPINOSA. The same.

RENAULT. You are welcome!

SPINOSA.

You are trembling, sir.

RENAULT. 'Tis a cold night, indeed, and I am aged,
 Full of decay and natural infirmities.

We shall be warm, my friend, I hope tomorrow.

PIERRE re-enters

PIERRE. (*Aside*)

'Twas not well done; thou shouldst have stroked him 300
 And not galled him.

JAFFEIR. (*Aside*) Damn him, let him chew on't.
 Heaven! where am I? beset with cursed fiends
 That wait to damn me. What a devil's man

When he forgets his nature— hush, my heart.
 RENAULT.
 My friends, 'tis late; are we assembled all? 305
 Where's Theodore?
 THEODORE. At hand.
 RENAULT. Spinosa?
 SPINOSA. Here.
 RENAULT.
 Brainveil?
 BRAINVEIL. I am ready.
 RENAULT. Durand and Brabe?
 DURAND. Command us;
 We are both prepared!
 RENAULT. Mezzana, Revillido,
 Ternon, Retrosi. Oh, you are men, I find,
 Fit to behold your fate and meet her summons. 310
 Tomorrow's rising sun must see you all
 Decked in your honours! Are the soldiers ready?
 OMNES.
 All, all.
 RENAULT.
 You, Durand, with your thousand must possess
 St. Mark's. You, captain, know your charge already; 315
 'Tis to secure the Ducal Palace. You,
 Brabe, with a hundred more must gain the Secque.¹
 With the like number, Brainveil, to the Procurale.²
 Be all this done with the least tumult possible,
 Till each in place you post sufficient guards: 320
 Then sheathe your swords in every breast you meet.
 JAFFEIR. (*Aside*)
 Oh, reverend cruelty! damned bloody villain!
 RENAULT.
 During this execution, Durand, you

¹ **Secque:** The Mint.

² **Procurale:** The residence of the most important magistrates.

Must in the midst keep your battalia fast.¹
 And, Theodore, be sure to plant the cannon 325
 That may command the streets; whilst Revillido,
 Mezzana, Ternon, and Retrosi guard you.
 This done, we'll give the general alarm,
 Apply petards,² and force the Ars'nal gates;
 Then fire the city round in several places, 330
 Or with our cannon (if it dare resist)
 Batter't to ruin. But, above all, I charge you
 Shed blood enough; spare neither sex nor age,
 Name nor condition.³ If there live a senator
 After tomorrow, though the dullest rogue 335
 That e'er said nothing, we have lost our ends.
 If possible, let's kill the very name
 Of senator, and bury it in blood.

JAFFEIR. (*Aside*)

Merciless, horrid slave! — Aye, blood enough!
 Shed blood enough, old Renault: how thou charm'st me! 340

RENAULT.

But one thing more, and then farewell till fate
 Join us again or separate us forever:
 First, let's embrace; heaven knows who next shall thus
 Wing ye together. But let's all remember
 We wear no common cause upon our swords. 345
 Let each man think that on his single virtue
 Depends the good and fame of all the rest;
 Eternal honour or perpetual infamy.
 Let's remember through what dreadful hazards
 Propitious Fortune hitherto has led us, 350
 How often on the brink of some discovery
 Have we stood tottering, and yet still kept our ground
 So well, the busiest searchers ne'er could follow

¹ **keep your battalia fast:** hold your troops firmly in place.

² **petards:** small bombs made of a metal or wooden boxes filled with gunpowder.

³ **condition:** social rank.

To make a spectacle of horror— then,
 Than let us call to mind, my dearest friends,
 That there is nothing pure upon the earth;
 That the most valued things have most allays,¹ 385
 And that in change of all those vile enormities
 Under whose weight this wretched country labours,
 The means are only in our hands to crown them.

PIERRE.

And may those powers above that are propitious
 To gallant minds, record this cause and bless it. 390

RENAULT.

Thus happy, thus secure of all we wish for,
 Should there, my friends, be found amongst us one
 False to this glorious enterprise, what fate,
 What vengeance were enough for such a villain?

ELIOT.

Death here without repentance, hell hereafter. 395

RENAULT.

Let that be my lot if, as here I stand,
 Lifted by fate amongst her darling sons,
 Though I had one only brother, dear by all
 The strictest ties of nature; though one hour
 Had given us birth, one fortune fed our wants, 400
 One only love, and that but of each other,
 Still filled our minds: could I have such a friend
 Joined in this cause, and had but ground to fear
 Meant foul play, may this right hand drop from me,
 If I'd not hazard all my future peace, 405
 And stab him to the heart before you. Who
 Would do less? wouldst not thou, Pierre, the same?

PIERRE.

You've singled me, sir, out for this hard question,
 As if 'twere started only for my sake!
 Am I the thing you fear? Here, here's my bosom; 410

¹ **allays:** alloys.

Search it with all your swords! Am I a traitor?

RENAULT.

No, but I fear your late commended friend
Is little less. Come, sirs, 'tis now no time
To trifle with our safety. Where's this Jaffeir?

SPINOSA.

He left the room just now in strange disorder. 415

RENAULT.

Nay, there is danger in him: I observed him
During the time I took for explanation;
He was transported from most deep attention
To a confusion which he could not smother.
His looks grew full of sadness and surprise, 420
All which betrayed a wavering spirit in him,
That laboured with reluctancy and sorrow.

What's requisite for safety must be done
With speedy execution; he remains
Yet in our power: I for my own part wear 425
A dagger.

PIERRE. Well?

RENAULT. And I could wish it—

PIERRE. Where?

RENAULT.

Buried in his heart.

PIERRE. Away! we're yet all friends;
No more of this; 'twill breed ill blood amongst us.

SPINOSA.

Let us all draw our swords and search the house,
Pull him from the dark hole where he sits brooding 430
O'er his cold fears, and each man kill his share of him.

PIERRE.

Who talks of killing? Who's he'll shed the blood
That's dear to me? Is't you? or you? or you, sir?
What, not one speak? how you stand gaping all
On your grave oracle, your wooden god there; 435

Yet not a word? (*To Renault*) Then, sir, I'll tell you a secret:
Suspicion's but at best a coward's virtue!

RENAULT.

A coward— (*Handles his sword*)

PIERRE. Put, put up thy sword, old man,

Thy hand shakes at it; come, let's heal this breach;

I am too hot. We yet may all live friends.

440

SPINOSA.

Till we are safe, our friendship cannot be so.

PIERRE. Again! Who's that?

SPINOSA. 'Twas I.

THEODORE. And I.

REVILLIDO. And I.

ELIOT. And all.

RENAULT.

Who are on my side?

SPINOSA. Every honest sword.

Let's die like men and not be sold like slaves.

PIERRE.

One such word more, by heaven, I'll to the Senate

445

And hang ye all, like dogs in clusters!

Why peep your coward swords half out their shells?

Why do you not all brandish them like mine?

You fear to die, and yet dare to talk of killing.

RENAULT.

Go to the Senate and betray us! Hasten,

450

Secure thy wretched life; we fear to die

Less than thou dar'st be honest.

PIERRE. That's rank falsehood!

Fear'st not thou death? Fie, there's a knavish itch

In that salt blood, an utter foe to smarting.

Had Jaffeir's wife proved kind, he had still been true.

455

Foh— how that stinks!

Thou die! Thou kill my friend! or thou, or thou

Or thou, with that lean, withered, wretched face!

Away! disperse all to your several charges,
 And meet tomorrow where your honour calls you; 460
 I'll bring that man whose blood you so much thirst for,
 And you shall see him venture for you fairly—
 Hence, hence, I say!

Exit RENAULT angrily

SPINOSA. I fear we've been to blame,
 And done too much.

THEODORE.
 'Twas too far urged against the man you loved. 465

REVILLIDO.
 Here, take our swords and crush 'em with your feet.

SPINOSA.
 Forgive us, gallant friend.

PIERRE. Nay, now y'have found
 The way to melt and cast me as you will.
 I'll fetch this friend and give him to your mercy;
 Nay, he shall die if you will take him from me. 470
 For your repose, I'll quit my heart's jewel,
 But would not have him torn away by villains
 And spiteful villainy.

SPINOSA. No, may you both
 Forever live and fill the world with fame!

PIERRE.
 Now you are too kind. Whence rose all this discord? 475
 Oh, what a dangerous precipice have we 'scaped!
 How near a fall was all we'd long been building!
 What an eternal blot had stained our glories
 If one, the bravest and the best of men,
 Had fall'n a sacrifice to rash suspicion, 480
 Butchered by those whose cause he came to cherish!
 Oh, could you know him all as I have known him,
 How good he is, how just, how true, how brave,
 You would not leave this place till you had seen him,

Humbled yourselves before him, kissed his feet, 485
And gained remission for the worst of follies.

 Come but tomorrow, all your doubts shall end, }
 And to your loves me better recommend, }
 That I've preserved your fame, and saved my friend. }

Exeunt omnes

ACT IV

Scene I

Enter JAFFEIR and BELVIDERA

JAFFEIR.

Where dost thou lead me? Every step I move,
Methinks I tread upon some mangled limb
Of a racked friend. Oh, my dear charming ruin!
Where are we wandering?

BELVIDERA.

To eternal honour;
To do a deed shall chronicle thy name 5
Among the glorious legends of those few
That have saved sinking nations. Thy renown
Shall be the future song of all the virgins
Who by thy piety have been preserved
From horrid violation. Every street 10
Shall be adorned with statues to thy honour,
And at thy feet this great inscription written:
Remember him that propped the fall of Venice.

JAFFEIR.

Rather, remember him who after all
The sacred bonds of oaths and holier friendship, 15
In fond compassion to a woman's tears,
Forgot his manhood, virtue, truth, and honour
To sacrifice the bosom that relieved him.
Why wilt thou damn me?

BELVIDERA.

Oh, inconstant man!
How will you promise? how will you deceive? 20
Do, return back, replace me in my bondage,
Tell all thy friends how dangerously thou lov'st me,
And let thy dagger do its bloody office.
Oh, that kind dagger, Jaffeir, how 'twill look

Struck through my heart, drenched in my blood to th'hilts! 25
 Whilst these poor dying eyes shall with their tears
 No more torment thee; then thou wilt be free.
 Or, if thou think'st it nobler, let me live
 Till I'm a victim to the hateful lust
 Of that infernal devil, that old fiend 30
 That's damned himself, and would undo mankind.
 Last night, my love!

JAFFEIR. Name, name it not again.
 It shows a beastly image to my fancy
 Will wake me into madness. Oh, the villain!
 That durst approach such purity as thine 35
 On terms so vile! Destruction, swift destruction
 Fall on my coward head, and make my name
 The common scorn of fools if I forgive him!
 If I forgive him? If I not revenge
 With utmost rage, and most unstaying fury, 40
 Thy sufferings, thou dear darling of my life, love!

BELVIDERA.
 Delay no longer then, but to the Senate,
 And tell the dismal'st story ever uttered.
 Tell 'em what bloodshed, rapines, desolations
 Have been prepared; how near's the fatal hour! 45
 Save thy poor country; save the reverend blood
 Of all its nobles, which tomorrow's dawn
 Must else see shed. Save the poor tender lives
 Of all those little infants which the swords
 Of murderers are whetting for this moment. 50
 Think that thou already hear'st their dying screams;
 Think that thou see'st their sad, distracted mothers
 Kneeling before thy feet and begging pity,
 With torn, disheveled hair and streaming eyes,
 Their naked, mangled breasts besmeared with blood, 55
 And even the milk with which their fondled babes
 Softly they hushed, dropping in anguish from them.

Think thou see'st this, and then consult thy heart.

JAFFEIR.

Oh!

BELVIDERA. Think too, if thou lose this present minute,
 What miseries the next day bring upon thee. 60
 Imagine all the horrors of that night,
 Murder and rapine, waste and desolation,
 Confusedly ranging. Think what then may prove
 My lot! The ravisher may then come safe,
 And 'midst the terror of the public ruin 65
 Do a damned deed — perhaps to lay a train¹
 May catch thy life; then where will be revenge,
 The dear revenge that's due to such a wrong?

JAFFEIR.

By all heaven's powers, prophetic truth dwells in thee;
 For every word thou speak'st strikes through my heart 70
 Like a new light, and shows how't has wandered.
 Just what th'hast made me, take me, Belvidera,
 And lead me to the place where I'm to say
 This bitter lesson; where I must betray
 My truth, my virtue, constancy, and friends. 75
 Must I betray my friends? Ah, take me quickly,
 Secure me well before that thought's renewed;
 If I relapse once more, all's lost forever.

BELVIDERA.

Hast thou a friend more dear than Belvidera?

JAFFEIR.

No, th'art my soul itself; wealth, friendship, honour, 80
 All present joys, and earnest of all future,²
 Are summed in thee. Methinks, when in thy arms
 Thus leaning on thy breast, one minute's more
 Than a long thousand years of vulgar hours.
 Why was such happiness not given me pure? 85

¹ **lay a train:** set a trap.

² **and earnest of all future:** and the pledge, or promise, of all future joys.

Why dashed with cruel wrongs and bitter wantings?
Come, lead me forward now like a tame lamb
To sacrifice. Thus in fatal garlands,
Decked fine, and pleased, the wanton skips and plays,
Trots by the enticing, flattering priestess' side, 90
And much transported with his little pride,
Forgets his dear companions of the plain, }
Till by her bound, he's on the altar lain, }
Yet then too hardly bleats, such pleasure's in the pain. }

Enter Officer and Six Guards

OFFICER.

Stand! Who goes there?

BELVIDERA. Friends. 95

JAFFEIR.

Friends, Belvidera! Hide me from my friends.
By heaven, I'd rather see the face of hell
Than meet the man I love.

OFFICER. But what friends are you?

BELVIDERA.

Friends to the Senate and the state of Venice.

OFFICER.

My orders are to seize on all I find 100
At this late hour, and bring 'em to the Council
Who now are sitting.

JAFFEIR. Sir, you shall be obeyed.

Hold, brutes, stand off! None of your paws upon me!
Now the lot's cast, and fate, do what thou wilt.

Exeunt guarded

Scene II The Senate-house

Where appear sitting, the DUKE OF VENICE, PRIULI,
ANTONIO, and eight other Senators

DUKE.

Antony, Priuli, senators of Venice,
Speak: why are we assembled here this night?
What have you to inform us of, concerns
The state of Venice, honour, or its safety?

PRIULI.

Could words express the story I have to tell you, 5
Fathers, these tears were useless, these sad tears
That fall from my old eyes; but there is cause
We all should weep, tear off these purple robes,
And wrap ourselves in sack-cloth, sitting down
On the sad earth, and cry aloud to heaven. 10
Heaven knows if yet there be an hour to come
Ere Venice be no more.

ALL SENATORS. How!

PRIULI. Nay, we stand
Upon the very brink of gaping ruin.
Within this city's formed a dark conspiracy
To massacre us all, our wives and children, 15
Kindred and friends; our palaces and temples
To lay in ashes — nay, the hour, too, fixed;
The swords, for aught I know, drawn even this moment,
And the wild waste begun. From unknown hands
I had this warning. But if we are men, 20
Let's not be tamely butchered, but do something
That may inform the world in after ages,
Our virtue was not ruined, though we were.

(A noise without: "Room, room, make room for some prisoners—")

2ND SENATOR.

Let's raise the city!

Enter Officer and Guard

PRIULI. Speak there, what disturbance? 25

OFFICER.

Two prisoners have the guard seized in the streets,
Who say they come to inform this reverend Senate
About the present danger.

ALL. Give 'em entrance—

Enter JAFFEIR and BELVIDERA guarded

Well, who are you?

JAFFEIR. A villain.

ANTONIO. Short and pithy.

The man speaks well.

JAFFEIR. Would every man that hears me 30

Would deal so honestly, and his own title.

DUKE.

'Tis rumoured that a plot has been contrived
Against this state; that you have a share in't, too.
If you are a villain, to redeem your honour,
Unfold the truth and be restored to mercy. 35

JAFFEIR.

Think not that I to save my life come hither —
I know its value better — but in pity
To all those wretches whose unhappy dooms
Are fixed and sealed. You see me here before you
The sworn and covenanted foe of Venice. 40
But use me as my dealings may deserve,
And I may prove a friend.

DUKE. The slave capitulates.¹

Give him the tortures.

JAFFEIR. That you dare not do.

¹ **capitulates:** negotiates.

Your fears won't let you, nor the longing itch
 To hear a story which you dread the truth of — 45
 Truth which the fear of smart shall ne'er get from me.
 Cowards are scared with threat'nings. Boys are whipped
 Into confessions; but a steady mind
 Acts of itself, ne'er asks the body counsel.
 "Give him the tortures!" Name but such a thing 50
 Again, by heaven, I'll shut these lips forever.
 Not all your racks, your engines, or your wheels
 Shall force a groan away — that you may guess at.

ANTONIO.

A bloody-minded fellow, I'll warrant;
 A damned bloody-minded fellow. 55

DUKE.

Name your conditions.

JAFFEIR.

For myself, full pardon,
 Besides the lives of two and twenty friends
*(Delivers a list)*¹

Whose names are here enrolled. Nay, let their crimes
 Be ne'er so monstrous, I must have the oaths
 And sacred promise of this reverend council 60
 That, in a full assembly of the Senate,
 The thing I ask be ratified. Swear this,
 And I'll unfold the secrets of your danger.

ALL.

We'll swear.

DUKE.

Propose the oath.

JAFFEIR.

By all the hopes
 Ye have of peace and happiness hereafter, 65
 Swear.

ALL.

We all swear.

JAFFEIR.

To grant me what I've asked,
 Ye swear.

¹ There is some confusion about this stage direction; Jaffeir's words suggest that he hands over the list at l. 70; "deliver" here may mean "produces."

ALL. We swear.

JAFFEIR. And as ye keep the oath,
May you and your posterity be blessed
Or cursed forever.

ALL. Else be cursed forever!

JAFFEIR.
Then here's the list, and with it the full disclose 70
Of all that threatens you. (*Delivers another paper*)
Now, Fate, thou hast caught me.

ANTONIO.
Why, what a dreadful catalogue of cut-throats is here! I'll
warrant not one of these fellows but has a face like a lion.
I dare not so much as read their names over. 75

DUKE.
Give orders that all diligent search be made
To seize these men; their characters are public.
The paper intimates their rendezvous
To be at the house of a famed Grecian courtesan
Called Aquilina; see that place secured. 80

ANTONIO. (*Aside*)
What, my Nicky Nacky, Hurry Durry, Nicky Nacky in the
plot? I'll make a speech—
Most noble senators,
What headlong apprehension drives you on,
Right noble, wise, and truly solid senators, 85
To violate the laws and right of nations?
The lady is a lady of renown.
'Tis true, she holds a house of fair reception,
And though I say't myself, as many more
Can say as well as I—

2ND SENATOR. My lord, long speeches 90
Are frivolous here when dangers are so near us.
We all well know your interest in that lady;
The world talks loud on't.

ANTONIO. Verily, I have done.

Furnished with arms and instruments of mischief. 115
 Bring in the prisoners.

Enter PIERRE, RENAULT, THEODORE, ELIOT,
 REVILLIDO, and other Conspirators, in fetters, guarded

PIERRE. You, my lords and fathers
 (As you are pleased to call yourselves) of Venice,
 If you sit here to guide the course of justice,
 Why these disgraceful chains upon the limbs
 That have so often laboured in your service? 120
 Are these the wreaths of triumph ye bestow
 On those that bring you conquests home and honours?

DUKE.
 Go on; you shall be heard, sir.

ANTONIO.
 And be hanged, too, I hope.

PIERRE. Are these the trophies I've deserved for fighting 125
 Your battles with confederated powers,
 When winds and seas conspired to overthrow you,
 And brought the fleets of Spain to your own harbours?
 When you, great Duke, shrunk trembling in your palace,
 And saw your wife, th' Adriatic, ploughed 130
 Like a lewd whore by bolder prows than yours,
 Stepped not I forth, and taught your loose Venetians
 The task of honour and the way to greatness,
 Raised you from your capitulating fears,
 To stipulate the terms of sued-for peace? 135
 And this is my recompense! If I am a traitor,
 Produce my charge; or show the wretch that's base enough
 And brave enough to tell me I am a traitor.

DUKE.
 Know you one Jaffeir?

(All the Conspirators murmur)

PIERRE. Yes, and know his virtue.

His justice, truth, his general worth and sufferings 140
From a hard father taught me first to love him.

Enter JAFFEIR, guarded

DUKE.

See him brought forth.

PIERRE. My friend, too, bound? nay then
Our fate has conquered us, and we must fall.
—Why droops the man whose welfare's so much mine
They're but one thing? These reverend tyrants, Jaffeir, 145
Call us all traitors; art thou one, my brother?

JAFFEIR.

To thee I am the falsest, veriest slave
That e'er betrayed a generous, trusting friend
And gave up honour to be sure of ruin.
All our fair hopes which morning was to have crowned, 150
Has this cursed tongue o'erthrown.

PIERRE. So, then all's over.
Venice has lost her freedom; I my life.
No more. Farewell.

DUKE. Say, will you make confession
Of your vile deeds and trust the Senate's mercy?

PIERRE. Cursed be your Senate; cursed your constitution. 155
The curse of growing factions and division
Still vex your councils, shake your public safety,
And make the robes of government you wear
Hateful to you, as these base chains to me!

DUKE.

Pardon, or death?

PIERRE. Death — honourable death! 160

RENAULT.

Death's the best thing we ask, or you can give.

ALL CONSPIRATORS.

No shameful bonds, but honourable death!

DUKE.

Break up the council. Captain, guard your prisoners.
Jaffeir, y'are free, but these must wait for judgment.

Exeunt all the Senators

PIERRE.

Come, where's my dungeon? Lead me to my straw. 165
It will not be the first time I've lodged hard
To do your Senate service.

JAFFEIR. Hold one moment.

PIERRE.

Who's he disputes the judgment of the Senate?
Presumptuous rebel — on— (*Strikes Jaffeir*)

JAFFEIR. By heaven, you stir not.

I must be heard, I must have leave to speak! 170

Thou hast disgraced me, Pierre, by a vile blow.

Had not a dagger done thee nobler justice?

But use me as thou wilt, thou canst not wrong me,

For I am fallen beneath the basest injuries;

Yet look upon me with an eye of mercy, 175

With pity and with charity behold me;

Shut not thy heart against a friend's repentance,

But as there dwells a god-like nature in thee,

Listen with mildness to my supplications.

PIERRE.

What whining monk art thou? what holy cheat 180

That wouldst encroach upon my credulous ears

And cant'st¹ thus vilely? Hence! I know thee not.

Dissemble and be nasty: leave me, hypocrite.

JAFFEIR.

Not know me, Pierre?

PIERRE. No, know thee not. What art thou?

¹ **cant:** to speak hypocritically in religious or pious sounding phrases.

JAFFEIR.

Jaffeir, thy friend, thy once loved, valued friend, 185
 Though now deservedly scorned, and used most hardly.

PIERRE.

Thou Jaffeir! thou my once loved, valued friend!
 By heavens, thou li'st! The man so called, my friend,
 Was generous, honest, faithful, just and valiant,
 Noble in mind, and in his person lovely, 190
 Dear to my eyes and tender to my heart;
 But thou, a wretched, base, false, worthless coward,
 Poor, even in soul, and loathsome in thy aspect.¹
 All eyes must shun thee, and all hearts detest thee.
 Prithee avoid, nor longer cling thus round me, 195
 Like something baneful that my nature's chilled at.

JAFFEIR.

I have not wronged thee, by these tears I have not.
 But still am honest, true, and hope, too, valiant;
 My mind is still full of thee: therefore, still noble.
 Let not thy eyes then shun me, nor thy heart 200
 Detest me utterly. Oh, look upon me,
 Look back and see my sad, sincere submission!
 How my heart swells, as even 'twould burst my bosom,
 Fond of its goal, and labouring to be at thee!
 What shall I do, what say to make thee hear me? 205

PIERRE.

Hast thou not wronged me? dar'st thou call thyself
 Jaffeir, that once loved, valued friend of mine,
 And swear thou hast not wronged me? Whence these chains?
 Whence the vile death, which I may meet this moment?
 Whence this dishonour but from thee, thou false one? 210

JAFFEIR.

All's true, yet grant one thing, and I've done asking.

PIERRE.

What's that?

¹ **aspect:** appearance; i.e. loathsome to look upon.

JAFFEIR. To take thy life on such conditions
 The Council have proposed. Thou and thy friends
 May yet live long, and to be better treated.

PIERRE. Life! Ask my life! Confess! Record myself 215
 A villain for the privilege to breathe
 And carry up and down this cursèd city
 A discontented and repining spirit,
 Burdensome to itself, a few years longer,
 To lose, it may be, at last in a lewd quarrel 220
 For some new friend, treacherous and false as thou art!
 No, this vile world and I have long been jangling¹
 And cannot part on better terms than now,
 When only men like thee are fit to live in't.

JAFFEIR. By all that's just—

PIERRE. Swear by some other powers, 225
 For thou hast broke that sacred oath too lately.

JAFFEIR. Then by that hell I merit, I'll not leave thee
 Till to thyself, at least, thou'rt reconciled,
 However thy resentments deal with me.

PIERRE. Not leave me!

JAFFEIR. No, thou shalt not force me from thee. 230
 Use me reproachfully, and like a slave;
 Tread on me, buffet² me, heap wrongs on wrongs
 On my poor head, I'll bear it all with patience
 Shall weary out thy most unfriendly cruelty,
 Lie at thy feet and kiss 'em though they spurn me 235
 Till, wounded by my sufferings, you relent,
 And raise me to thy arms with dear forgiveness.

¹ **jangling:** quarrelling.

² **buffet:** strike or beat.

PIERRE.

Art thou not—

JAFFEIR. What?

PIERRE. A traitor?

JAFFEIR. Yes.

PIERRE. A villain?

JAFFEIR.

Granted.

PIERRE. A coward, a most scandalous coward,
Spiritless, void of honour, one who has sold 240
Thy everlasting fame for shameless life?

JAFFEIR.

All, all, and more—much more. My faults are numberless.

PIERRE.

And wouldst thou have me live on terms like thine?
Base as thou are false—

JAFFEIR. No, 'tis to me that's granted.

The safety of thy life was all I aimed at, 245
In recompense for faith and trust so broken.

PIERRE.

I scorn it more because preserved by thee.
And as, when first my foolish heart took pity
On thy misfortunes, sought thee in thy miseries,
Relieved thy wants, and raised thee from thy state 250
Of wretchedness in which thy fate had plunged thee,
To rank thee in my list of noble friends,
All I received in surety for thy truth
Were unregarded oaths, and this dagger,
Given with a worthless pledge thou since hast stolen: 255
So I restore it back to thee again,
Swearing by all those powers which thou hast violated,
Never from this cursed hour to hold communion,
Friendship, or interest with thee, though our years
Were to exceed those limited the world. 260

Take it — farewell — for now I owe thee nothing.

JAFFEIR.

Say thou wilt live, then.

PIERRE.

For my life, dispose it

Just as thou wilt, because 'tis what I'm tired with.

JAFFEIR.

Oh Pierre!

PIERRE.

No more.

JAFFEIR.

My eyes won't lose the sight of thee,

But languish after thine, and ache with gazing.

265

PIERRE.

Leave me — Nay, then, thus I throw thee from me,

And curses, great as is thy falsehood, catch thee.

Exit PIERRE

JAFFEIR.

Amen.

He's gone, my father, friend, preserver,

And here's the portion he has left me.

270

(Holds the dagger up)

This dagger, well remembered; with this dagger

I gave a solemn vow of dire importance,

Parted with this and Belvidera together.

Have a care, Mem'ry, drive that thought no farther.

No, I'll esteem it as a friend's last legacy,

275

Treasure it up in this wretched bosom,

Where it may grow acquainted with my heart,

That when they meet, they start not from each other.

So: now for thinking. A blow; called traitor, villain,

Coward, dishonourable coward— foh!

Oh, for a long, sound sleep, and so forget it!

280

Down, busy devil—

Enter BELVIDERA

BELVIDERA.

Whither shall I fly?

Where hide me and my miseries together?
 Where's now the Roman constancy I boasted?
 Sunk into trembling fears and desperation!
 Not daring to look up to that dear face 285
 Which used to smile even on my faults, but down
 Bending these miserable eyes to earth,
 Must move in penance, and implore much mercy.

JAFFEIR.

Mercy! Kind heaven has surely endless stores
 Hoarded for thee of blessings yet untasted; 290
 Let wretches loaded hard with guilt as I am,
 Bow with the weight, and groan beneath the burden,
 Creep with a remnant of that strength th'have left,
 Before the footstool of that heaven th'have injured.
 Oh Belvidera! I'm the wretched'st creature 295
 E'er crawled on earth! Now if thou'st virtue, help me,
 Take me into thy arms, and speak the words of peace
 To my divided soul that wars within me,
 And raises every sense to my confusion.
 By heaven, I'm tottering on the very brink 300
 Of peace, and thou art all the hold I've left.

BELVIDERA.

Alas! I know thy sorrows are most mighty.
 I know th'hast cause to mourn; to mourn, my Jaffeir,
 With endless cries and never ceasing wailings.
 Th'hast lost—

JAFFEIR. Oh, I have lost what can't be counted! 305

My friend, too, Belvidera, that dear friend,
 Who, next to thee, was all my health rejoiced in,
 Has used me like a slave — shamefully used me.
 'Twould break thy pitying heart to hear the story.
 What shall I do? Resentment, indignation, 310
 Love, pity, fear, and mem'ry how I've wronged him
 Distract my quiet with the very thought on't,
 And tear my heart to pieces in my bosom.

BELVIDERA.

What has he done?

JAFFEIR. Thou'dst hate me should I tell thee.

BELVIDERA.

Why? 315

JAFFEIR.

Oh, he has used me! yet, by heaven, I bear it;
He has used me, Belvidera — but first swear
That when I've told thee, thou wilt not loathe me utterly,
Though vilest blots and stains appear upon me;
But still at least with charitable goodness, 320
Be near me in the pangs of my affliction,
Not scorn me, Belvidera, as he has done.

BELVIDERA.

Have I then e'er been false that now I'm doubted?
Speak, what's the cause I'm grown into distrust?
Why thought unfit to hear my love's complaining? 325

JAFFEIR.

Oh!

BELVIDERA. Tell me.

JAFFEIR. Bear my failings, for they are many.

Oh my dear angel! In that friend I've lost
All my soul's peace; for every thought of him
Strikes my sense hard, and deadens it in my brains.
Wouldst thou believe it—

BELVIDERA. Speak.

JAFFEIR. Before we parted, 330

Ere yet his guards had led him to his prison,
Full of severest sorrows for his sufferings,
With eyes o'erflowing and a bleeding heart,
Humbling myself almost beneath my nature,
As at his feet I kneeled, and sued for mercy, 335
Forgetting all our friendship, all the dearness
In which we lived so many years together,

With a reproachful hand he dashed a blow—
 He struck me, Belvidera, by heaven, he struck me,
 Buffeted, called me traitor, villain, coward! 340
 Am I a coward? Am I a villain? Tell me:
 Th'art the best judge, and mad'st me, if I am so.
 Damnation — coward!

BELVIDERA. Oh, forgive him, Jaffeir.
 And if his sufferings wound thy heart already,
 What will they do tomorrow?

JAFFEIR. Hah!

BELVIDERA. Tomorrow, 345
 When thou shalt see him stretched in all the agonies
 Of a tormenting and a shameful death,
 His bleeding bowels and his broken limbs
 Insulted o'er by a vile, butchering villain;
 What will thy heart do then? Oh, sure 'twill stream 350
 Like my eyes now.

JAFFEIR. What means thy dreadful story?
 Death, and tomorrow? Broken limbs and bowels?
 Insulted o'er by a vile, butchering villain?
 By all my fears, I shall start out to madness
 With barely guessing if the truth's hid longer. 355

BELVIDERA.
 The faithless senators, 'tis they've decreed it.
 They say, according to our friend's request,
 They shall have death, and not ignoble bondage;
 Declare their promised mercy all as forfeited,
 False to their oaths, and deaf to intercession. 360
 Warrants are passed for public death tomorrow.

JAFFEIR.
 Death! doomed to die! condemned unheard! unpleaded!

BELVIDERA.
 Nay, cruel'st racks and torments are preparing,
 To force confessions from their dying pangs.
 Oh, do not look so terribly upon me; 365

How your lips shake, and all your face disordered!
 What means my love?

JAFFEIR.

Leave me! I charge thee leave me—Strong temptations
 Wake in my heart.

BELVIDERA. For what?

JAFFEIR. No more, but leave me.

BELVIDERA.

Why? 370

JAFFEIR.

Oh! By heaven, I love thee with that fondness,
 I would not have thee stay a moment longer
 Near these cursed hands. Are they not cold upon thee?
(Pulls the dagger half out of his bosom, and puts it back again)

BELVIDERA.

No, everlasting comfort's in thy arms;
 To lean thus on thy breast is softer ease 375
 Than downy pillows decked with leaves of roses.

JAFFEIR.

Alas! thou think'st not of the thorns 'tis filled with:
 Fly ere they gall thee. There's a lurking serpent
 Ready to leap and sting thee to the heart.
 Art thou not terrified?

BELVIDERA. No.

JAFFEIR. Call to mind 380

What thou hast done, and whither thou hast brought me.

BELVIDERA.

Hah!

JAFFEIR.

Where's my friend? my friend, thou smiling mischief?
 Nay, shrink not, now 'tis too late. Thou shouldst have fled 385
 When thy guilt first had cause, for dire revenge
 Is up, and raging for my friend. He groans!
 Hark, how he groans! His screams are in my ears
 Already; see, th'have fixed him on the wheel,
 And now they tear him— Murder! Perjured Senate!

Murder—Oh!—hark thee, trait'ress, thou hast done this; 390
Thanks to thy tears and false persuading love.

How her eyes speak! Oh thou bewitching creature!

(Fumbling for his dagger)

Madness cannot hurt thee: come, thou little trembler,
Creep even into my heart, and there lie safe;
'Tis thy own citadel—Hah—yet stand off. 395

Heaven must have justice, and my broken vows
Will sink me else beneath its reaching mercy.
I'll wink, and then 'tis done—

BELVIDERA. What means the lord
Of me, my life and love? What's in thy bosom
Thou grasp'st at so? Nay, why am I thus treated? 400

(Jaffeir draws the dagger; offers to stab her)¹

What wilt thou do? Ah, do not kill me, Jaffeir!
Pity these panting breasts and trembling limbs
That used to clasp thee when thy looks were milder,
That yet hang heavy on my unpurged soul;
And plunge it not into eternal darkness. 405

JAFFEIR.
No, Belvidera, when we parted last,
I gave this dagger with thee as in trust
To be thy portion if I e'er proved false.
On such condition was my truth believed;
But now is forfeited, and must be paid for. 410

(Offers to stab her again)

BELVIDERA. *(Kneeling)*

Oh, mercy!

JAFFEIR. Nay, no struggling.

BELVIDERA. Now then kill me,
(Leaps upon his neck and kisses him)
While thus I cling about thy cruel neck,
Kiss thy revengeful lips, and die in joys

¹ *Offers to stab her:* attempts to stab her.

Greater than any I can guess hereafter.

JAFFEIR.

I am, I am a coward. Witness't heaven, 415
 Witness it, earth, and every being, witness!
 'Tis but one blow; yet, by immortal love,
 I cannot bear a thought to harm thee.

(He throws away the dagger and embraces her)

The seal of providence is sure upon thee,
 And thou wert born for yet unheard-of wonders. 420
 Oh, thou wert either born to save or damn me!
 By all the power that's given thee o'er my soul,
 By thy resistless tears and conquering smiles,
 By thy victorious love that still waits on thee,
 Fly to thy cruel father; save my friend, 425
 Or all our future quiet's lost forever.
 Fall at his feet; cling round his reverend knees;
 Speak to him with thy eyes, and with thy tears
 Melt his hard heart, and wake the dead nature in him.
 Crush him in th'arms, and torture him with thy softness; 430
 Nor, till thy prayers are granted, set him free,
 But conquer him, as thou hast vanquished me.

Exeunt ambo

ACT V

SCENE I

Enter PRIULI, solus¹

PRIULI.

Why, cruel heaven, have my unhappy days
Been lengthened to this sad one? Oh! dishonour
And deathless infamy is fallen upon me.
Was it my fault? Am I a traitor? No.
But then, my only child, my daughter, wedded; 5
There my best blood runs foul, and a disease
Incurable has seized upon my memory,
To make it rot and stink to after ages.
Cursed be the fatal minute when I got² her;
Or would that I'd been anything but man, 10
And raised an issue which would ne'er have wronged me.
The miserablest creatures (man excepted)
Are not the less esteemed though their posterity
Degenerate from the virtues of their fathers;
The vilest beasts are happy in their offsprings, 15
While only man gets traitors, whores, and villains.
Cursed be the names, and some swift blow from fate
Lay his head deep, where mine may be forgotten.

Enter BELVIDERA in a long mourning veil

BELVIDERA.

He's there—my father, my inhuman father,
That, for three years, has left an only child 20
Exposed to all the outrages of fate

¹ **solus:** alone.

² **got:** begot.

The lineaments of hers y'have kissed so often, 45
Pleading the cause of your poor cast-off child.

PRIULI.

Thou art my daughter.

BELVIDERA. Yes—and y'have oft told me
With smiles of love and chaste, paternal kisses,
I'd much resemblance of my mother.

PRIULI. Oh!

Hadst thou inherited her matchless virtues, 50
I'd been too blessed.

BELVIDERA. Nay, do not call to memory
My disobedience, but let pity enter
Into your heart, and quite deface the impression.
For could you think how mine's perplexed, what sadness,
Fears, and despairs distract the peace within me, 55
Oh, you would take me in your dear, dear arms,
Hover with strong compassion o'er your young one,
To shelter me with a protecting wing
From the black gathered storm that's just, just breaking.

PRIULI.

Don't talk thus.

BELVIDERA. Yes, I must, and you must hear, too. 60
I have a husband.

PRIULI. Damn him!

BELVIDERA. Oh, do not curse him!
He would not speak so hard a word towards you
On any terms, howe'er he deal with me.

PRIULI.

Hah! What means my child?

BELVIDERA. Oh, there's but this short moment 65
'Twixt me and fate. Yet send me not with curses
Down to my grave; afford me one kind blessing
Before we part: just take me in your arms,
And recommend me with a prayer to heaven,

That I may die in peace; and when I'm dead— 70
PRIULI.

How my soul's caught!

BELVIDERA. Lay me, I beg you, lay me
By the dear ashes of my tender mother.
She would have pitied me, had fate yet spared her.

PRIULI.

By heaven, my aching heart forebodes much mischief.
Tell me thy story, for I'm still thy father. 75

BELVIDERA.

No, I'm contented.

PRIULI. Speak.

BELVIDERA. No matter.

PRIULI. Tell me.

By yon blessed heaven, my heart runs o'er with fondness.

BELVIDERA.

Oh!

PRIULI. Utter't.

BELVIDERA. Oh, my husband, my dear husband
Carries a dagger in his once kind bosom,
To pierce the heart of your poor Belvidera. 80

PRIULI.

Kill thee!

BELVIDERA. Yes, kill me. When he passed his faith
And covenant against your state and Senate,
He gave me up as hostage for his truth,
With me a dagger, and a dire commission:
Whene'er he failed, to plunge it through this bosom. 85

I learnt the danger, chose the hour of love

T'attempt his heart and bring it back to honour.

Great love prevailed, and blessed me with success.

He came, confessed, betrayed his dearest friends

For promised mercy. Now they're doomed to suffer; 90

Galled with the remembrance of what then was sworn,

If they are lost, he vows t'appease the gods

With this poor life, and make my blood th'attonement.

PRIULI.

Heavens!

BELVIDERA. Think you saw what passed at our last parting;
Think you beheld him like a raging lion, 95
Pacing the earth, and tearing up his steps,
Fate in his eyes, and roaring with the pain
Of burning fury; think you saw his one hand
Fixed on my throat, while the extended other
Grasped a keen, threat'ning dagger. Oh, 'twas thus 100
We last embraced; when, trembling with revenge,
He dragged me to the ground, and at my bosom
Presented horrid death, cried out, "My friends—
Where are my friends?" swore, wept, raged, threatened, loved—
For he yet loved, and that dear love preserved me 105
To this last trial of a father's pity.
I fear not death, but cannot bear a thought
That that dear hand should do th'unfriendly office.
If I was ever then your care, now hear me;
Fly to the Senate; save the promised lives 110
Of his dear friends, ere mine be made the sacrifice.

PRIULI.

Oh, my heart's comfort!

BELVIDERA. Will you not, my father?

Weep not, but answer me.

PRIULI. By heaven, I will.

Not one of 'em but what shall be immortal.
Canst thou forgive me all my follies past? 115
I'll henceforth be indeed a father; never,
Never more thus expose, but cherish thee,
Dear as the vital warmth that feeds my life,
Dear as these eyes that weep in fondness o'er thee.
Peace to thy heart. Farewell.

for hanging—Hah, hurry durry—I think this will do, though
I was something out, at first, about the sun and the
cucumber.

Enter AQUILINA

AQUILINA.

Good morrow, senator.

ANTONIO.

Nacky, my dear Nacky; morrow, Nacky. Odd, I am very 150
brisk, very merry, very pert, very jovial—ha-a-a-a—Kiss
me, Nacky. How dost thou do, my little tory rory¹ strumpet?
Kiss me, I say, hussy, kiss me.

AQUILINA.

“Kiss me, Nacky.” Hang you, Sir Coxcomb! Hang you, sir!

ANTONIO.

Haity, taity,² is it so indeed? with all my heart, faith— (*Sings*) 155
Hey then, up go we, faith—hey then, up go we, dum dum
*derum dump.*³

AQUILINA.

Signor.

ANTONIO.

Madonna.

AQUILINA.

Do you intend to die in your bed? 160

ANTONIO.

About threescore years hence, much may be done,
my dear.

AQUILINA.

You'll be hanged, signor.

ANTONIO.

Hanged, sweetheart? Prithee, be quiet. Hanged, quoth-a,⁴
that's a merry conceit, with all my heart. Why, thou jok'st, 165

¹ **tory rory**: boisterous

² **Haity taity**: hoity toity, an exclamation meant to mock pretension.

³ **hey then, up go we**: Anti-Papist ballad printed in 1681, to be sung to a popular tune.

⁴ **quoth-a**: you say.

Nacky; thou are given to joking, I'll swear. Well, I protest, Nacky—nay, I must protest, and will protest, that I love joking dearly, man. And I love thee for joking, and I'll kiss thee for joking, and touse¹ thee for joking; and odd, I have a devilish mind to take thee aside about that business for joking, 170
too; odd, I have and (*Sings*) *Hey then, up go we, dum dum derum dump.*

AQUILINA.

See you this, sir? (*Draws a dagger*)

ANTONIO.

Oh, laud,² a dagger! Oh, laud! it is naturally my aversion! I cannot endure the sight on't; hide it, for heaven's sake! I cannot look that way till it be gone—hide it, hide it, oh, oh, hide it! 175

AQUILINA.

Yes, in your heart I'll hide it.

ANTONIO.

My heart! What, hide a dagger in my heart's blood!

AQUILINA.

Yes, in thy heart, thy throat, thou pampered devil! 180
Thou hast helped to spoil my peace, and I'll have vengeance
On thy cursed life for all the bloody Senate,
The perjured, faithless Senate. Where's my lord,
My happiness, my love, my god, my hero?
Doomed by thy accursed tongue, amongst the rest, 185
T'a shameful wrack? By all the rage that's in me,
I'll be whole years in murdering thee.

ANTONIO.

Why, Nacky, wherefore so passionate? What have I done? What's the matter, my dear Nacky? Am not I thy love, thy happiness, thy lord, thy hero, thy senator, and everything in the world, Nacky? 190

AQUILINA.

Thou! Think'st thou, thou art fit to meet my joys,

¹ **touse:** knock about, manhandle.

² **Oh, laud:** Oh Lord.

To bear the eager clasp of my embraces?
Give me my Pierre, or—

ANTONIO.

Why, he's to be hanged, little Nacky; 195
Trussed up for treason, and so forth, child.

AQUILINA.

Thou li'st; stop down thy throat that hellish sentence,
Or 'tis thy last. Swear that my love shall live,
Or thou art dead.

ANTONIO. Ah-h-h-h.

AQUILINA. Swear to recall his doom;
Swear at my feet, and tremble at my fury. 200

ANTONIO.

I do. (*Aside*) Now, if she would but kick a little bit—one
kick now, ah-h-h-h.

AQUILINA.

Swear, or—

ANTONIO.

I do, by these dear fragrant foots and little toes, sweet as—
e-e-e-e, my Nacky, Nacky, Nacky. 205

AQUILINA.

How!

ANTONIO.

Nothing, but untie thy shoestring a little, faith and troth;
that's all, that's all; as I hope to live, Nacky, that's all.

AQUILINA.

Nay, then—

ANTONIO. Hold, hold; thy love, thy lord, thy hero
Shall be preserved and safe.

AQUILINA. Or may this poniard¹ 210
Rust in thy heart.

ANTONIO. With all my soul.

AQUILINA. Farewell—

¹ **poniard:** dagger.

Exit AQUILINA.

ANTONIO.

Adieu. Why, what a bloody-minded, inveterate, termagant¹
strumpet have I been plagued with! oh-h-h, yet more! nay,
then, I die, I die,—I am dead already.² (*Stetches himself out*)

Scene II

Enter JAFFEIR.

JAFFEIR.

Final destruction seize on all the world:
Bend down, ye heavens, and shutting round this earth,
Crush the vile globe to its first confusion;
Scorch it with elemental flames to one cursed cinder,
And all us little creepers in't, called men, 5
Burn, burn to nothing. But let Venice burn
Hotter than all the rest; here kindle hell,
Ne'er to extinguish, and let souls hereafter
Groan here, in all those pains which mine feels now.

Enter BELVIDERA.

BELVIDERA. (*Meeting him*)

My life—

JAFFEIR. (*Turning from her*) My plague—

BELVIDERA. Nay, then I see my ruin, 10
If I must die!

¹ **termagant**: a violent, overbearing person, usually used with reference to women.

² **I die, I die**: common metaphor for orgasm.

JAFFEIR. No, Death's this day too busy;
Thy father's ill-timed mercy came too late.
I thank thee for thy labours, though, and him, too.
But all my poor betrayed, unhappy friends
Have summons to prepare for fate's black hour; 15
And yet I live.

BELVIDERA. Then be the next my doom.
I see thou hast passed my sentence in thy heart,
And I'll no longer weep or plead against it,
But with the humblest, most obedient patience
Meet thy dear hands, and kiss 'em when they wound me. 20
Indeed I am willing, but I beg thee do it
With some remorse; and where thou giv'st the blow,
View me with eyes of a relenting love,
And show me pity, for 'twill sweeten justice.

JAFFEIR.
Show pity to thee!

BELVIDERA. Yes, and when thy hands, 25
Charged with my fate, come trembling to the deed,
As thou hast done a thousand, thousand dear times
To this poor breast, when kinder rage has brought thee,
When our stinged hearts have leaped to meet each other,
And melting kisses sealed our lips together, 30
When joys have left me gasping in thy arms,
So let my death come now, and I'll not shrink from't.

JAFFEIR.
Nay, Belvidera, do not fear my cruelty,
Nor let the thoughts of death perplex thy fancy,
But answer me to what I shall demand 35
With a firm temper and unshaken spirit.

BELVIDERA.
I will when I've done weeping—

JAFFEIR. Fie, no more on't!
How long is't since the miserable day
We wedded first—

BELVIDERA. Oh-h-h!

JAFFEIR. Nay, keep in thy tears,
Lest they unman me, too.

BELVIDERA. Heaven knows I cannot; 40
The words you utter sound so very sadly,
These streams will follow—

JAFFEIR. Come, I'll kiss them dry, then.

BELVIDERA.
But was't a miserable day?

JAFFEIR. A cursed one.

BELVIDERA.
I thought it otherwise, and you've oft sworn
In the transporting hours of warmest love, 45
When sure you spoke the truth, you've sworn you blessed it.

JAFFEIR.
'Twas a rash oath.

BELVIDERA. Then why am I not cursed too?

JAFFEIR.
No, Belvidera; by th' eternal truth,
I dote on thee with too much fondness.

BELVIDERA. Still so kind!
Still then do you love me?

JAFFEIR. Nature, in her workings, 50
Inclines not with more ardour to Creation
Than I do now towards thee; man ne'er was blessed,
Since the first pair first met, as I have been.

BELVIDERA.
Then sure you will not curse me.

JAFFEIR. No, I'll bless thee.
I came on purpose, Belvidera, to bless thee. 55
'Tis now, I think, three years w'have lived together.

BELVIDERA.
And may no fatal minute ever part us
Till, reverend grown for age and love, we go
Down to one grave as our last bed together,

There sleep in peace till and eternal morning. 60
 JAFFEIR. (*Sighing*)
 When will that be?
 BELVIDERA. I hope long ages hence.
 JAFFEIR.
 Have I not hitherto (I beg thee tell me
 Thy very fears) used thee with tenderest love?
 Did e'er my soul rise up in wrath against thee?
 Did I e'er frown when Belvidera smiled, 65
 Or, by the least unfriendly word, betray
 A bating¹ passion? Have I ever wronged thee?
 BELVIDERA.
 No.
 JAFFEIR. Has my heart, or have my eyes e'er wandered
 To any other woman?
 BELVIDERA. Never, never—
 I were the worst of false ones, should I accuse thee. 70
 I own I've been too happy, blessed above
 My sex's charter.
 JAFFEIR.
 Did I not say I came to bless thee?
 BELVIDERA.
 Yes.
 JAFFEIR. Then hear me, bounteous heaven;
 Pour down your blessings on the beauteous head, 75
 Where everlasting sweets are always springing.
 With a continual hand, let peace,
 Honour, and safety always hover round her;
 Feed her with plenty; let her eyes ne'er see
 A sight of sorrow, nor her heart know mourning. 80
 Crown all her days with joy, her nights with rest,
 Harmless as her own thoughts, and prop her virtue
 To bear the loss of one that too much loved,
 And comfort her with patience in our parting.

¹ **bating**: i.e. abating, diminishing.

BELVIDERA.

How, parting, parting?

JAFFEIR.

Yes, forever parting.

85

I have sworn, Belvidera, by yon heaven
That best can tell how much I lose to leave thee,
We part this hour forever.

BELVIDERA.

Oh, call back

Your cruel blessings; stay with me and curse me!

JAFFEIR.

No, 'tis resolved.

BELVIDERA.

Then hear me, too, just heaven!

90

Pour down your curses on this wretched head
With never ceasing vengeance; let despair,
Danger, or infamy—nay all, surround me;
Starve me with wanting; let my eyes ne'er see
A sight of comfort, nor my heart know peace,
But dash my days with sorrow, nights with horrors
Wild as my own thoughts now, and let loose fury
To make me mad enough for what I lose,
If I must lose him. If I must! I will not.
Oh, turn and hear me!

95

JAFFEIR.

Now hold, heart, or never.

100

BELVIDERA.

By all the tender days we have lived together,
By all our charming nights, and joys that crowned 'em,
Pity my sad condition—speak, but speak.

JAFFEIR.

Oh-h-h.

BELVIDERA.

By these arms that now cling round thy neck,

By this dear kiss, and by ten thousand more,

105

By these poor streaming eyes—

JAFFEIR.

Murder! unhold me.

By th'immortal destiny that doomed me *(Draws his dagger)*

To this cursed minute, I'll not live one longer.

Resolve to let me go or see me fall—

BELVIDERA.

Hold, sir, be patient. *(Passing-bell tolls)*

JAFFEIR. Hark, the dismal bell 110

Tolls out for death; I must attend its call, too;
For my poor friend, my dying Pierre, expects me;
He sent a message to require I'd see him
Before he died, and take his last forgiveness.
Farewell forever. *(Going out, looks back at her)*

BELVIDERA. Leave thy dagger with me. 115

Bequeath me something—Not one kiss at parting?
Oh my poor heart, when wilt thou break?

JAFFEIR. Yet stay.

We have a child, as yet a tender infant.
Be a kind mother to him when I am gone;
Breed in him virtue and the paths of honour, 120
But let him never know his father's story.
I charge thee guard him from the wrongs my fate
May do his future fortune or his name.
Now—nearer yet— *(Approaching each other)*

Oh, that my arms were riveted
Thus round thee ever! But my friends, my oath! 125
This, and no more. *(Kisses her)*

BELVIDERA. Another, sure another,
For that poor little one you've ta'en such care of;
I'll give't him truly.

JAFFEIR. So, now farewell.

BELVIDERA. Forever?

JAFFEIR.

Heaven knows, forever; all good angels guard thee.

Exit JAFFEIR

BELVIDERA.

All ill ones sure had charge of me this moment. 130
Cursed be my days, and doubly cursed my nights,

Which I must now mourn out in widowed tears;
 Blasted be every herb, and fruit, and tree;
 Cursed be the rain that falls upon the earth,
 And may the general curse reach man and beast. 135
 Oh, give me daggers, fire, or water!
 How I could bleed, how burn, how drown, the waves
 Huzzing¹ and booming round my sinking head,
 Till I descended to the peaceful bottom!
 Oh, there's all quiet; here all rage and fury; 140
 The air's too thin, and pierces my weak brain.
 I long for thick, substantial sleep: Hell, hell,
 Burst from the centre, rage and roar aloud,
 If thou art half so hot, so mad, as I am.

Enter PRIULI and Servants

Who's there?
 PRIULI. Run, seize and bring her safely home. 145
(They seize her)
 Guard her as you would life. Alas, poor creature!
 BELVIDERA.
 What, to my husband? then conduct me quickly.
 Are all things ready? Shall we die most gloriously?
 Say not a word of this to my old father.
 Murmuring streams, soft shades, and springing flowers, 150
 Lutes, laurels, seas of milk, and ships of amber.

Exeunt

¹ **Huzzing:** Buzzing.

Scene III

Scene opening, discovers a scaffold and a wheel prepared for the
executing of PIERRE; then enter Officers, PIERRE, and Guards,
a Friar, Executioner, and a great Rabble.

OFFICER.

Room, room there—stand all by; make room for the prisoner.

PIERRE.

My friend not come yet?

FATHER.¹ Why are you so obstinate?

PIERRE.

Why you so troublesome, that a poor wretch
Cannot die in peace,
But you like ravens will be croaking round him?

5

FATHER.

Yet heaven—

PIERRE. I tell thee, heaven and I are friends.

I ne'er broke peace with't yet by cruel murders,
Rapine, or perjury, or vile deceiving,
But lived in moral justice towards all men;
Nor am a foe to the most strong believers,
Howe'er my own short-sighted faith confine me.

10

FATHER.

But an all-seeing Judge—

PIERRE. You say my conscience

Must be my accuser. I have searched that conscience,
And I find no records there of crimes that scare me.

FATHER. 'Tis strange you should want² faith.

PIERRE. You want to lead

15

My reason blindfold, like a hampered lion,
Checked of its noble vigour; then, when baited³

¹ **FATHER:** the Friar.

² **want:** lack.

³ **baited:** tormented.

Down to obedient tameness, make it couch,¹
And show strange tricks which you call signs of faith.
So silly souls are gulled² and you get money. 20
Away, no more: Captain, I would hereafter
This fellow write no lies of my conversion
Because he has crept upon my troubled hours.

Enter JAFFEIR

JAFFEIR.

Hold. Eyes be dry; heart, strengthen me to bear
This hideous sight, and humble me to take 25
The last forgiveness of a dying friend,
Betrayed by my vile falsehood to his ruin.
Oh, Pierre!

PIERRE. Yet nearer.

JAFFEIR. Crawling on my knees,
And prostrate on the earth, let me approach thee.
How shall I look up to thy injured face, 30
That always used to smile with friendship on me?
It darts an air of so much manly virtue
That I, methinks, look little in thy sight,
And stripes³ are fitter for me than embraces.

PIERRE.

Dear to my arms, though thou hast undone my fame, 35
I can't forget to love thee. Prithee, Jaffeir,
Forgive that filthy blow my passion dealt thee;
I am now preparing for the land of peace,
And fain would have the charitable wishes
Of all good men, like thee, to bless my journey. 40

JAFFEIR.

Good! I am the vilest creature, worse than e'er

¹ **couch:** lie down.

² **gulled:** duped.

³ **stripes:** whipping.

Suffered the shameful fate thou art going to taste of.
 Why was I sent for to be used thus kindly?
 Call, call me villain, as I am; describe
 The foul complexion¹ of my hateful deeds; 45
 Lead me to the rack, and stretch me in thy stead;
 I've crimes enough to give it its full load,
 And do it credit. Thou wilt but spoil the use on't,
 And honest men hereafter bear its figure
 About 'em as a charm from treacherous friendship. 50

OFFICER.

The time grows short; your friends are dead already.

JAFFEIR.

Dead!

PIERRE.

Yes, dead, Jaffeir; they've all died like men, too,
 Worthy their character.

JAFFEIR.

And what must I do?

PIERRE.

Oh, Jaffeir!

JAFFEIR. Speak aloud thy burdened soul, 55
 And tell thy troubles to thy tortured friend.

PIERRE.

Friend! Couldst thou yet be a friend, a generous friend,
 I might hope comfort from thy noble sorrows.
 Heaven knows I want a friend.

JAFFEIR.

And I a kind one,

That would not thus scorn my repenting virtue, 60
 Or think, when he's to die, my thoughts are idle.

PIERRE.

No! Live, I charge thee, Jaffeir.

JAFFEIR.

Yes, I will live,

But it shall be to see thy fall revenged
 At such a rate as Venice long shall groan for.

¹ **complexion:** quality or nature.

PIERRE.

Wilt thou?

JAFFEIR. I will, by heaven.

PIERRE. Then still thou'rt noble, 65

And I forgive thee. Oh—yet—shall I trust thee?

JAFFEIR.

No, I've been false already.

PIERRE. Dost thou love me?

JAFFEIR.

Rip up my heart, and satisfy thy doubtings.

PIERRE.

Curse on this weakness. *(He weeps)*

JAFFEIR. Tears! Amazement! Tears!

I never saw thee melted thus before; 70

And know there's something labouring in thy bosom

That must have vent; though I'm a villain, tell me.

PIERRE.

Seest thou that engine? *(Pointing to wheel)*

JAFFEIR.

Why?

PIERRE.

Is't it fit a soldier who has lived with honour, 75

Fought nations' quarrels, and been crowned with conquest,

Be exposed a common carcass on a wheel?

JAFFEIR.

Hah!

PIERRE. Speak, is't fitting?

JAFFEIR. Fitting?

PIERRE. Yes, is't fitting?

JAFFEIR.

What's to be done?

PIERRE. I'd have thee undertake

Something that's noble, to preserve my memory 80

From the disgrace that's ready to attain¹ it.

¹ **attaint:** condemn.

OFFICER.

The day grows late, sir.

PIERRE. I'll make haste! Oh, Jaffeir,
Though thou'st betrayed me, do me some way justice.

JAFFEIR.

No more of that. Thy wishes shall be satisfied.

I have a wife, and she shall bleed; my child, too,

85

Yield up his little throat, and all t'appease thee—

(Going away, PIERRE holds him)

PIERRE. No—this—no more! *(He whispers JAFFEIR)*

JAFFEIR. Hah! Is't then so?

PIERRE. Most certainly.

JAFFEIR.

I'll do't.

PIERRE. Remember.

OFFICER. Sir.

PIERRE. Come, now I'm ready.

(He and JAFFEIR ascend the scaffold)

Captain, you should be a gentleman of honour;

Keep off the rabble that I may have room

90

To entertain my fate, and die with decency.

Come! *(Takes off his gown. Executioner prepares to bind him)*

FATHER. Son.

PIERRE. Hence tempter.

OFFICER. Stand off, priest.

PIERRE. I thank you, sir.

You'll think on't. *(To Jaffeir)*

JAFFEIR. 'Twon't grow stale before tomorrow.

PIERRE. Now, Jaffeir! now I am going. Now—

(Executioners having bound him)

JAFFEIR.

Have at thee,

95

Thou honest heart, then—here— *(Stabs him)*

And this is well too. *(Then stabs himself)*

FATHER. Damnable deed!

Prithee my love. The winds! hark how they whistle!
 And the rain beats. Oh, how the weather shrinks me!
 You are angry now; who cares? pish, no indeed. 5
 Choose then. I say you shall not go, you shall not.
 Whip your ill nature; get you gone then; Oh!

(JAFFEIR'S Ghost rises)

Are you returned? See, father, here he's come again;
 Am I to blame to love him? Oh, thou dear one.

(Ghost sinks)

Why do you fly me? Are you angry still, then? 10
 Jaffeir, where art thou? Father, why do you do thus?
 Stand off, don't hide from me. He's here somewhere.
 Stand off, I say! What gone? Remember't tyrant!
 I may revenge myself for this trick one day.
 I'll do't—I'll do't. Renault's a nasty fellow. 15
 Hang him, hang him, hang him.

Enter Officer and others.

PRIULI.

News, what news? *(Officer whispers PRIULI)*

OFFICER. Most sad, sir.

Jaffeir, upon the scaffold, to prevent
 A shameful death, stabbed Pierre, and next himself.
 Both fell together.

PRIULI. Daughter.

BELVIDERA. Hah, look there! 20

(The Ghosts of JAFFEIR and PIERRE rise together, both bloody)

My husband bloody, and his friend, too! Murder!
 Who has done this? Speak to me thou sad vision;
 On these poor trembling knees I beg it. *(Ghosts sink)*

Vanished—

Here they went down. Oh, I'll dig, dig the den up.
 You shan't delude me thus. Hoa! Jaffeir, Jaffeir. 25
 Peep up and give me but a look—I have him!

I've got him, father! Oh, now how I'll smuggle¹ him!
My love! my dear! my blessing! help me! help me!
They have hold on me, and drag me to the bottom.
Nay—now they pull so hard—farewell— (*She dies*)

MAID. She's dead. 30

Breathless and dead.

PRIULI. Then guard me from the sight on't.

Lead me into some place that's fit for mourning,
Where the free air, light, and the cheerful sun
May never enter. Hang it round with black;
Set up one taper² that may last a day, 35
As long as I've to live, and there leave me;
Sparing no tears when you this tale relate,
But bid all cruel fathers dread my fate.

Exeunt omnes.

¹ **smuggle:** caress.

² **taper:** candle.

EPILOGUE

The text is done, and now for application,
 And when that's ended, pass your approbation.
 Though the conspiracy's prevented here,
 Methinks I see another hatching there;¹
 And there's a certain faction fain would sway, } 5
 If they had strength enough, and damn this play, }
 But this the author bade me boldly say:
 If any take his plainness in ill part,
 He's glad on't it from the bottom of his heart;
 Poets in honour of the truth should write, } 10
 With the same spirit brave men for it fight;
 And though against him causeless hatreds rise, }
 And daily where he goes of late, he spies }
 The scowls of sullen and revengeful eyes, }
 'Tis what he knows with much contempt to bear, } 15
 And serves a cause too good to let him fear.
 He fears no poison from an incensed drab,²
 No ruffian's five-foot sword, nor rascal's stab,
 Nor any of the other snares of mischief laid,
 Not a Rose-Alley cudgel-ambuscade,³ } 20
 From any private cause where malice reigns,
 Or general pique all blockheads have to brains.
 Nothing shall daunt his pen when truth does call,
 No, not the † picture-mangler at Guildhall.
 The rebel-tribe,⁴ of which that vermin's one, } 25
 Have now set forward, and their course begun;

†The rascal that cut the Duke of York's picture.⁵

¹ I.e. critics in the audience.

² **drab**: prostitute.

³ **ambuscade**: ambush. A reference to an attack on Dryden that took place in Rose Alley in 1679.

⁴ **rebel-tribe**: the Whigs.

⁵ In January 1682, a portrait of the Duke of York hanging in the Guildhall was vandalized.

And while that Prince's figure they deface,
As they before had massacred his name,
Durst their base fears but look him in the face,
They'd use his person as they've used his fame; 30
A face in which such lineaments they read
Of that great martyr's,¹ whose rich blood they shed,
That their rebellious hate they still retain,
And in his son would murder him again.
With indignation, then, let each brave heart, 35
Rouse and unite to take his injured part;
Till royal love and goodness call him home,²
And songs of triumph meet him as he come;
Till heaven his honour and our peace restore,
And villains never wrong his virtue more. 40

¹ **great martyr:** Charles I.

² The Duke of York was, at this time, in Scotland.