# Ben Jonson's
# *Every Man Out of His Humor:*
# A Retelling

**David Bruce**

**Dedicated to Carl Eugene Bruce and Josephine Saturday Bruce**

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**Educate Yourself**

**Read Like A Wolf Eats**

**Be Excellent to Each Other**

**Books Then, Books Now, Books Forever**

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# CAST OF CHARACTERS

**ASPER** *the presenter and supposed author of the play, who also plays the role of Macilente. He is a harsh critic.*

**GREX** *CHORUS (or AUDIENCE consisting) of Asper's friends:*

**CORDATUS** *Asper's spokesman*

**MITIS**

**PROLOGUE**

**CARLO BUFFONE** *a common jester*

**Carlo's BOY** *his boy-servant*

**MACILENTE** *a maliciously envious scholar*

**SOGLIARDO** *a country bumpkin and would-be gentleman, Sordido's brother*

**SORDIDO** *a rich farmer, Sogliardo's brother, father of Fungoso and Fallace, and father-in-law of Deliro*

HIS **HIND** *a farm laborer*

**FUNGOSO** *an Inns of Court student, Sordido's son, Fallace's brother*

His **TAILOR**

His **SHOEMAKER**

His **HABERDASHER** *a maker and/or seller of hats*

**FASTIDIOUS BRISK** *a courtier, would-be lover of Saviolina*

**CINEDO** *his page. In Latin,* cinaedus *means "homosexual."*

**PUNTARVOLO** *a knight*

HIS **LADY**

HER **WAITING-GENTLEWOMAN**

HIS **HUNTSMAN**

HIS **SERVINGMEN**, TWO in number

HIS **DOG** *a live greyhound*

HIS **CAT**

**DELIRO** *a merchant and moneylender, doting husband of Fallace*

**FALLACE** *Deliro's wife, Fungoso's sister, and would-be mistress of Brisk*

**FIDO** *Deliro and Fallace's boy-servant*

**SHIFT** *a cavalier and pimp*

**CLOVE** *a coxcomb. Coxcombs are fools.*

**ORANGE** *his friend, another coxcomb*

**RUSTICI** *country people*

**SAVIOLINA** *a court lady*

**MUSICIANS**

**NOTARY**

**A GROOM** *a servant, often taking care of horses*

**TWO DRAWERS** *at the Mitre Tavern, the elder named* ***GEORGE****. Servers of ale and wine*

**CONSTABLE** and **OFFICERS** *of the law*

**QUEEN ELIZABETH I** *portrayed by an actor*

**THE SCENE**: INSULA FORTUNATA, AKA THE FORTUNATE ISLAND. Aka Britain. "The city" is London because St. Paul's Cathedral is mentioned and is the location of one scene (3.1) in the play.

**NOTES:**

Ben Jonson's society existed before the age of modern medicine.

Doctors in Ben Jonson's society believed that the human body had four humors, or vital fluids, that determined one's temperament. Each humor made a contribution to the personality, and one humor could be predominant. For a human being to be sane and healthy, the four humors had to be present in the right amounts. If a man had too much of a certain humor, it would harm his personality and health.

Blood was the sanguine humor. A sanguine man was optimistic.

Phlegm was the phlegmatic humor. A phlegmatic man was calm.

Yellow bile was the choleric humor. A choleric man was angry.

Black bile was the melancholic humor. A melancholic man was gloomy.

A humor can be a personal characteristic.

A humor can also be a fancy or a whim.

A humor can also be a mood.

Asper's humor (personal characteristic) was to be severely critical and satiric.

Sordido's humor (personal characteristic) was to be severely greedy.

Sogliardo's humor (personal characteristic) was to want to be a gentleman and to have Cavalier Shift as his role model.

Cavalier Shift's humor (personal characteristic) was to want to be thought a brave man.

Fungoso’s humor (personal characteristic) was to be excessively socially ambitious and dressed in the very latest fashion.

Saviolina’s humor (personal characteristic) was to have an overly high opinion of herself.

Deliro’s humor (personal characteristic) was to excessively dote on his wife, Fallace.

Fallace’s humor (personal characteristic) was to excessively dote on Fastidious Brisk.

Fastidious Brisk’s humor (personal characteristic) was to want to be thought a highly desired and desirable courtier.

Puntarvolo’s humor (personal characteristic) was to travel and gamble on his travel.

Macilente’s humor (personal characteristic) was to be maliciously envious.

In Ben Jonson’s society, a person of higher rank would use “thou,” “thee,” “thine,” and “thy” when referring to a person of lower rank. (These terms were also used affectionately and between equals.) A person of lower rank would use “you” and “your” when referring to a person of higher rank.

“Sirrah” was a title used to address someone of a social rank inferior to the speaker. Friends, however, could use it to refer to each other.

The word “wench” at this time was not necessarily negative. It was often used affectionately.

In Ben Jonson’s society, a “clown” is a rustic, a countryman or countrywoman.

Queen Elizabeth I ruled England at the time of the play, whose first performance was in 1599.

# NOTES ON CHARACTERS

**ASPER [Sour]**

A faultfinder. He is of an ingenious, intellectually gifted, free, and unrestrained spirit, eager, tart, and constant in reproof, without fear rebuking the world's abuses; one whom no servile hope of gain or frosty apprehension of danger can make to be a parasite and sycophant, either to time, place, or opinion.

**MACILENTE [Lean, Thin]**

A lean malcontent. A man well-endowed with natural abilities, a capable and sufficient scholar, and travelled, who, lacking that place in the world's account which he thinks his merit is entitled to, falls into such an envious apoplexy, with which his judgment is so confounded and disgusted that he grows violently impatient of any contrasting happiness in another.

**PUNTARVOLO [Wishes to Gamble]**

A vainglorious knight, over-Englishing — over-elaborating and over-exaggerating — his travels and wholly consecrated to affecting eccentricity; the very Jacob's staff of compliment; a sir who has lived to see the revolution of time in most of his apparel — he is old, and most of his clothing is no longer fashionable. Of dignified appearance good enough, but so palpably affected to his own praise that, for lack of flatterers, he commends himself to the floutage and mockery of his own family. He deals upon returns and strange performances, resolving, in spite of public derision, to stick to his own particular fashion, phrase, and gesture.

A Jacob's staff was an instrument for measuring altitude. Puntarvolo enjoys using high-altitude (high-flown) language.

He praises himself so much and so extravagantly that others mock him.

"Returns and strange performances" are things to gamble on. A traveler could bet that he could return from a hazardous journey within a certain time; others could bet that he would not be able to do it. An example of a strange performance is actor Will Kemp's betting that he could dance the morris dance from London to Norwich.

**CARLO BUFFONE [Charles the Jester]**

A public, scurrilous, and profane jester, who, more swift than Circe, with absurd similes will transform any person into deformity. A good feast-hound or banquet-beagle who will scent out a supper some three miles away, and who will swear to his patrons ("God damn me if I did not!") that he came in oars when he was only wafted over in a sculler. A contemptible person who has an extraordinary gift in pleasing his palate, and will swill up more sack (white wine) at a sitting than would make all the guard a posset (medicinal drink). His religion is railing, and his discourse ribaldry. They stand highest in his respect whom he studies most to reproach.

Circe is the goddess who turned Odysseus' men into swine in Homer's *Odyssey*.

Carlo Buffone is a man who gets himself invited to dinners hosted by rich people. He will swear that he crossed the Thames River in an expensive boat with lots of oars, but he actually used less-expensive means of transportation: a rowboat with a pair of oars or a small boat with one oar. He entertains his hosts with malicious gossip and indelicate tales.

A posset is a drink containing milk curdled by wine or ale.

**FASTIDIOUS BRISK [Well-Dressed]**

A neat, foppish, spruce, full-of-affectations courtier; one who wears clothes well and in fashion, practices by his mirror how to salute and greet people of high social class, speaks good fragments of others' wit (notwithstanding his fashionable use of the bass viol and tobacco to punctuate his conversation), swears tersely and with variety, cares not what lady's favor [letter, gift, or sexual conquest] he belies or what great man's familiarity he belies. A good property to perfume the boot of a coach. He will borrow another man's horse to appraise it and then ride the horse as if it were his own; or, if he lacks money, on foot can post — ride quickly — himself into credit with his merchant only with the jingle of his spur and the jerk of his wand (whip).

Fastidious Brisk uses perfume. Attendants sat in the boot of the coach, and Brisk's perfume improved the smell of the air there. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines "boot" in this way: "An uncovered space on or by the steps on each side, where attendants sat, facing sideways."

Although Fastidious Brisk has no horse, he wears spurs and carries a whip so that other people, including merchants, think that he is wealthy enough to own a horse. This is a scheme to persuade merchants to give him credit.

**DELIRO [Fool]**

A good doting — foolish — citizen, who, it is thought, is wealthy enough that he might be a member of the common council. A fellow sincerely besotted with his own wife, and so rapt with a belief in her perfections that he simply holds himself unworthy of her; and in that hoodwinked — as if blindfolded — humor, lives more like a suitor than a husband, standing in as true dread of her displeasure as when he first wooed her. He sacrifices twopence in juniper to her every morning before she rises, and he wakes her with villainous out-of-tune music, which she, out of her contempt (though not out of her judgment) is sure to dislike.

Deliro treats his wife as if she were a goddess. He burns sweet-smelling juniper as a sacrifice to her, just as devotees burn incense to honor their god.

**FALLACE [Illusion]**

Deliro's wife and idol, a proud, mincing, petted darling, and as perverse as he is officious. She dotes as perfectly upon the courtier Fastidious Brisk as her husband dotes on her, and lacks only the effrontery to be adulterous.

**SAVIOLINA [Moderately Witty]**

A court lady whose weightiest praise is a light, shallow wit, admired by herself and one more, her admirer Brisk.

**SORDIDO [Sordid and Corrupt]**

A wretched hobnailed rustic miser and chatterer, whose recreation is reading of almanacs, and whose felicity is foul weather; one who never prayed but for a lean dearth of wheat due to crop failure, and always wept in a fat harvest.

Almanacs forecast weather and crop yields. Sordido hoards grain and hopes for a lean harvest so he can sell grain at a high price.

**FUNGOSO [A Mushroom, aka an Upstart]**

The son of Sordido, and a student; one who has reveled — including in the festivities of the Inns of Court after Christmas — in his time and follows the fashion afar off, like a spy. He makes it the whole bent of his endeavors to wring sufficient means from his wretched father to put him in the courtier's fashion; at which he earnestly aims, but so unluckily, that he still alights short a suit.

Fungoso metaphorically bends his bow, takes aim at a target, and shoots, but his arrow alights — lands — short of his mark. Fungoso wants to dress like a courtier, but he fails.

**SOGLIARDO [Fool]**

An essential (in the highest sense) clown and rustic, brother to Sordido, yet so enamored of the title and status of a gentleman that he will have it although he has to pay for it. He comes up every London law-term to learn to take tobacco and see new motions. He is in his kingdom when he can get himself into company where he may be well laughed at.

Motions are 1) puppet-shows, and 2) events that take place in courts of law.

**SHIFT [Conman and Trickster]**

A threadbare shark, rogue, and petty swindler; one who never was a soldier, yet is a con man who makes money by begging while pretending he was a soldier. His profession is skeldering (fraudulent begging) and odling (cheating), his bank is St. Paul's Cathedral, and his warehouse is Pickt-hatch, a place of brothels. Borrows single testons (sixpences) upon oaths until doomsday. Falls under executions of three shillings and enters into five-groat bonds. He waylays the reports of notable military exploits and cons them without book (that is, he hears the reports and memorizes them), damning himself by lying that he came freshly from the military exploit, when all the while he was taking the diet (that is, undertaking a cure for venereal disease) in a bawdy house or lay pawned in his chamber for rent and victuals. He is of that admirable and happy memory that he will salute — greet — one for an old acquaintance whom he never saw in his life before. He lays claim to cheats, quarrels, and robberies that he never did, only to get himself a reputation. His chief activities are taking the whiff of tobacco, squiring a prostitute and pimping her or using her services, and covertly looking for imparters — people who will part with their money by lending it to him, or people who can give him information he can use, perhaps to help him pretend to be a soldier.

Pickt-hatch was a bad part of town where Shift stored — warehoused — stolen goods.

An execution is a writ of execution. Shift cannot repay three shillings, and so a writ of execution is taken out to seize his property to repay the three shillings.

Sometimes, Shift would have to stay in his room because he had pawned everything of value he owned, perhaps including his clothing.

Shift pretends to recognize people he has never seen before as a way to worm himself into their acquaintanceship and con them.

**CLOVE** and **ORANGE [Effeminate Fools]**

An inseparable pair of coxcombs, aka fools, city-born; the Gemini or twins of foppery who, like a pair of wooden rapiers, are fit for nothing but to be practiced upon (cheated or fooled). Being well flattered, they'll lend money, and repent when they have done. Their glory is to feast actors and give suppers; and in company of better rank, to avoid the suspicion of intellectual insufficiency, will enforce their ignorance most desperately, to set upon the understanding of anything. Orange is the more preposterous of the two, whose small portion of juice being squeezed out, Clove serves to stick him with commendations.

Clove and Orange are both fools, but they pretend — or even believe — that they are more intelligent than they are. They force their ignorance on other, smarter people.

When Orange speaks, Clove lavishes him with praise.

**CORDATUS [Wise and Prudent]**

The author's friend, a man intimately and closely acquainted with the scope and drift — the aim and design — of the author's plot; of a discreet, prudent, and understanding judgment, and has the place of a moderator, arbitrator, and judge.

**MITIS [Gentle]**

Is a person of no action, and therefore we have reason to afford him no character.

***BENA NOTA***:

It was not near his thoughts who has published this either to traduce and defame the author or to make vulgar and cheap any of the individual and distinguished merits of the actors, but rather, whereas many censures fluttered about it, to give all leave and leisure to judge with distinction.

# INDUCTION

The induction is an introduction.

The trumpet sounded for the second time. The first sounding of the trumpet was to tell audience members to take their places, and the third and final sounding would announce the beginning of the Prologue. The middle sounding was a warning that audience members really needed to take their places.

Asper and two of his friends — Cordatus and Mitis — strode onto the stage of a playhouse. Asper would be an actor in the play his friends were going to see. His two friends were running after him. Asper was angry, and they wanted to calm him. Audience members — including you, dear reader — were in attendance.

Asper was also the author of the play about to be presented on that stage.

In Ben Jonson's day, the word "asper" meant harsh, severe, and stern. As a satirist, Asper was about to severely criticize society.

Cordatus began, "Nay, my dear Asper —"

Mitis began, "Stay your mind, and calm yourself —"

Asper said:

"Go away!

"Who is so capable of enduring this impious world that he can check his spirit or rein his tongue? Who can control himself in this impious and wicked world and refrain from criticizing it?

"Or who has such a dead unfeeling sense that heaven's horrid thunders cannot awaken it?

"To see the earth, cracked with the weight of sin, hell gaping under us, and over our heads black ravenous ruin with her sail-stretched wings ready like a bird of prey to sink us down and cover us.

"Who can behold such prodigies — monstrous, unnatural events — as these and have his lips sealed up?

"Not I. My soul was never ground into such oily colors to flatter vice and daub iniquity — I can't paint a pretty picture of this impious world.

"Instead, with an armed and resolved hand, I'll strip the ragged, torn, faulty follies of the time as naked as people are at their birth —"

Asper was a satirist who wished to point out the faults of this world. He wanted to metaphorically strip and whip wicked offenders.

"Don't be too bold," Cordatus interrupted.

Asper said, "You trouble me with your interruption!"

He then continued his diatribe from where he had left off:

"— and with a whip of steel print wounding lashes in their iron ribs.

"I fear no angry mood, stamped in a private brow when I am pleased to unmask a public vice.

"I fear no strumpet's poisons nor ruffian's stab, should I detect their hateful lusts.

"I fear no pawnbroker's, bawd's, usurer's, or lawyer's extortionate grip, if I were disposed to say that they're all corrupt.

"I fear no courtier's frown, should I 'applaud' the easy flexure of his supple hams as he frequently bows.

"Tut, these are so innate and inborn, vulgar, and common that drunken Custom — habituated vice — would not shame to laugh in scorn at any satirist who would just dare to tax them.

“And yet, not one of these but knows Custom’s works, knows what damnation is, the devil, and hell. Yet hourly they persist, grow grossly luxuriant and foul-smelling in sin, blasting their souls away in perjurious, lying puffs of air, to cherish their extortion, pride, or lusts.”

“Stop, good Asper,” Mitis said. “Don’t be like your name.”

Asper’s name means “harsh.” He is a harsh critic.

Asper continued:

“Oh, but to such corrupt people, whose faces are all filled with religious zeal, and who, with the words of Hercules, attack such crimes as these, who will not smell of sin, but seem as if they were made of sanctity, religion in their garments, and their hair cut shorter than their eyebrows —”

Asper was criticizing hypocrisy. The Puritans were thought to be hypocrites.

Puritans talked much about religious zeal, and their hairstyle was short.

Hercules suffered fits of madness during which he ranted.

Asper continued:

“— when the conscience is vaster than the ocean, and devours and swallows up more wretches than the Counters —”

The Counters are prisons.

Asper was criticizing conscientious Puritans who condemned more people than could be held in London’s two prisons for debtors. The Puritans’ ability to morally condemn other people became as wide and deep as the ocean.

Mitis said, “Gentle Asper, contain your spirit in much stricter boundaries, and don’t be thus carried away with the violence of your strongly held thoughts and beliefs.”

Cordatus said, “Unless your breath has the godlike power to melt and destroy the world and mold and make it anew again, it is in vain to expend it in these moods.”

Looking around, Asper said, “I did not see this thronged round until now.”

The round was the area around the stage. Asper and his two friends were standing on stage.

Asper addressed the audience, including you, dear readers:

“Gracious and kind spectators, you are welcome.

“May Apollo and the Muses feast your eyes with graceful objects, and may our Minerva — Queen Elizabeth I — answer your hopes to their largest strain — to their utmost.”

Apollo was the god of music and poetry. The nine Muses were goddesses of the arts. Minerva was the Roman equivalent of the Greek Athena, goddess of wisdom.

Asper continued:

“Yet here — don’t mistake me, judicious friends — I do not say this to beg your patience, or servilely to fawn on your applause like some dry, unfruitful brain, despairing in his merit.”

Asper then invited critics to criticize his ideas:

“Let me be criticized by the austerest brow.

“Where I lack art and skill in my conception and expression, or where I lack judgment in my handling of my conception and expression, please tax and criticize me freely.

“Let envious, carping critics with their most sweeping eyes look through and through me; I pursue no favor.

“Only grant me your attentions, and I will give you music worth your ears.

“Oh, how I hate the monstrousness of time, where every servile imitating spirit, plagued with an itching, contagious leprosy of wit, in a mere lame fury strives to fling his ulcerous body in the Thespian spring of poetic inspiration, and straightaway leaps forth a poet, but as lame as Vulcan or the founder of Cripplegate.”

Vulcan is the Roman equivalent of the Greek Hephaestus. He was the lame blacksmith god.

Cripplegate, one of the seven gates of Old London, was popularly supposed to have been built by a lame man who had become wealthy.

Not every playwright is competent or original.

Mitis said, “In faith, this humor will seem offensive to some. You will be thought to be too peremptory and dogmatic.”

The word “humor” was popular at the time and had many meanings. Mitis was using it to mean “mood.”

Picking up on the word “humor,” Asper said, “‘This humor’? It’s good you used that phrase just now, and can you explain why you used the phrase ‘this humor,’ Mitis?”

Mitis began to turn away, wishing to avoid a discussion of the meaning or meanings of the word “humor.”

Asper told him, “Nay, do not turn away, but answer me.”

“Answer?” Mitis said. “Answer what?”

Asper said:

“I will not stir your patience, pardon me.

“I urged my question about humor for some reasons, and the rather to give these ignorant ‘well-spoken’ days some taste of their abuse of this word ‘humor.’”

“‘Well-spoken’” with the ironic quotes means “eloquent but ignorant.”

“Humor” was an in-vogue word, used by many people with various meanings.

Asper considered some of those meanings to be incorrect.

“Oh, do not let your purpose lapse, good Asper,” Cordatus said. “It cannot but arrive at a most acceptable conclusion, chiefly to such people as have the happiness daily to see how the poor innocent word is racked, distorted, and tortured.”

Cordatus agreed with Asper that the word “humor” was frequently misused.

“Aye, please, proceed,” Mitis said.

Asper, who had been thinking and not paying attention, said, “Ha? What? What is it?”

“Tell us about the abuse of the word ‘humor,’” Cordatus said.

Ben Jonson’s society existed before the age of modern medicine.

Doctors in Ben Jonson’s society believed that the human body had four humors, or vital fluids, that determined one’s temperament. Each humor made a contribution to the personality, and one humor could be predominant. For a human being to be sane and healthy, the four humors had to be present in the right amounts. If a man had too much of a certain humor, it would harm his personality and health.

The four humors are blood, yellow bile, black bile, and phlegm. If blood is predominant, then the person is sanguine (active, optimistic). If yellow bile is predominant, then the person is choleric (bad-tempered). If black bile is predominant, then the person is melancholic (sad). If phlegm is predominant, then the person is phlegmatic (calm, apathetic, indolent).

The above is the definition of “humor” that Asper believed was correct.

Asper said:

“Oh, I beg your pardon. I was lost in my thoughts.

Asper now defined humor:

“Why, humor (as it is, *ens*, aka entity) we thus define to be a quality of air or water, and in itself it holds these two properties, moisture and flexure, aka fluidity or ability to flow.

“As for demonstration: Pour water on this floor, and it will wet and run. Likewise, the air, forced through a horn or trumpet, flows instantly away and leaves behind a kind of dew or condensation.

“And hence we do conclude that whatsoever has flexure (fluidity) and humidity, as wanting power to contain itself, is humor. So in every human body the choler, melancholy, phlegm, and

blood, by reason that they flow continually in some one part and are not continent, but are incontinent and always flowing, receive the name of humors.

“Now, thus far it may by metaphor — figuratively — apply itself unto the general disposition, as when some individual, singular, peculiar quality does so possess a man that it draws all his affections, desires, and feelings, his spirits, and his powers in their confluxions — their actions of flowing together — all to run one way.

“This may be truly said to be a humor.”

Other people believed that a humor could be a personal characteristic, a fancy or a whim, or a mood.

A personal characteristic could be an eccentricity, such as affectation in clothing.

Asper, however, did not regard affectation in clothing to be a true humor:

“But that a rook — a lout — in wearing a pied feather — the cable hatband or the three-piled ruff, a yard of shoe-tie or the Switzer’s knot on his French garters, should affect a humor, oh, it is more than most ridiculous.”

A pied feather is a parti-colored plume — a feather dyed more than one color.

A cable hatband is a twisted cord worn around a hat.

A three-piled ruff is a three-layered collar.

Shoe-ties are decorations made of ribbon and worn on a shoe.

The Switzer’s knot is a garter worn below the knee by Swiss soldiers.

French garters are made of silk or taffeta.

People were claiming that their affectation in clothing was a humor.

“He speaks pure truth,” Cordatus said. “Now, if an idiot should have but an apish — foolishly affected or imitative — or fantastic strain, it is his humor.”

In other words, if anyone exhibited any kind of eccentricity, perhaps (or probably) intentionally, that person called it his or her humor.

Speaking as a satirist and as the supposed author of the satiric play about to be performed, Asper said, “Well, I will scourge and whip those apes, and to these courteous eyes” — he meant the audience — “I will set opposite to their gaze a mirror as large as is the stage whereon we act, where they shall see the time’s deformity anatomized — dissected — in every nerve and sinew, with constant courage and contempt of fear.”

“Asper, I urge it as your friend, take heed and be careful,” Mitis said. “The days are dangerous, full of objection and faultfinding and complaint, and men are grown impatient of reproof.”

Asper laughed and then replied:

“You might as well have told me that yonder is heaven.”

He pointed to the underside of the cover over the stage; the underside was painted like the sky.

Asper continued:

“You might as well have told me that this stage is the earth, these pillars are men, and these things all move like the things they represent.

“Don’t I know the times’ condition?

“Yes, Mitis, I know the times’ condition, and their souls, and who they are who either will or can make an objection against me. They are none but a group of fools, so sick in taste that they scorn all medicine of the mind, and, like camels made sore because of chafing, kick at every touch — they fight the people who are trying to help them.

“Good men and virtuous spirits who loath their vices will cherish my free labors, love my lines, and with the fervor of their shining grace make my brain fruitful to bring forth more objects worthy their serious and attentive eyes.

“But why do I so urge this, as if my argument were faint and weak?

“No, if any person here should happen to see himself in the portrayal of any actor on stage, let him not dare to accuse me of doing wrong, for if he is ashamed to have his follies known, first he should be ashamed to enact them.”

More usually, people don’t see themselves when actors portray the audience’s vices — but they do see their neighbors. Later, Jonathan Swift would write, “Satire is a sort of glass [mirror] wherein beholders do generally discover everybody’s face but their own; which is the chief reason for that kind reception it meets with in the world, and that so very few are offended with it.”

Asper continued:

“My strict hand was made to seize on vice, and, with a firm grip, to crush out the humor of such spongy souls as lap up every idle vanity.”

Cordatus said about Asper, “Why, this is genuine *furor poeticus*! The poets’ inspired frenzy!”

He then said to the audience, “Kind gentlemen [and gentlewomen], we hope your patience will yet conceive the best interpretation of his actions or entertain this supposition: that a madman speaks.”

Asper called to the actors, who were offstage, “Are you ready there?”

He then said, “Mitis, sit down, and my Cordatus, sit down, too.”

He called to the trumpeters, “Sound, ho, and begin!”

When the trumpets would next sound, that would be the signal for the prologue to begin. Actually, the trumpets would sound not immediately, but a little later.

Asper said to his two friends, “I will leave you two as judges to sit here, observe what I present, and liberally speak your opinions upon every scene as it shall pass the view of these spectators.”

He called to the trumpeters, “Nay, now, you’re tedious, sirs. For shame, begin!”

Asper then said, “And Mitis, note for me if in all this collection of faces of the audience you can espy a gallant of this type, who, to be thought one of the judicious, sits with his arms thus wreathed” — Asper folded his arms tightly in the position a judgmental critic would fold them — “his hat pulled here” — Asper demonstrated the way a judgmental critic would wear his hat — “cries a derisive ‘mew’ and nods, then shakes his empty head, and will show more various motions — expressions — in his face than the new *London*, *Rome*, or *Nineveh*.”

“Motions” were puppet-plays as well as expressions. *London* was probably about the giants Gog and Magog, *Nineveh* was probably about Jacob and the whale, and *Rome* was probably about Julius Caesar.

Asper continued his description of a judgmental critic: “And now and then he breaks a dry biscuit jest — a stale joke, which, so that it may more easily be chewed, he steeps and soaks in his own laughter.”

People would float a piece of dry toast in a mug of ale and then consume both the toast and the ale.

“Why, will that make it be sooner swallowed?” Cordatus asked.

Asper replied, “Oh, assure yourself it will, or if it did not, yet as Horace sings, *Jejunus raro stomachus vulgaria temnit* — that is, ‘Mean cates are always welcome to hungry guests.’”

“Mean cates” are common food, not delicacies.

“That is true, but why should we observe them, Asper?” Cordatus asked.

Why keep an eye on the judgmental critics?

Asper answered:

“Oh, I would know them, for in such assemblies they’re more infectious than the pestilence. And therefore I would give them pills to purge — emetics or laxatives — and make them fit for fair societies. How monstrous and detested is it to see a fellow who has neither art nor brain sit like an Aristarchus, or a stark ass” — Aristarchus of Samothrace was an ancient Greek literary critic — “taking exception to men’s lines with a tobacco face in snuff, always spitting, using his twisted, contorted looks, in nature of a vice, to wrest and turn the good aspect of those who shall sit near him from what they do behold! Oh, it is most vile.”

Critics can be good or bad. A good satirist can justly criticize a bad society. A bad critic can unjustly criticize a good play.

Mitis began, “Nay, Asper —”

Asper said:

“Peace, Mitis, be quiet. I know what you are thinking: You’ll say that your — that is, my — audience will take exception at this.

“Pish, you are too timorous and full of fear. Then it is he, a patient, shall reject all medicine because the physician tells him you are sick.”

In other words, you say that the audience will take exception at my words and so I ought not to say them, although my words are meant to heal despite inflicting pain. It is as if a physician were to tell you that you are sick, and because you are timorous and full of fear, and you don’t want others to feel that way, the others have no chance of getting the same medicine although they suffer from the same illness that you do.

Asper continued:

“Or, if I say that he is vicious, you will not hear of virtue.”

In other words, if I say that someone is sinful, you will shield that person from hearing me although I then talk about virtue.

Asper continued:

“Come, you’re foolish.

“Shall I be so extravagant to think that happy judgments and composed, self-possessed spirits will challenge me for taxing such as these?

“I am ashamed —”

Cordatus interrupted, “— nay, but good sir, pardon us. We must not endure this peremptory sailing on and criticizing us but instead use our best endeavors how to please the audience. We can’t ignore the interests of the audience.”

Asper replied:

“Why, therein I commend your careful thoughts, and I will join with you in working to please the audience.

“But whom shall we please?

“Attentive auditors, such as will join their profit with their pleasure, and come to feed their understanding parts and satisfy their intellect? For these, I’ll prodigally expend my energy and speak my spirit away into air with my satiric speeches. For these, I’ll melt my brain into invention, coin new ideas, and hang my richest words as polished jewels in the audience’s bounteous ears.

“But wait, I am losing myself and wronging the actors’ patience. If I stay on stage and dwell here, the actors will not begin, I see.”

He said to Cordatus and Mitis, “Friends, sit here still, and entertain this troop of audience members with some familiar talk and chit-chat. I’ll hasten the trumpeters and make them sound.”

When the trumpet sounded, the Prologue would walk onto the stage. During the prologue, Asper would dress for his part in the play.

Asper then said to the audience:

“Now, gentlemen, I go to turn myself into an actor and a humorist.”

A humorist 1) is subject to humors, and/or 2) is comical.

Asper continued:

“Here, before I resume my present person, we hope to make the circles of your eyes flow with distilled laughter — tears of laughter. If we fail, we must impute it to this sole, single chance: ‘Art has an enemy called ignorance.’”

He exited to get dressed for his role in his play.

“How do you like his spirit, Mitis?” Cordatus asked.

“I would like it much better if he were less confident,” Mitis said.

“Why, do you suspect his merit?” Cordatus asked.

“No, but I fear this spirit of his will procure him much malice against him,” Mitis said.

“Oh, that sets the stronger seal on his merit,” Cordatus said. “If he had no enemies, I should esteem his fortunes most wretched at this instant.”

A savage satirist such as Asper should have enemies. A savage satirist without enemies is a bad savage satirist. Asper does have enemies and so he may be a good savage satirist.

“You have seen his play, Cordatus,” Mitis said. “Please tell me, how is it?”

“Indeed, sir, I must refrain from judging it,” Cordatus said. “Only this I can say of it, it is strange, and of a particular kind by itself, somewhat like *Vetus Comoedia*. A work that has bounteously pleased me; how it will answer the general expectation and be received by the audience, I don’t know.”

*Vetus Comoedia* is Old Comedy, such as the comic plays of the ancient Greek playwright Aristophanes. It is also early English comic plays.

“Does he observe all the laws of comedy in it?” Mitis asked.

“What laws do you mean?” Cordatus asked.

Mitis replied, “Why, the equal division of it into acts and scenes, according to the Terentian manner; the correct number of actors; the furnishing of the scene with *grex* or chorus; and that the whole plot fall within the compass of a single day.”

Terence was a Roman playwright who divided his plays into five acts.

Ben Jonson’s *grex* or chorus consisted of Cordatus and Mitis, who would comment on and criticize his play.

“Oh, no, these are too nice — foolish or over-strict — observations,” Cordatus said.

“They are such as must be received, if you don’t mind my saying so, or it cannot be authentic,” Mitis said. “They must be accepted as authoritative.”

“To tell the truth, I can discern no such necessity,” Cordatus said.

“No?” Mitis said.

Cordatus now began to talk about theatrical history as the people of Ben Jonson’s day understood it. Some of what they believed was correct, and some was incorrect:

“No, I assure you, signor.

“If those laws you speak of had been delivered to us *ab initio* — from the beginning — and in their present excellence and perfection, there would be some reason for obeying their rules. But it is manifest that that which we call *comoedia* was at first nothing but a simple and continuous satire, aka satyr’s dance and songs, sung by one only person, until Susario invented a second, after him Epicharmus a third; Phormus and Chionides devised to have four actors, with a prologue and chorus, to which Cratinus, long after, added a fifth and sixth, Eupolis more, Aristophanes more than they.

“Every man in the dignity of his spirit and judgment supplied something.

“And, although it is true that in Aristophanes this kind of poem” — “poem” was Ben Jonson’s preferred word for “play” — “appeared completely and fully perfected, yet how is the face of it changed since, in Menander, Philemon, Cecilius, Plautus, and the rest, who have utterly excluded the chorus, altered the social levels and conditions of the characters, their names, and natures, and augmented it with all liberty according to the elegancy and disposition of those times wherein they wrote.

“I don’t see then why we shouldn’t enjoy the same *licentia*, or free power, to illustrate and heighten our invention as they did, and not be tied to those strict and regular forms that the foolishness and fussiness of a few playwrights — who value nothing but form — would thrust upon us.”

Some people follow the literary rules too strictly.

Mitis replied, “Well, we will not dispute about this now. But where does Ben Jonson set his scene in this upcoming play?”

“By the Virgin Mary, he sets it on the *Insula Fortunata*, sir,” Cordatus answered.

The Fortunate Island is 1) Britain, and 2) the birthplace of Folly, according to Renaissance humanist Erasmus’ *The Praise of Folly*.

In mythology, the Fortunate Islands are the Isles of Bliss, where good souls go to in the afterlife.

“Oh, the Fortunate Island?” Mitis said, “By the Mass, he has bound himself to a strict law there. He has severely limited what he can do.”

Some people of Ben Jonson’s day believed in the three theatrical laws of time, place, and action.

The unity of time was the rule that the events of the play had to take place within one day.

The unity of place was the rule that the events of the play had to take place in one main place.

The unity of action was the rule that the events of the play had to concern one action. That is, the play would have one plot.

These laws came from an interpretation of Aristotle’s *Poetics*, but Ben Jonson and other playwrights often violated these rules; for example, plays would often contain one major plot and one or more minor plots. Ben Jonson often did this, but he also followed the three unities in his play *Volpone*.

“Why so?” Cordatus asked.

“He cannot lightly and easily alter the scene without crossing the seas,” Mitis said.

The unity of place, if observed, would prohibit the characters from leaving the island.

“He doesn’t need to cross the seas, having a whole island to run through, I think,” Cordatus said.

“No?” Mitis said. “How comes it, then, that in a certain play we see so many seas, countries, and kingdoms passed over with such admirable dexterity?”

The Elizabethan stage was very fluid. The locale could be England in one scene and France in the next scene. This happens in William Shakespeare’s *Henry V*.

“Oh, that just shows how well the authors can travail and travel in their vocation, and outrun the apprehension of their audience,” Cordatus said. “But leaving this topic of discussion, I wish the actors would begin at once. This protraction is enough to sour the best-settled patience in the theatre.”

The trumpets sounded for the third time to announce the entrance of the Prologue.

“They have answered your wish, sir,” Mitis said. “The trumpets sound.”

The Prologue — the actor who spoke the prologue — strode on stage.

“Oh, here comes the Prologue,” Cordatus said.

He then said to the Prologue, “Now, sir, if you had stayed away a little longer, I would have spoken your prologue for you, indeed.”

“By the Virgin Mary, with all my heart, sir, you shall do it yet, and I thank you,” the Prologue said.

He started to leave.

“Nay, nay! Stay, stay! Do you hear me?” Cordatus said.

The Prologue replied, “You could not have prepared and aimed to have done me a greater benefit at this time, for I say to you, I am not word-perfect, and had I spoken the prologue, I must of necessity have been reduced to silence.”

“What! Do you speak this seriously?” Cordatus asked.

“Seriously?” the Prologue said. “Aye, as God’s my help, I do speak this seriously, and I esteem myself indebted to your kindness for it.”

“For what?” Cordatus asked.

“Why, for undertaking the prologue for me,” the Prologue said.

“What! Did I agree to undertake it for you?” Cordatus asked.

“Did you?” the Prologue said. “I appeal to all these gentlemen in the audience whether you did or not. Come, it pleases you to cast a strange and surprised look on it now, but it will not serve as an excuse.”

“Before God, but it must serve, and therefore speak your prologue,” Cordatus said.

“If I do, let me die poisoned with some venomous hiss and never live to look as high as the two-penny room again,” the Prologue said.

The Prologue had metaphorically compared the hissing of a hostile audience to the hissing of a venomous snake.

Places in the theater cost various prices according to how good the places were. The two-penny rooms were frequented by prostitutes and pickpockets.

The Prologue exited.

“He has put you to it, sir,” Mitis said.

“By God’s death, what a humorous — perverse — fellow this is!” Cordatus said.

He then said to the audience, “Gentlemen [and gentlewomen], in good faith, I can speak no prologue, howsoever the Prologue’s weak wit has had the fortune to make this strong, severe, brazen use and treatment of me here before you. But I protest —”

Carlo Buffone entered the scene along with his serving-boy.

Carlo interrupted Cordatus, “— come, come, stop these fustian — bombastic and longwinded — protestations. Leave. Come, I cannot abide these grey-headed, hoary, outdated ceremonies.”

He then ordered his serving-boy, “Boy, fetch me a glass of wine, quickly, so that I may bid these gentlemen welcome and give them a health — a toast — here.”

The serving-boy exited.

Carlo Buffone then said, “I marvel whose wit it was to put a prologue in yonder sackbut’s mouth. They might well think he’d be out of tune, and yet you’d play upon him, too.”

A sackbut is a musical instrument that is a forerunner of the trombone, and a butt of sack is a cask of white wine. Carlo Buffone was calling the Prologue a sackbut. Possibly, he was implying that Cordatus had a squeaky voice and was drunk. Carlo was known for saying caustic things that were not necessarily true. He was willing to say mean things if it would get people to laugh.

“To play on a person” is 1) to trick that person, 2) to mock that person, 3) to jest with that person, and/or 4) to manipulate that person (as one would manipulate a musical instrument).

“Hang him, dull block!” Cordatus said, knowing that he had been insulted.

A “block” is 1) a block of wood on which wigs or hats were placed, 2) metaphorically, a blockhead or stupid person, 3) an obstruction, or 4) a wooden support in carpentry.

Using the definition of “block” as a wooden support, Carlo Buffone said, “Oh, speak good words, speak charitable words. A well-timbered fellow, he would have made a good column if he had been thought on when the house — the Globe Theatre — was being built.”

“Well-timbered” can mean 1) well-built, or 2) wooden-headed, aka blockheaded.

The Globe Theatre was where Ben Jonson’s play was being performed.

Carlo’s serving-boy returned with a glass and some wine.

Carol Buffone said:

“Oh, have thou come? Well assayed, and well done. Give me wine, boy. Fill my glass. Good. Here’s a cup of wine that sparkles like a diamond.”

He then said to the audience:

“Gentlewomen — I am sworn to put them in first — and gentlemen, here is a round in place of a bad prologue.”

Carlo Buffone was claiming that etiquette required him to mention the gentlewomen first, before mentioning the gentlemen.

He continued:

“I drink this good draught to your health here: Canary, the very elixir and spirit of wine.”

Canary wine was wine from the Canary Islands. The Latin name of the islands is *Canariae Insulae* and means the Islands of the Dogs. Large dogs were reputed to roam on the islands.

Carlo Buffone drank and then said:

“This is the wine that our poet — Ben Jonson — calls Castalian liquor, the liquor of the Muses, whose sacred spring was named Castalia, when he comes abroad, now and then, once in a fortnight, and hosts a good meal among players, where he has *caninum appetitum*: a dog-like, greedy appetite. By the Virgin Mary, at home he keeps a good philosophical — abstemious — diet of beans and buttermilk. An honest pure rogue, he will drink off three, four, five of these draughts, one after another, and look villainously when he has done, like a one-headed Cerberus.

“Ben Jonson does not hear me, I hope.”

The draughts were of wine, but Carlo made it sound as they might be of buttermilk. If indeed they were of buttermilk, that could explain why Ben Jonson looked so villainously. Of course, being drunk or hungover can also make one look villainously.

Cerberus was a three-headed dog that was a guard dog in the Land of the Dead. One way to get past him was to get him drunk with bread soaked in wine so that he would sleep.

Carlo Buffone continued:

“And then, when his belly is well ballasted — loaded — and his brain clothed with Canary wine and rigged a little, he sails away in spite of it, as though he would work wonders when he comes home.”

Once loaded with the inspiration of Canary wine, Ben Jonson felt as if he could write a play that would be wonderfully applauded.

Carlo Buffone continued:

“He has made a play here, and he calls it *Every Man Out of His Humor*. By God’s blood, if he gets me out of the humor he has put me in, I’ll never trust any of his tribe again, while I live.”

The humor — mood — Carlo Buffone was in was caustic and critical. Can Ben Jonson get him out of that humor? Not likely. Chances are, even if Ben Jonson doesn’t get him of that mood, Carlo Buffone will never trust any of his tribe.

Carlo Buffone continued:

“Gentles, all I can say on his behalf is, you are welcome. I could wish my bottle here were passed around among you, but there’s an old rule: ‘No pledging your own health.’

“By the Virgin Mary, if any here are thirsty for it, their best course of action that I know is to sit still, seal up their lips, and drink so much of the play in at their ear.”

Carlo Buffone and his serving-boy exited.

“Who may this fellow be, Cordatus?” Mitis asked.

Cordatus answered:

“Indeed, if the time will allow his description, I’ll give it to you.”

In fact, Carlo Buffone is a character in Ben Jonson’s play.

Cordatus continued:

“He is one whom the author — Ben Jonson — calls Carlo Buffone, an impudent common jester, a violent railer, and an immense glutton. He is one whose company is desired by all men, but beloved by none. He will sooner lose his soul than a jest, and he will profane even the most holy things to excite laughter. No honorable or reverend personage whatsoever can come within the reach of his eye but is turned into all manner of variations by his specious similes and comparisons.”

“You paint forth a monster,” Mitis said. “You make him out to be a monster.”

Cordatus continued his description:

“He will prefer all other countries before his native country, and he thinks he can never sufficiently, or with admiration enough, deliver his affected ideas about foreign atheistic policies.

“But wait, observe these actors in the play. Carlo Buffone will appear as himself in the play soon.”

Macilente, unaccompanied, walked onto the stage.

Asper, the supposed author of the play, was appearing in the role of Macilente.

“Oh, this is your envious man, Macilente, I think,” Mitis said.

“The same, sir,” Cordatus replied.

The play began.

# CHAPTER 1

## — 1.1 —

The scene was the estate of Sogliardo, a wealthy country bumpkin who wished to be a gentleman. The estate was near London.

Macilente, an envious scholar, said to himself:

"*Viri est, fortunae caecitatem facile ferre*."

The Latin means: "The lot of Mankind is to endure the blindness of fortune without complaining."

Macilente continued:

"It is true, but stoic."

The Stoic philosophers believed in patiently enduring their lot in life.

Macilente continued:

"Where in the vast world does that man breathe who can so entirely command his passions and his feelings?

"Well, I see that I strive in vain to cure my wounded soul. For every cordial that my thoughts apply turns into a corrosive and eats it farther.

"There is no taste and no relish in this philosophy. It is like a dose of medicine that a man should drink, but his stomach turns with the sight of it.

"I am no such peeled and pilled Cynic that I would believe that beggary is the only happiness, or that with a number of these patient fools, I would sing 'my mind to me a kingdom is' when the lank hungry belly barks for food."

"My mind to me a kingdom is" is the first line of a hymn by Sir Edward Dyer.

The word "peeled" means threadbare and beggarly, and the word "pilled" means covered with fur.

Hungry stomachs growl; very hungry stomachs bark.

Many Cynics were beggars and the Cynic Diogenes was sometimes called the Dog. The word "Cynic" means "Dog-like."

The Cynics believed in rejecting wealth, fame, and power and instead living a simple life. They often publicly and caustically rejected wealth, fame, and power and the people who pursued them.

Diogenes once carried a lit lamp during the daytime and claimed to be looking for a man — any man — but all he could find were scoundrels. (Retellings of this story sometimes say that he was looking for an honest man.)

Alexander the Great heard about Diogenes, met him, and asked if he could do anything for him. In doing so, Alexander stood between the famous Cynic and the sun and cast a shadow on him. Diogenes replied, "Yes, you can stand out of my sunlight."

Alexander told him, "If I were not Alexander, I would want to be Diogenes." Diogenes replied, "If I were not Diogenes, I would want to be Diogenes."

When Alexander wondered why Diogenes was looking at a pile of bones, Diogenes replied, "I am looking for the bones of your father, but I cannot distinguish them from the bones of his slaves."

Macilente began to speak about his envy of the success of other people:

"I look into the world, and there I meet with objects that strike my bloodshot eyes into my brain; where, when I view myself — having before observed, this man is great, mighty, and feared, and that man is loved and highly favored, a third man is thought wise and learned, a

fourth man is rich and therefore honored, a fifth man is splendidly handsome, and a sixth man is admired for his nuptial fortunes won by marrying a rich woman — when I see these and view myself, I say that I wish my optic instruments — my eyes — were cracked, and that the engine of my grief could cast my eyeballs, like two globes of wildfire, forth to melt this unjustly proportioned frame of nature."

"Engine" here refers to a war machine such as a catapult.

Wildfire was a highly inflammable substance used in war.

Macilente continued:

"Oh, they are thoughts that have transfixed — pierced and wounded — my heart, and often, in the strength and full force of apprehension, made my cold passion stand upon my face, like drops of sweat on a stiff cake of ice."

Cordatus commented:

"This alludes well to that of the poet,

"*Invidus suspirat, gemit, incutitque dentes,*

"*Sudat frigidus, intuens quod odit*."

Jonson scholar G.A. Wilkes translated the Latin:

"*The envious man sighs, groans, gnashes his teeth,*

"*Breaks into a cold sweat, contemplating what he hates*."

Mitis said, "Oh, peace. Be quiet: You interrupt the scene."

**— 1.2 —**

Sogliardo and Carlo Buffone entered the scene. Sogliardo was a country bumpkin who had land and money and wished to be a gentleman.

Macilente said, "Wait! Who are these men? I'll lie down a while until they pass by."

He lay down.

Cordatus said to Mitis, "Signor, note this gallant, I say to you."

The "gallant" was Sogliardo.

"Who is he?" Mitis asked.

"A tame rook," Cordatus said. "You'll see through him very soon. Listen."

A rook is a fool.

Sogliardo said, "Nay, look, Carlo, this is my humor now. I have land and money, my relatives left me well off, and I will be a gentleman whatsoever it costs me."

"That is a most gentlemanlike resolution," Carlo Buffone said.

Sogliardo said:

"Tut, if I take a humor of a thing once, I am like your tailor's needle: I go through and I see it through.

"But, as for my name, signor, what do you think? Won't it serve for a gentleman's name, when the 'signor' is put to it? Huh?"

"Let me hear it," Carlo Buffone said. "What is it?"

Sogliardo answered, "'Signor Insulso Sogliardo.' I think it sounds well."

*Insulso* is Latin for "without salt." Sogliardo is without salt: He is bland and without wit and intelligence.

"Oh, excellent," Carlo Buffone said. "Tut, if you were all dressed to suit your name, you might very well stand for a gentleman. I know many Sogliardos who are gentlemen."

Sogliardos are people without wit and intelligence, like Sogliardo.

"Why, and for my wealth I might be a justice of peace," Sogliardo said.

Carlo Buffone said to himself, "Aye, and a constable for your wit."

Calling Sogliardo “a constable for your wit” was a way of saying that Sogliardo was witless. Constables were often thought to be unintelligent.

Sogliardo motioned around him and said, “All this is my lordship you see here, and those farms you came by.”

Sogliardo was a lord of the lordship who owned much property. He was not a member of the peerage.

“These are good steps to gentility, too, by the Virgin Mary,” Carlo Buffone said. “But Sogliardo, if you affect — aspire — to be a gentleman indeed, you must observe all the splendid qualities, humors, and accomplishments of a gentleman.”

“I know it, signor,” Sogliardo said, “and if you please to instruct me, I am not too good and high-ranking to learn something from you, I’ll assure you.”

Carlo Buffone said out loud, “Enough, sir —”

He said to himself, “I’ll make admirable use in the projection of my medicine upon this lump of copper here.”

He then said out loud, “— I’ll think about how I can help you, sir.”

He wanted to turn this metaphorical lump of copper (and literal fool) into money and gold for himself, like an alchemist would use the philosopher’s stone to turn base metals such as copper into gold.

In the process called projection, some of the philosopher’s stone was used to turn base metal into precious metal. This was supposed to be the final step of making the philosopher’s stone.

The philosopher’s stone was called “medicine” here because it was also believed to cure all illnesses.

Of course, the philosopher’s stone does not exist.

“Signor, I will both pay you and beg you, and thank you and think about you,” Sogliardo replied.

Cordatus said, “Isn’t this purely and entirely good?”

Envious at hearing about Sogliardo’s wealth, Macilente said to himself, “By God’s blood, why should such a prick-eared hind as this be rich?”

A hind is 1) a rustic, 2) a servant, or 3) a female deer.

Dogs with erect ears are said to be prick-eared. Possibly, Sogliardo had big ears and a short haircut.

Macilente continued, “Bah! A fool? Such a transparent gull that may be seen through? Why should he have land, houses, and lordships? Oh, I could eat my entrails and sink my soul into the earth with sorrow!”

Carlo Buffone said:

“First, to be an accomplished gentleman, that is, a gentleman of the time, you must give up housekeeping in the country and live all the time in the city among gallants, where, at your first appearance, it would be good if you turned four or five hundred acres of your best land into two or three trunks of apparel — you may do it without going to a conjurer, magician, or witch.”

A gentleman needed expensive clothing, and he could get money to buy it by mortgaging his land.

Carlo Buffone continued:

“And be sure that you mix yourself always with such as flourish in the spring of the fashion and are least among the common people; study their deportment and behavior in everything; learn to play at the card game called primero and the dice game called passage; and, always when you lose, have two or three peculiar, eccentric oaths to swear by that no

other man swears; but above all, protest in your play, and affirm ‘Upon your honor, as you are a true gentleman’ at every cast of the dice. You may do it with a safe conscience, I assure you.”

“Oh, this is admirably splendid!” Sogliardo said. “He cannot choose but be a gentleman who has these excellent gifts. More, more, I ask you to tell me.”

Carlo Buffone said:

“You must endeavor to feed neatly at your eating-house, sit and look melancholy, and pick your teeth when you cannot speak.”

Toothpicks were fashionable.

He continued:

“And when you go to plays, be humorous — unreceptive to the play — look with a good starched-with-haughtiness face, and ruffle your brow like a new boot, laugh at nothing but your own jests, or else as the noblemen laugh; that’s a special grace and eloquence you must observe.”

Wide-topped boots were fashionable. The tops were folded, aka ruffled, below the knee.

“I assure you that I do those things, sir,” Sogliardo said.

Carlo Buffone said, “Aye, and sit on the stage and flout and scoff — provided you are wearing a good suit of clothing.”

Some members of the audience could sit on the stage. In fact, Cordatus and Mitis were sitting on the stage.

“Oh, I’ll have a suit only for that, sir,” Sogliardo said.

“You must talk much about your kindred and allies,” Carlo Buffone said.

“Tell lies?” Sogliardo said. “No, signor, I shall not need to do so, I have kindred in the city to talk about. I have a niece who is a merchant’s wife, and a nephew, my brother Sordido’s son, who is a law student of the Inns of Court.”

Carlo Buffone said:

“Oh, but you must pretend alliance with courtiers and great persons, and always when you are to dine or sup in any strange and unfamiliar presence, hire a fellow with a great chain that is the steward’s badge of office — though it be copper, it doesn’t matter — to bring you letters, feigned to make it appear to be from such a nobleman or such a knight or such a lady, ‘To their worshipful, right rare, and noble qualified friend or kinsman, Signor Insulso Sogliardo’ — give yourself plenty enough titles of address.

“And there, while you direct your attention to circumstances of news, or inquiry of their health, or so, one of your friends, whom you must bring with you always, breaks the seal open, as if it were in jest, and reads it publicly at the table; at which you must seem to take his action as unpardonable an offence as if he had torn your mistress’ colors, or insulted or lustfully panted at her picture; and pursue it with that hot grace as if you would enforce a challenge upon it immediately.”

Colors are scarves and ribbons that are gifts from women.

Sogliardo said:

“Wait, I do not like that humor of challenge. It may be accepted.”

He did not want to get into a fight.

He continued:

“But I’ll tell you what’s my humor now. I will do this: I will take the opportunity of sending one of my suits to the tailor’s to have the pocket repaired, or so, and such a letter as you talk of, with its seal and all broken open, shall be left in the pocket.

“Oh, the tailor will soon let everyone know who and what I am upon the reading of it, more effectively than twenty of your gallants.”

The stereotype of tailors was that they were effeminate and they were gossips.

“But then you must put on an extreme face of discontentment at your serving-man’s negligence,” Carlo Buffone said.

Sogliardo would pretend that his serving-man had left the open letter in the pocket.

“Oh, so I will, and I will beat him, too,” Sogliardo said. “I’ll have a man-servant for the purpose.”

Macilente said to himself, “You may indeed have a man-servant for the purpose. After all, you have land and crowns. Oh, partial — unfairly biased — Fate!”

Crowns are gold coins.

“By the Mass, well remembered,” Carlo Buffone said.

Wealthy men could beat their servants.

He continued, “You must keep your men gallant at the first. Give them fine pied — parti-colored — liveries embroidered with good gold lace. There’s no loss in it; they may rip it off and pawn it, when they lack victuals.”

“By our Lady, the Virgin Mary, that is expensive, signor,” Sogliardo objected. “It will bring a man into debt.”

“Debt?” Carlo Buffone said. “Why, that’s the more for your credit, sir; it’s an excellent policy for gentlemen to owe much in these days, if you note how gentlemen act in these days.”

Sogliardo would get credit — a reputation — for being a gentleman, but “more for [his] credit” also meant he would be in danger of overextending his credit, aka debt.

“How will debt be more for my credit as a gentleman, good signor?” Sogliardo said. “I would like to be a politician and play the game of being a gentleman well.”

Carlo Buffone said:

“Oh, look, wherever you are indebted any great sum, your creditor attends you with no less regard than if he were bound to you for some huge benefit, and he will tremble with fear lest he give you the least cause of offence, lest he lose his money.

“I assure you, in these times no man has his servant more obsequious and pliant than gentlemen have their creditors, to whom, if at any time, you pay but a half or a fourth part of what you owe them, it comes more acceptedly and welcome than if you gave them a New-Year’s gift.”

“I understand you, sir,” Sogliardo said. “I will raise the money by borrowing it, and bring myself in credit and run up debts, to be sure.”

Carlo Buffone said:

“By the Virgin Mary, take heed of this: Always be careful that you don’t do business with bankrupts, or poor needy Ludgathians.”

Ludgathians were bankrupts who were in the debtors’ prison at Ludgate.

Carlo Buffone continued:

“They are impudent creatures, turbulent spirits; they don’t care what violent tragedies they stir, nor how they play fast and loose with a poor gentleman’s fortunes, to get their own.

“By the Virgin Mary, these rich fellows who have the world, or the better part of it, sleeping in their countinghouses, they are ten times more peaceable, they. Either fear, hope, or modesty restrains them from offering any outrages.”

These rich fellows were the ones with lots of money in their treasuries. Because of their excessive wealth, they were peaceful. Possibly, this made them easier to take advantage of. They would not object to small (small for them, that is) losses.

Carlo Buffone continued:

“But this is nothing to your followers. You shall not run a penny more in debt for them, if you wish, yourself.”

“No?” Sogliardo said. “How should I keep them, then?”

Don’t servants need to eat and to be paid?

Carlo Buffone replied:

“Keep them? By God’s blood, let them keep themselves; they aren’t sheep, are they?

“You shall come in houses where plate, apparel, jewels, and diverse other pretty commodities lie negligently scattered, and I would have those mercuries follow me in the houses, I think. They should remember they don’t have their fingers for nothing.”

Mercuries are thieves; Mercury was the Roman god of thieves.

Carlo Buffone would have Sogliardo’s servants pilfer items from the houses of rich people.

“That’s not so good, I think,” Sogliardo said.

“Why, after you have kept them a fortnight or so and showed them enough to the world, you may turn them away and keep no more than a boy; it’s enough,” Carlo Buffone said.

Serving-boys were paid less than serving-men.

“Nay, my humor is not for boys,” Sogliardo said. “I’ll keep men, if I keep any, and I’ll give coats, that’s my humor. But I lack a cullison.”

Servants wore blue coats. Their clothing was known as liveries, and the servants of great gentlemen had distinctive liveries that showed whom they served.

A cullison was a badge that indicated one’s family and was displayed on servants’ livery. The badge often was a coat of arms. Gentlemen had cullisons.

“Why, now that you ride to the city, you may buy one,” Carlo Buffone said. “I’ll bring you where you shall have your choice for money.”

Wealthy ambitious men could bribe heralds to grant them a coat of arms.

“Can you, sir?” Sogliardo asked.

“Oh, aye, you shall have one take the measure of you and make you a coat of arms to fit you of what fashion you will,” Carlo Buffone said.

His words were suitable to describe both a herald who made coats of arms and a tailor who made coats.

“By word of mouth, I thank you, signor,” Sogliardo said.

“By word of mouth?” He was taking Carlo Buffone’s advice and making up his own oaths: “I swear by my word of mouth.”

Sogliardo continued, “I’ll be for once a little prodigal in a humor, in faith, and have a most prodigious coat.”

Macilente said loud enough to be heard:

“Torment and death! Break head and brain at once to be delivered of your fighting issue!”

Zeus gave birth to his warrior-daughter Athena from his forehead. Parthenogenesis is a form of asexual reproduction, and the temple called the Parthenon in Athens was dedicated to her.

Sogliardo was an ordinary fool, but Lady Fortune had given him wealth and so he was going to be born again as a wealthy, foolish gentleman. Sogliardo was someone whom Macilente wanted to fight.

Macilente continued:

“Who can endure to see blind Fortune dote thus?

“To be enamored on this dusty turf — this clod! A whoreson puckfist! Oh, God! God! God! God!

“I could run wild with grief now to behold the rankness and gross fertility of her bounties that does breed such bulrushes, these mushroom gentlemen, these social upstarts, who shoot up in a night to a position of dignity.”

Macilente felt envious of Sogliardo’s wealth, and he felt contempt at how Sogliardo was planning to spend it.

A puckfist is a puffball fungus: It is empty, like Sogliardo's head.

Bulrushes only appear to be strong; they are actually fragile.

Mushroom gentlemen are gentlemen who seemingly spring up overnight. They are new men, and they do not come from families who have long been known as belonging to a high social class.

Hearing Macilente complain, Carlo Buffone said to Sogliardo, "Let him alone. Ignore him. He is some stray, some stray."

"Nay, I will ask him some questions before I go, to be sure," Sogliardo said.

Carlo Buffone replied, "The lord of the soil has all wefts and strays here, hasn't he?"

Wefts are waifs, abandoned property such as that dropped by a thief while being pursued. Strays are stray animals. If waifs and strays were not claimed within a reasonable amount of time, they became the property of the lord of the lordship.

Carlo Buffone was referring to Macilente as if he were a stray dog.

"Yes, sir," Sogliardo answered.

"Truly, then I pity the poor fellow," Carlo Buffone said.

He was referring to Macilente.

Carlo Buffone said to himself, "He's fallen into a fool's hands."

Sogliardo said to Macilente, "Sirrah, who gave you a commission or warrant to lie — reside — in my lordship?"

"Your lordship?" Macilente said.

"What? 'My lordship'? Do you know me, sir?" Sogliardo asked.

"I do know you, sir," Macilente said.

Carlo Buffone said to himself, "By God's heart, he answers him like an echo."

"Why, who am I, sir?" Sogliardo asked.

"You are one of those whom fortune favors," Macilente answered.

Carlo Buffone said to himself, "The periphrasis of a fool. I'll observe this better."

A Latin proverb stated, "*Fortuna favit fatuis*." This means: "Fortune favors fools."

Macilente had used a periphrasis — roundabout way — to say that Sogliardo was a fool.

"Whom fortune favors?" Sogliardo asked. "What do you mean by that, friend?"

"I mean simply … that you are one who doesn't live by your wits," Macilente said.

This means "you are rich enough that you don't have to live by your wits," and it implies "you aren't intelligent enough to live by your own wits."

"By my wits?" Sogliardo said. "No, sir, I scorn to live by my wits, I. I have better means, I tell thee, than to take such base courses of action as to live by my wits. By God's blood, do thou think I live by my wits?"

Sogliardo was happy that he had so much money that he didn't need to live by his wits. He was also stupid enough that he didn't understand Macilente's implied insult.

Macilente said to Carlo Buffone, "I think, jester, you should not relish this well."

Jesters live by their wits; Sogliardo took pride in not living by his wits.

Carlo Buffone said to himself, "Ha! Does he know me? Does he recognize me?"

Macilente said to Carlo Buffone, "Though yours be the worst use a man can put his wit to, of thousands of ways to use your wit, to prostitute it at every tavern and eating-house, yet I think that you should have turned your broadside at this, and you should have been ready with a defense of wit able to sink this hulk of ignorance into the bottom and depth of his contempt."

As a jester, Carlo Buffone should have given Sogliardo a broadside of his wit and metaphorically blown him out of the water and literally blown him out of his self-satisfied complacency.

A broadside occurs when all the cannon on one side of a warship fire at the same time.

A hulk is 1) a large ship, or 2) a large person.

Carlo Buffone said to himself, “By God’s blood, this man is Macilente!”

He then said out loud to him, “Signor, you are well encountered. How is it with you? How are you?”

He then whispered to Macilente, “Oh, we must not regard what he — Sogliardo — says, man. He is a trout, a shallow fool. He has no more brain than a butterfly. He is a mere stuffed suit. He looks like a musty bottle, newly placed in a wicker basket; his head’s the cork, light, light.”

Trout were supposed to be easily caught by tickling them.

Sogliardo was like a musty — a stale — bottle in a new wicker basket. His intelligence was musty, but his clothing was new.

Carlo Buffone then said out loud, “I am glad to see you so well returned, signor.”

“You are?” Macilente said. “Gramercy, good Janus. Great thanks.”

Janus was a Roman god with two faces. One face looked toward the future; the other face looked toward the past. The image became used for a hypocrite. Carlo Buffone was praising Sogliardo to his face, but he was insulting him behind his back.

Sogliardo whispered to Carlo Buffone, “Is he one of your acquaintance? I love him the better for that.”

Carlo Buffone whispered to Sogliardo, “By God’s precious body, come away and don’t waste time on him, man, what do you mean? If you knew him as I do, you’d shun him as you’d shun the plague.”

Sogliardo whispered back, “Why, sir?”

Carlo Buffone whispered back, “Oh, he’s a black — an evil — fellow. Take heed on him. Be careful when you are around him.”

Sogliardo whispered back, “Is he a scholar or a soldier?”

Carlo Buffone whispered back, “Both, both. A lean mongrel; he looks as if he were chap-fallen — slack-jawed — because of exhaustion from barking at other men’s good fortunes. Be wary how you offend him; he carries oil and fire in his pen that will scald where it drops; his spirit’s like gunpowder, quick, violent; he’ll blow a man up with a jest. I fear him worse than a rotten wall does the cannon, when the wall is still shaking an hour after the sound of the cannon’s blast. Leave, don’t come near him.”

Sogliardo whispered back, “For God’s sake, let’s be gone. If he is a scholar, you know I cannot abide him. I had as gladly see a cockatrice, especially as cockatrices go now.”

Cockatrices are basilisks, mythological monsters that can kill with their look.

Cockatrices are also prostitutes. There is a pun on “cock,” and the “trice” is analogous to the end of *meretrix*, a word that is Latin for “prostitute” and which people of Ben Jonson’s time joked meant “merry tricks.” Therefore, cockatrices are cock-tricks.

Carlo Buffone now whispered to Macilente, “What, you’ll stay, signor? This gentleman Sogliardo and I are to visit the knight Puntarvolo, and then go from thence to the city. We — you and I — shall meet there.”

Carlo Buffone and Sogliardo exited.

Throughout this meeting, Macilente had been lying down.

Now he stood up and said to himself:

“Aye, when I cannot shun you, we will meet.

“It is strange. Of all the creatures I have seen, I don’t envy this Buffoon, Carlo Buffone, for indeed neither his fortunes nor his parts — qualities — deserve it.

“But I hate him as I hate the devil, or that brass-visaged and impudent monster called Barbarism.

“Oh, it is an open-throated, black-mouthed, slanderous cur, which bites at all, but eats on those who feed him.

“A rogue who to your face will, serpent-like, creep on the ground as if he would eat the dust, and to your back will turn the tail and sting you more deadly than a scorpion.”

Seeing someone coming, he said, “Wait, who’s this? Now, for my soul, another darling of the old Lady Chance’s. I’ll observe him.”

Old Lady Chance is Lady Fortune.

He watched quietly, unobserved as the newcomer arrived and he listened as the newcomer spoke to himself.

## — 1.3 —

Sordido entered the scene. He was reading a prognostication: a set of weather predictions and other information useful to farmers. Prognostications were bound with almanacs.

Sordido was Sogliardo’s brother, and like Sogliardo, he was rich. Sordido was, in particular, a rich farmer.

What Sordido was reading made him happy: “Oh, splendid, good, good, good, good, good! I thank my Christ. I thank my Christ for it.”

Macilente said to himself, “Didn’t I say the truth? Doesn’t his passion — his strong emotion — speak out of my divination?”

Macilente had guessed that this newcomer was “another darling of the Old Lady Chance’s.” The newcomer’s strong feelings of happiness seemed to show that this was true.

Macilente continued, “Oh, my senses, why don’t you lose your powers and become deadened, dull, and blunted with this spectacle? I know him: He is Sordido, the farmer, a boor, and brother to that swine who was here.”

“That swine” was Sogliardo.

“Excellent, excellent, excellent!” Sordido said. “It is as I would wish, as I would wish.”

Macilente said to himself, “See how the strumpet Fortune tickles and excites him, and makes him swoon with laughter, ‘Oh, oh, oh!’”

Many people considered Lady Fortune to be a strumpet because she was so fickle when deciding on whom to bestow or not to bestow her favors. Often, she left one man and then favored another man.

“Ha, ha, ha!” Sordido said. “I will not sow my grounds this year. Let me see, what harvest shall we have? June? July?”

He consulted his book of prognostications.

Macilente said to himself, “What is it? A prognostication that enraptures him so?”

Sordido read the prognostications out loud and commented on them:

“‘*The twentieth, twenty-first, twenty-second days, rain and wind*.’ Oh, good, good.

“‘*The twenty-third and twenty-fourth, rain and some wind*.’ Good.

“‘*The twenty-fifth, rain*’ — good still.

“‘*Twenty-sixth, twenty-seventh, twenty-eighth, wind and some rain*.’ I wish it had been rain and some wind. Well, it is good, when it can be no better.

“‘*Twenty-ninth inclining to rain*.’ Inclining to rain? That’s not so good, now.

“‘*Thirtieth and thirty-first, wind and no rain*.’ No rain? By God’s eyelid, wait, this is worse and worse.

“What does he say about St. Swithin’s? Turn back. Look, ‘*St. Swithin’s*’ — no rain?”

A proverb stated, “If it rain on St. Swithin’s Day [July 15], it will continue for forty days.”

Excessive rainy weather ruined crops and made the price of grain higher.

Macilente said to himself:

“Oh, here’s a precious, filthy, damned rogue, who fattens himself with the expectation of rotten weather and unseasonable hours, and he is rich for it, an elder brother.”

Because of primogeniture, the eldest son usually inherited the bulk of his parents’ estate.

Macilente continued speaking to himself:

“His barns are full, his ricks and mows are well trod, and his garners — grain storehouses — crack with store.”

Well-trod ricks and mows are well-tamped stacks of grain so that no space is wasted that could store more grain.

Macilente continued speaking to himself:

“Oh, it is well! Ha, ha, ha!

“May a plague consume thee and thy family!”

Sordido hoarded grain so that he could wait for a bad harvest and sell it at a very high price.

Still thinking he was alone, Sordido continued:

“Oh, here! ‘*St. Swithin’s, the fifteenth day, variable weather, for the most part, rain*’ — good — ‘*for the most part, rain*.’

“Why, it should rain forty days after now, more or less. It was a rule held before I was able to hold a plow, and yet here are two days, no rain. Ha! It makes me muse.”

On the thirtieth and the thirty-first, the prognostication forecast no rain.

Sordido continued:

“We’ll see how the next month begins, and see if that is better. ‘*August: August first, second, third, and fourth days, rainy and blustering*.’ This is well, now.

“‘*Fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth, rain, with some thunder*.’ Aye, by the Virgin Mary, this is excellent; the other was incorrectly printed, surely.”

“The other” was the other two days: the thirtieth and the thirty-first.

Sordido continued:

“‘*The tenth and eleventh, great store of rain*’ — oh, good, good, good, good, good!

“‘*The twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth days, rain*’ — good still.

“‘*Fifteenth and sixteenth, rain*’ — good still.

“‘*Seventeenth and eighteenth, rain*’ — good still.

“‘*Nineteenth and twentieth*’ — good still, good still, good still, good still, good still!

“‘*One-and-twentieth, some rain*.’ Some rain? Well, we must be patient and attend the heavens’ pleasure. I wish it would be more, though.

“‘*The one-and-twentieth, two-and-twentieth, three-and-twentieth, great tempest of rain, thunder, and lightning*.’ Oh, good again, past expectation good!

“I thank my blessed angel. Never, never did I spend a penny better than I spent this penny to purchase this dear book.”

Almanacs containing prognostications cost one penny.

Still thinking he was alone, Sordido continued:

“It is not dear — expensive — for price, and yet by me it is as dearly prized and as valuable as life, since in it is contained the very life-essence, blood, strength, and sinews of my happiness.

“Blest be the hour wherein I bought this book.

“May the endeavors of the man who composed the book be happy and fortunate, and may the man who sold me the book be fortunate.

“Sleep with this blessing, and be as true to me as I rejoice and am confident in thee.”

A servant arrived and gave a letter to Sordido.

As Sordido read the letter, Macilente said to himself:

"Ha, ha, ha! Isn't this good? Isn't it pleasing, this?"

He was sarcastic.

Macilente continued:

"Ha, ha! God's — ha! Is it possible that such a spacious — large-scale and owning-much-land — villain should live and not be plagued? Or does he lie hidden within the wrinkled bosom of the world where Heaven cannot see him?

"By God's blood, I think that it is rare and admirable that he should breathe and walk, feed with good digestion, sleep, enjoy his health, and, like a boisterous whale swallowing the poor, always swim in wealth and pleasure.

"Isn't it strange?

"Unless his house and skin were thunder-proof, I wonder at it."

"Thunder-proof" means impervious to thunderbolts thrown by Zeus, the King of the gods — or thrown by God.

Macilente continued:

"I think now, the fever, gout, leprosy, or some such loathed disease might alight upon him, or that fire from heaven might fall upon his barns, or mice and rats eat up his grain, or else that it might rot within the hoary ricks, even as it stands.

"I think this might be a good and suitable punishment, and after all that, the devil might come and fetch him. Aye, it is true. I truly believe he deserves this punishment.

"In the meantime he surfeits — celebrates to excess — in prosperity, and thou, Macilente, in envy of him, gnaw thyself.

"Peace, fool, by which I mean myself, get away from here, and tell thy vexed spirit, 'Wealth in this age will scarcely look on merit.'"

He exited.

Sordido asked the servant, "Who brought this paper and gave it to you to give to me, sirrah?"

The servant replied, "By the Virgin Mary, sir, one of the justice's men brought it; he says it is a precept — a court order — and all their hands are on it. All the authorities have signed their names to it."

Sordido responded:

"Aye, and the prints of them stick in my flesh like a brand deeper than in their letters."

They had used wax to seal the letter and stamp the seal deeply.

Sordido continued:

"They have sent me pills wrapped in paper here, pills that, should I take them, would poison all the sweetness of my book and turn my honey into hemlock juice."

Pills were usually wrapped in paper.

The authorities were ordering Sordido to sell his grain at a fair price in the marketplace because people were hungry. Soon, some authorities would arrive and check his storehouses to verify that he had sold his grain.

Sordido said:

"But I am wiser than to observe and obey their precepts or follow their prescriptions. Here's a device to order me to bring my grain to the markets.

"Aye, that's likely!

"When I have neither barn nor garner nor earth to hide my grain in, I'll bring it, but until then, each corn I send shall be as big as Paul's."

He intended to hide his grain. Only the grain he could not hide would be sold, but the only grain he could not hide would have each kernel as large as St. Paul's Cathedral.

Sordido continued:

“Oh, but some say that the poor are likely to starve.

“Why, let them starve; what’s that to me? Are bees bound to keep life in drones and idle moths by laboring to produce honey while they are idle? No.

“Why, such as these who term themselves the poor, only because they would be pitied, are indeed just a band of lazy beggars, licentious rogues and sturdy vagabonds, bred by the sloth of a fat plenteous year like snakes in heat of summer out of dung, and this is all that these cheap times are good for; whereas a wholesome and penurious dearth of grain purges the soil of such vile excrements, and kills the vipers.”

Ben Jonson’s society believed that snakes could be born from spontaneous generation.

“Penurious” means 1) extremely poor, and 2) mean.

His servant said, “Oh, but master, be careful that they — the poor people — don’t hear you.”

“Why should I?” Sordido asked.

“The poor people will loudly exclaim against and denounce you,” the servant said.

Sordido said:

“Aye, their exclamations against me move me as much as thy breath moves a mountain.

“Poor worms, they hiss at me, while I at home can be contented to applaud myself, to sit and clap my hands and laugh and leap, knocking my head against my roof with joy to see how plump my moneybags are and my barns.

“Sirrah, go, hurry to your home, and bid your fellows to get all their flails ready in preparation for when I come.”

“I will, sir,” the servant said as he exited.

Alone, Sordido said to himself:

“I’ll instantly set all my servants to thrashing a whole rick of corn, which I will hide under the ground, and with the straw thereof I’ll stuff the outsides of my other mows.”

Ricks are stacks of cut corn or hay, and mows are corn or hay stored in a barn.

Sordido wanted to disguise his mows of grain as mows of straw.

Sordido continued:

“That done, I’ll have them empty all my garners and in the friendly earth bury my store, so that, when the searchers for my grain — by then hidden — come to prevent me from cornering the market, they may suppose all’s consumed and that my fortunes were lied about or misreported.

“And to lend more opinion to my appearance of need and to stop that many-mouthed vulgar dog — poor people yelping for food — that otherwise would always be baying at my door, each market day I will be seen to buy part of the purest wheat, as if to feed my household, and when the wheat comes here, it shall increase my heaps.

“It will yield me treble gain at this dear time, promised in this dear book. I have cast and calculated and forecast all.”

He was gambling — like a cast of the dice — all the grain he had that the upcoming harvest would be poor.

Sordido continued:

“Until then, I will not sell an ear. I’ll hang first.

“Oh, I shall make my prizes — rewards — and my prices as I wish!

“My house and I can eat peas and barley.

“What though a world of wretches starve the while?

“‘He who will thrive must think no courses of action vile.’”

He exited.

Cordatus said to Mitis, “Now, signor, how do you approve of this? Have the humorists expressed themselves truly or not?”

The humorists were 1) the characters with humors, and 2) the characters who caused the audience to smile and laugh.

Mitis replied:

“Yes, I do approve of this, if it will be well prosecuted and followed up. It is hitherto happy enough.

“But I think that Macilente went away from here too soon. He might have been made to stay and speak something in reproof of Sordido’s wretchedness — greediness — now at the last.”

“Oh, no, that would have been extremely improper,” Cordatus said. “Besides, he had continued the scene too long with him as it was, being in no more action.”

Mitis said, “You may put forward the length as a necessary reason, but for propriety and stage decorum the scene would very well have borne Macilente’s staying and speaking, in my judgment.”

“Oh, the worst of both: excessive length and lack of propriety,” Cordatus said. “Why, you mistake his — Macilente’s — humor utterly, then.”

“How do I mistake it?” Mitis asked. “Isn’t his humor envy?”

Cordatus said:

“Yes, but you must understand, signor, Macilente envies Sordido not as he is a villain, a wolf in the commonwealth, but as he is rich and fortunate; for the true condition of envy is *dolor alienae felicitates.*”

The Latin meant: “resentment at another person’s good fortune.”

Cordatus continued:

“To have our eyes continually fixed upon another man’s prosperity — that is, his chief happiness — and to grieve at that. That is what Macilente does.

“Whereas if we make his monstrous and abhorred actions our object, the grief we take then comes nearer the nature of hate than envy, as being bred out of a kind of contempt and loathing in ourselves.”

Macilente was envious of Sordido’s wealth. Macilente’s humor was envy.

If Macilente’s main opinion of Sordido was that he was a monster for hoarding grain in hopes of making much money later while people were starving now, then Macilente’s humor would be hate: He would hate Sordido.

Mitis said, “So you’ll infer it would have been hate, not envy in him, to reprehend the humor — greediness — of Sordido?”

Cordatus said:

“Right, for what a man truly envies in another, he could always love and cherish in himself; but no man truly reprehends in another what he loves in himself, therefore reprehension — finding fault — is out of his hate.”

Macilente envied Sordido’s wealth, but Macilente would love to have that wealth for himself.

Cordatus continued:

“And this distinction he himself has made in a speech there, if you noticed it, where he says, ‘I don’t envy this Buffoon, but I hate him.’”

Mitis said, “Wait, sir: ‘I don’t envy this Buffoon, but I hate him.’ Why might he not as well have hated Sordido as him?”

Cordatus answered:

“No, sir, there was subject — a material motive — for his envy in Sordido: his wealth.

“But there was no subject — no material motive — for envy in the other: Carlo Buffone.

“He — Carlo Buffone — stood possessed of not one eminent gift or superior talent, but he did possess a most odious and fiend-like disposition that would turn charity itself into hate, rather than envy as in the present case.”

# CHAPTER 2

## — 2.1 —

Carlo Buffone, Sogliardo, Fastidious Brisk, and Cinedo were near the house of the knight Puntarvolo. Fastidious Brisk was a courtier, and Cinedo was his page. In Latin, *cinaedus* means "homosexual."

"You have satisfied me, sir," Mitis said.

Seeing the new actors arriving, he added, "Oh, here come the fool and the jester again, I think."

"It would be a pity if they should be parted, sir," Cordatus said.

The jester was Carlo Buffone, and the fool was Sogliardo.

"What bright-shining gallant is that with them?" Mitis asked. "The knight they went to pay a visit to?"

Carlo Buffone and Sogliardo had mentioned paying a visit to the knight named Puntarvolo.

"No, sir, this man is one Monsieur Fastidious Brisk, otherwise called the fresh Frenchified courtier," Cordatus answered.

Ben Jonson's society regarded anyone who was "Frenchified" as effeminate and affected.

"Is he a humorist, too?" Mitis asked.

"He is as humorous as quicksilver," Cordatus answered. "Just watch him."

Quicksilver, also known as mercury, is liquid at room temperature and coheres in a ball. People who are mercurial are volatile, unstable, and capricious. Think of Mercutio in William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

"The scene is the country still, remember," Cordatus said.

Sordido and Puntarvolo lived close to each other and close to the city.

The city was London.

Fastidious Brisk said, "Cinedo, watch when the knight comes, and give us word."

"I will, sir," Cinedo said as he exited.

"How do thou like my boy, Carlo?" Fastidious Brisk asked.

"Oh, well, well," Carlo Buffone said. "He looks like a colonel of the pygmies' cavalry, or one of these clockwork figures in a great antique and antic — old-fashioned and grotesque — clock. He would show well upon a haberdasher's stall at a corner shop, splendidly."

Haberdashers sold hats. Carlo Buffone was joking that Cinedo looked like a dummy in a haberdasher's shop.

"By God's heart, what a damned witty rogue is this!" Fastidious Brisk said. "How he confounds with his similes!"

"It's better to confound with similes than smiles," Carlo Buffone said.

"To confound" means 1) to surprise, 2) to confuse, or 3) to destroy or ruin. This third meaning is now obsolete.

Courtiers do much flattering and smiling. Sometimes, flattery and smiles can lead to ruin and destruction.

"And to where were you riding now, signor?" Carlo Buffone asked.

"Who, I?" Fastidious Brisk asked. "What a silly jest is that! To where should I ride but to the court?"

He was a courtier, and so he spent much time at the court.

Carlo Buffone sprung his sex joke: "Oh, pardon me, sir, you could ride to twenty places more: your hot-house, or your —"

A hot-house is a place where a person can get a hot bath and a massage. Also, a hot-house can be a whorehouse. “Riding” can be a sexual riding.

Carlo Buffone did not finish his sentence, pretending that he was not willing to mention anything salacious.

“By the virtue of my soul, this knight dwells in Elysium here,” Fastidious Brisk said, changing the subject.

Elysium is where good souls go to in the afterlife.

Carlo Buffone said to himself:

“He’s gone now.”

The attention of Fastidious Brisk had wandered to a different topic of discussion, probably on purpose. In other words, Carlo Buffone’s conversation was not to his liking.

Carlo Buffone added, still talking to himself:

“I thought he would fly out presently. These be our nimble-spirited catsos who have their evasions — tricks and shifts — at pleasure, and who will run over a bog like your wild Irish; no sooner started, but they’ll leap from one thing to another like a squirrel — hey! — dance and do tricks in their discourse, from fire to water, from water to air, from air to earth, as if their tongues did but even lick the four elements over, and away.”

The word “catso” comes from the Italian *cazzo*, which means “penis.” “Catso” is used to mean “rogue.”

Irish soldiers were known for attacking enemy English soldiers and then escaping by running through swampland.

The four elements that Ben Jonson’s society thought everything was made of in various combinations were air, water, earth, and fire.

Fastidious Brisk said, “Sirrah Carlo, thou never saw my grey hobby yet, did thou?”

His use of “sirrah” showed that he believed that he was Carlo Buffone’s social superior.

Hobby horses are small horses, much in fashion in Ben Jonson’s time.

“No, have you such a one?” Carlo Buffone asked.

“The best in Europe, my good villain, thou shall say when thou see him,” Fastidious Brisk said.

“Good villain” means “fine fellow,” but in a condescending way.

“But when shall I see him?” Carlo Buffone asked.

Not answering the question, Fastidious Brisk said, “There was a nobleman in the court offered me one hundred pounds for him, I swear by this light of the day — the sun. A fine little fiery slave, he runs like a — oh, excellent, excellent! — with the very sound of the spur.”

“What? The sound of the spur?” Carlo Buffone asked.

“Oh, it’s your only humor now extant, sir,” Fastidious Brisk said. “A good jingle, a good jingle.”

Fastidious Brisk moved his feet and jingled his spurs.

Carlo Buffone said to Sogliardo, “By God’s blood, you shall see him turn morris-dancer. He has got him bells, a good suit, and a hobby-horse.”

The “bells” were his jingling spurs.

In some dances, the dancers wore a hobby-horse — a figure of a horse that was attached to their waist. It made a comic image since the dancer appeared to be on horseback. The hobby-horse’s rear legs were the person’s legs. “Hobby-horse” was also slang for “prostitute.”

Morris-dance costumes included small bells attached to the clothing.

Morris-dances and hobby-horse capers were rural entertainments. A courtier such as Fastidious Brisk would look down on them as being unsophisticated entertainments.

Sogliardo said to Carlo Buffone, “Signor, now you talk of a hobby-horse, I know where one is, one who will not be given for a brace of angels.”

A brace of angels is a pair of gold coins.

“What is that you are saying, sir?” Fastidious Brisk asked.

Sogliardo said, “By the Virgin Mary, sir, I am telling this gentleman about a hobby-horse. It was my father’s, indeed, and though I say it —”

Carlo Buffone said to himself, “Who should not say it.”

He then said, out loud, “Go on, go on.”

Sogliardo continued, “— my father did dance in it with as good humor and as good regard and public approval as any man of his social rank whatsoever, being no gentleman. I have danced in it myself, too.”

“Not since the humor of gentility was upon you, did you?” Carlo Buffone asked.

Gentlemen were unlikely to dance in a hobby-horse costume.

“Yes, once,” Sogliardo said. “By the Virgin Mary, that was but to show what a gentleman might don in a humor.”

“Oh, very good,” Carlo Buffone said.

Mitis said to Cordatus, “Why, this fellow’s discourse would be nothing if not for the word ‘humor.’”

The word “humor” was an in-vogue word, and some speakers vastly overused it.

“Oh, bear with him,” Cordatus said. “If he should lack matter, substance — and lack words, too — it would be pitiful.”

Sogliardo said, “Nay, look, sir, there’s not a gentleman in the country who has the like humors for the hobby-horse as I have. I have the method for the threading of the needle, the —”

“Threading the needle” was a dance move in the morris-dance. Possibly, two dancers made one big arch with their arms and the other dancers danced through the arch.

“What? The method?” Carlo Buffone said.

Sogliardo responded, “Aye, the legerity” — he meant “dexterity” — “for that, and the wehee” — neigh — “and the daggers in the nose, and the travels of the egg from finger to finger — all the humors necessary for a good performance.”

These are all dance moves and tricks of dexterity suitable for good dancers and performers.

Sogliardo continued, “The hobby-horse hangs at home in my parlor. I’ll keep it for a monument, as long as I live, to be sure.”

A monument is a memorial. Sogliardo would keep the hobby-horse as a memorial for long-times-past morris-dances.

“Do so, and when you die, it will be an excellent trophy to hang over your tomb,” Carlo Buffone said.

Roman trophies were such things as the weapons of a fallen enemy.

“By the Mass, and I’ll have a tomb, now I think on it,” Sogliardo said. “It is but so much expense.”

“Best build it in your lifetime, then; your heirs may happen to forget it if you don’t,” Carlo Buffone said.

“I mean to,” Sogliardo said. “I’ll not trust it to them.”

“No, for heirs and executors are grown damnably careless, especially since the ghosts of will-and-testament makers left off walking,” Carlo Buffone said.

Out of fear of where they would end up in the afterlife, wealthy people often made wills that would leave their descendants destitute, if followed. Their descendants found ways to get around such wills and inherit the deceased person’s wealth. The ghosts of the deceased wealthy

people have stopped walking, perhaps because the wealthy people ought to take care of their descendants, and since the descendants are, in fact, taken care of, the ghosts can rest peacefully.

Also possibly, the ghosts had been in Purgatory, the place where souls — ghosts — purged their sins, according to Catholic doctrine. Since the idea of Purgatory was no longer current in Protestant England, Englishmen and Englishwomen no longer believed that ghosts walked in Purgatory.

Carlo Buffone said quietly to Fastidious Brisk, "How do you like him, signor?"

Fastidious Brisk said quietly back, "Before heavens, his humor arrides me exceedingly."

Trying to avoid vulgar words — the words of commoners — Fastidious Brisk was Englishizing a Latin prefix and a Latin word: *ad* (to) and *ridere* (laugh). He meant *arrides* to mean "amuses."

Carlo Buffone whispered to Fastidious Brisk, "'Arrides' you?"

In other words, his humor is to *ride* you?

Fastidious Brisk whispered back:

"Aye, *pleases* me.

Then, realizing that he had set himself up to be mocked, he said:

"A pox on it!

"I am so haunted at the court and at my lodging with your refined choice spirits that it makes me completely of another garb, another strain, I don't know how."

"Garb" is fashionable expression, and "strain" is an uncommon turn of phrase.

Poet John Milton used the words "garb" and "strain" to describe extravagant language.

Fastidious Brisk added quietly, "I cannot frame myself to your harsh vulgar phrase. It is against my genius."

"Genius" can mean 1) natural inclination, 2) spirit, or 3) guardian angel.

Upset at being ignored, Sogliardo said, "Signor Carlo."

He and Carlo Buffone talked together quietly.

Cordatus said to Mitis, "This is just like that sentence of Horace: *Dum vitant stulti vitia in contraria currunt*."

The Latin means: "When fools avoid vices, they run into their opposites."

Cordatus continued, "So this gallant, laboring to avoid vulgarity in his speech, falls into a habit of affectation ten thousand times more hateful than vulgar speech."

In this case, the fool is Fastidious Brisk. The vice is vulgar speech, and in avoiding it, he uses the speech of courtiers to excess. Cordatus regarded such speech as ten thousand times more hateful than vulgar speech.

"Vulgar" contains the meaning of "common." Vulgar speech is the speech of commoners: common people.

Carlo Buffone said quietly to Sogliardo about Fastidious Brisk:

"Who, he?

"He is a gull, a fool. There is no salt — no wit and intelligence — in him in the earth, in the world, man. He looks like a fresh salmon kept in a tub, he'll be spent — exhausted by spawning — shortly. His brain's lighter than the feather in his cap already, and his tongue more subject to lie than the feather is to wag and flutter. He sleeps with a musk-cat every night, and walks all day hanged in pomander chains for penance."

A musk-cat can be a container of musk or a prostitute or an animal such a civet or a musk deer that secretes musk.

Pomander chains are necklaces with hanging containers of perfume, but the bodies of some executed criminals were hung in chains and exposed to the view of the public.

Carlo Buffone continued speaking quietly to Sogliardo about Fastidious Brisk:

"He has his skin tanned in civet — preserved in perfume — to make his complexion youthful and the sweetness of his youth lasting in the sense of his sweet lady. A good empty puff, he loves and respects you well, signor."

Puffs are libertines, often homosexual, or they are vainglorious boasters.

Sogliardo replied quietly, "There shall be no love lost, sir, I'll assure you."

Upset at being ignored by Carlo Buffone, Fastidious Brisk said, "Nay, Carlo, I am not fortunate enough to enjoy your love and friendship, I see. I am not favored by your attention. Please allow me to enjoy thy company a little, sweet mischief-maker. By this air, I shall envy this gentleman's — Sogliardo's — place in thy affections, if you are thus private, indeed."

Cinedo, Fastidious Brisk's boy-servant, entered the scene.

Fastidious Brisk asked, "How is it now? Has the knight arrived?"

"No, sir," Cinedo said. "But it is guessed he will arrive soon, by his forerunners."

Forerunners are servants sent ahead to announce a person's imminent arrival, but in this case four-runners are also four-legged dogs that run ahead of a hunter.

"His hounds!" Fastidious Brisk said. "By Minerva, an excellent figure of speech, a good boy."

Minerva is the Roman goddess of wisdom. Her Greek name is Athena.

Carlo Buffone said, "You should give him a French crown for it; the boy would find two better figures in that, and a good figure of your bounty beside."

A French crown is 1) a coin with the head of King Henri IV of France on one side, and 2) baldness as a symptom of the French disease: syphilis.

"Figures" are 1) figures of speech, and 2) images of kings on coins.

"Tut, the boy wants no crowns," Fastidious Brisk replied.

That is, he wants no tips.

"He wants no crown," Carlo Buffone said.

That is, he wants no baldness caused by syphilis.

Carlo Buffone added, "Speak in the singular number, and we'll believe you."

"Figure," the singular of "figures," is a sum of money.

"Nay, thou are so capriciously conceited now," Fastidious Brisk replied.

"Conceited" means 1) full of conceits, aka ideas and figures of speech, 2) fanciful, and 3) full of an overvaluation of yourself.

Fastidious Brisk then began saying to Carlo Buffone:

"Sirrah —"

Realizing that Carlo Buffone had made a joke at his expense about a French crown, he said to himself:

"Damnation!"

He then continued speaking out loud:

"I have heard this knight, Puntarvolo, reported to be a gentleman of exceedingly good humor. Thou know him; please tell me, what is his disposition? I never was so favored by my stars as to see him yet."

He asked Cinedo:

"Boy, are you looking after the hobby horse?"

"Aye, sir, the groom has set him up and put him in a stall," Cinedo replied.

Fastidious Brisk said, "It is well."

Sogliardo talked quietly with Cinedo.

Fastidious Brisk said to Carlo Buffone, "I rode out of my way on purpose to visit him, and take knowledge of his — nay, good wickedness! — his humor, his humor."

He was worried that Carlo would deliberately mistake his words as meaning that he had come here to take knowledge — have carnal knowledge — of the knight's wife.

Carlo Buffone told Fastidious Brisk about the knight Puntarvolo: "Why, he loves dogs, and hawks, and his wife well. He has a good riding face, and he can sit on a great warhorse. He will taint — break — a staff well when tilting. When he is mounted, he looks like the sign of the George, that's all I know, save that, instead of a dragon, he will brandish his sword against a tree, and break his heavy sword as confidently upon the knotty bark as the other did upon the scales of the beast."

Having a good riding face can mean 1) Puntarvolo always looks in control of his horse, and/or 2) his wife likes to sit on his face.

The sign of the George is the sign of the St. George Inn. St. George is the patron saint of England, and one of his notable exploits was killing a dragon.

Fastidious Brisk said, "Oh, but this is nothing to what's said about him. They say that he has dialogues and discourses between his horse, himself, and his dog, and that he will court his own lady as if she were a stranger he had never encountered before."

Carlo Buffone replied, "Aye, that he will, and woo her anew every morning."

He pointed to Sogliardo, who was talking quietly to Cinedo, and said, "This gentleman has been a spectator of it."

He then said to Sogliardo, "Signor Insulso!"

In the middle of a conversation, Sogliardo said to Cinedo, "I am resolute to keep a page —"

He then said to Carlo Buffone, "What do you have to say, sir?"

"Have you seen Signor Puntarvolo woo his lady?" Carlo Buffone asked.

"Oh, aye, sir," Sogliardo answered.

"And what is the manner of it? Please tell us, good signor," Fastidious Brisk requested.

Sogliardo answered, "Indeed, sir, he woos her in a very high style. He has his humors for it, sir; as first, suppose he were now to come from riding or hunting or so, he has his trumpet to sound, and then the waiting-gentlewoman looks out, and then he speaks, and then she speaks. It is very pretty, indeed, gentlemen."

"Do you remember any particulars, signor?" Fastidious Brisk asked.

"Oh, yes, sir," Sogliardo said. "First, the gentlewoman looks out at the window."

"After the trumpet has summoned a parle? Not before?" Carlo Buffone asked.

A parle is a talk by opposing parties before battle begins.

Sogliardo said, "No, sir, not before, and then he says —"

He had a fit of laughing.

"What does he say?" Carlo Buffone said. "Don't be so amused."

Sogliardo said, "He says —"

He continued to laugh.

"Nay, speak, speak," Fastidious Brisk said.

"Ha, ha, ha — he says, 'God save you' — ha, ha!" Sogliardo said.

"Was this the ridiculous motive to all this passion?" Carlo Buffone asked.

In other words: Is this what you are laughing at?

"Nay, that, I am laughing at what comes after, is — ha, ha, ha, ha!" Sogliardo said.

Carlo Buffone said, "Doubtless he apprehends more than he utters, this fellow, or else —"

Hounds sounded.

"Listen! Listen!" Sogliardo said. "They are returning from hunting. Stand by, close under this terrace, and you shall see it done better than I can show it in words."

“So it had need,” Carlo Buffone said. “It will scarcely poise — repay — the observation else.”

Watching the knight woo his wife must necessarily convey more information — and entertainment — than Sogliardo had been able to convey.

“Indeed, I remember it all, but the manner of it is quite out of my head,” Sogliardo said.

He remembered how entertaining the sight was, but he could not convey the details that made the sight entertaining.

“Oh, withdraw, withdraw!” Fastidious Brisk said. “It cannot be other than a most pleasing sight to watch.”

They moved away to watch Puntarvolo unobserved.

**— 2.2 —**

Puntarvolo and a huntsman with a horn entered the scene. They were accompanied by a greyhound. Puntarvolo was a knight who enjoyed hunting.

“Forester, give wind to thy horn,” Puntarvolo said.

The huntsman blew his horn.

“Enough!” Puntarvolo said. “By this time, the sound has touched the ears of the people enclosed in the castle.”

Puntarvolo did not have a castle as his dwelling. He was playing a role, as would soon become clear.

He then said to the huntsman, “Depart, leave the dog, and take with thee what thou have deserved, the horn, and thanks.”

Normally, the blower of the horn would deserve and get a monetary tip, but this blower had blown badly his horn. Or the blower had blown well the horn and the horn was his tip.

The huntsman exited.

“Aye, by the Virgin Mary, there’s some taste in this,” Carlo Buffone said. “This is worth savoring.”

“Isn’t it good?” Fastidious Brisk said.

“Ah, peace,” Sogliardo said. “Quiet! Now look above! Now look above!”

The knight’s wife’s waiting-gentlewoman appeared at the window. The waiting-gentlewoman was a companion, not a common servant.

“Wait!” Puntarvolo said. “My eye has, on the instant, through the generous gift of the window, received the form of a nymph. I will step forward three paces, of the which I will barely retire one; and, after some little flexure — bending — of the knee, with an erected grace, I will greet her.”

“Erected grace” is a complimentary greeting after standing up from kneeling.

Readers may be forgiven for thinking of a different kind of erection.

Taking steps, he counted, “One, two, and three.”

He stepped back one step, knelt, and said, “Sweet lady, God save you.”

“No, indeed, I am only the waiting-gentlewoman,” she replied.

“He knew that before,” Carlo Buffone said.

“Pardon me,” Puntarvolo said. “*Humanum est errare*.”

The Latin means: “To err is human.”

Puntarvolo had erred in mistaking the serving-gentlewoman for the lady of the house.

Puntarvolo had taken three steps forward and one step back. His mistaking the serving-gentlewoman for the lady of the castle was his one step back.

A proverb stated: “To err (that is, to sin) is human, to repent (one’s sin) is divine, to persevere (in sinning) is diabolical.”

“He learned that from a Puritan,” Carlo Buffone said.

Puritans were thought to be hypocritical. A jest in Ben Jonson’s day was this: “A Puritan is such a one as loves God with all his soul but hates his neighbor with all his heart.”

Puntarvolo said:

“To achieve the richest perfection of compliment (which is the sundial — the measuring device — of the thought, and guided by the sun of your beauties) are required these three elements: the *gnomon*, the *puntilios*, and the *superficies*.

“The *superficies* is that which we call ‘place’; the *puntilios*, ‘circumstance’; and the *gnomon*, ‘ceremony.’

“In each of which, for a stranger to err, it is easy and easily done, and such am I.”

The *gnomon* is the rod of the sundial.

The *punctilio* are the gradations marked on the sundial’s circumference.

The *superficies* is the level surface of the sundial.

Carlo Buffone said, “True, not knowing her horizon, he must needs err, which I fear he knows too well.”

A horizon is a place in which Puntarvolo can err, aka wander. The woman’s horizon is her intelligence and knowledge. Her horizon is also the horizontal position in which Puntarvolo can have sex with her. Some religious people consider all sex, even sex between a husband and wife, to be sexual sin, aka sexual erring. This belief is considered a heresy by many religious leaders.

“What do you call the lord of the castle, sweet face?” Puntarvolo asked.

“The lord of the castle is a knight, sir: Signor Puntarvolo,” the waiting-gentlewoman said.

“Puntarvolo? Oh,” Puntarvolo said, still playing the role of a stranger.

“Now must he ruminate,” Carlo Buffone said.

“Does the wench know him all this while, then?” Fastidious Brisk asked.

“Oh, as well as you know me, man,” Carlo Buffone said. “Why, therein lies the syrup — the sweetness — of the jest. It’s a fully planned project, a designment of his own, a thing studied and rehearsed as ordinarily at his coming from hawking or hunting, like a jig after a play.”

“Aye, even like a jig, sir,” Sogliardo said.

Yes, the waiting-gentlewoman was part of the role-playing. Puntarvolo had written the lines she was saying.

“It is a most sumptuous and stately edifice,” Puntarvolo said. “How old is the knight, fair damsel?”

“Indeed, much about your years, sir,” the waiting-gentlewoman said. “He is approximately your age.”

“What temperament, or what stature, bears he?” Puntarvolo asked.

“He is approximately your height, and very near upon your temperament,” the waiting-gentlewoman answered.

Puntarvolo said, “My temperament is melancholy —”

“So is the dog’s, exactly,” Carlo Buffone said.

Dogs were proverbially melancholy.

Puntarvolo continued;

“— and melancholy does betoken constancy, chiefly in love.

“What are his endowments? Is he courteous? Is he courtly and chivalrous?”

“Oh, he is the most courteous knight upon God’s earth, sir,” the waiting-gentlewoman answered.

“Is he magnanimous?” Puntarvolo asked.

A magnanimous man is generous in his thoughts and actions.

“He is as magnanimous as the skin between your brows, sir,” the waiting-gentlewoman answered.

Having skin between the eyebrows — no unibrow — indicated magnanimity and honesty.

“Is he bountiful and charitable?” Puntarvolo asked.

Charity was a noble virtue.

“By God’s blood, Puntarvolo takes an inventory of his own good parts!” Carlo Buffone said.

Puntarvolo had written the waiting-gentlewoman’s lines, and those lines praised him.

“Bountiful? Aye, sir, I wish you should know it; the poor are served at his gate early and late, sir,” the waiting-gentlewoman answered.

“Is he learned?” Puntarvolo asked.

“Oh, aye, sir, he can speak the French and Italian,” the waiting-gentlewoman answered.

“Then, he is travelled?” Puntarvolo asked.

“Aye, indeed, he has been beyond-sea once or twice,” the waiting-gentlewoman answered.

“As far as Paris, to fetch over a fashion and come back again,” Carlo Buffone said.

A much more impressive journey would have been to the Holy Land.

“Is he religious?” Puntarvolo asked.

“Religious? I don’t know what you call religious, but he goes to church, I am sure,” the waiting-gentlewoman answered.

“By God’s eyelid, I think these answers should offend him,” Fastidious Brisk said.

Puntarvolo had traveled abroad only once or twice, and Fastidious Brisk thought that his religiousness was perhaps shown only by his going to church, although the waiting-gentlewoman had said that “the poor are served at his gate early and late.”

“Tut, no,” Carlo Buffone said. “He knows they are excellent, and to the capacity of her who speaks them.”

The serving-gentlewoman was playing a part, and these answers are either what she was ad-libbing or what Puntarvolo had written for her to say. In any case, Puntarvolo was happy with the answers.

“I wish that I could see his face,” Puntarvolo said.

“The waiting-gentlewoman should let down a mirror from the window at that word, and request him to look in it,” Carlo Buffone said.

“Doubtless, the gentleman is most exact and absolutely qualified,” Puntarvolo said. “Does the castle contain him? Is he inside the castle?”

“No, sir, he is away from home, but his lady is within,” the waiting-gentlewoman answered.

“His lady?” Puntarvolo said. “Is she beautiful? Splendidious? Brilliant and magnificent? And is she amiable?”

“Amiable” is derived from the Latin word for “love.” As used by Puntarvolo, “amiable” means “able to be loved.”

“Oh, Jesus, sir!” the waiting-gentlewoman said.

She may not have wanted to play a role in this game. Or her answer may have meant that she was unable to express his lady’s beauty.

“Please, dear nymph, entreat her beauties to shine on this side of the building,” Puntarvolo said.

The waiting-gentlewoman exited from the window.

Carlo Buffone said, “He wants his lady — his wife — to shine on this side of the building so that he may erect a new sundial of compliment, with his *gnomons* and his *puntilios*.”

Carlo was thinking of a different kind of erection than a literal sundial.

Fastidious Brisk said, “Nay, thou are such another man now; a man had necessarily walk uprightly before thee.”

“Uprightly” can mean 1) righteously, or 2) with an erection.

Carlo Buffone said, “By God’s heart, can any man walk more upright than he does? Look, look. It is as if he went about in a frame, or had a suit of wainscot on, and the dog watching him lest he should leap out of it.”

Puntarvolo had excellent posture. He was as stiffly upright as if he were being stretched on a rack or was wearing wood paneling as a suit of clothing.

“Oh, villain!” Fastidious Brisk said.

“Well, if ever I meet him in the city, I’ll have him jointed — pulled joint from joint so he can be roasted,” Carlo Buffone said. “Or else I’ll pawn him in Eastcheap among the butchers.”

Seeing some people coming, Fastidious Brisk said, “Peace! Quiet! Who are these people, Carlo?”

Sordido and his son, Fungoso, entered the scene.

Carlo Buffone, Fastidious Brisk, and Sogliardo continued to watch, unnoticed.

Sordido said to Fungoso, his son, “Yonder’s your godfather; do your duty to him, son.”

Fungoso’s godfather was Puntarvolo.

Fungoso took off his hat.

Sogliardo pointed to Sordido and said to Fastidious Brisk, “You ask who is this man, sir? He is a poor elder brother of mine, sir, a yeoman who may spend some seven or eight hundred pounds a year. That’s his son, my nephew, there.”

A yeoman was not a gentleman, but he could own much land and be wealthy.

Puntarvolo said, “You are not ill-come, neighbor Sordido, although I have not yet said well-come. What, my godson is grown a great proficient — an advanced scholar — by this time!”

“I hope he will grow to be great one day, sir,” Sordido said.

Wealthy yeomen could become gentlemen by such means as getting degrees in law.

“What does he study? The law?” Fastidious Brisk asked.

“Aye, sir, he is a gentleman, although his father is only a yeoman,” Sogliardo answered.

Some people, such as King James I at a later time, wanted only gentlemen to be admitted into law schools, but many yeomen got educations in law.

“What do you call your nephew, signor?” Carlo Buffone asked.

“By the Virgin Mary, his name is Fungoso,” Sogliardo answered.

The Italian *fungo* means “fungus.” A mushroom is a type of fungus.

Mushroom gentlemen are gentlemen who seemingly spring up overnight from humble origins.

“Fungoso?” Carlo Buffone said. “Oh, he looked somewhat like a sponge in that pinked doublet, I thought. Well, make much of him; I see he was never born to ride upon a mule.”

A doublet is a jacket. When a doublet is pinked, it has small holes through which a lining or a shirt with a contrasting color can be seen.

Judges and sergeants-at-law rode mules. Fungoso was so fantastically dressed that he wouldn’t fit in a conservative occupation such as law.

The waiting-gentlewoman appeared again at the window and said, “My lady will come immediately, sir.”

“Oh, now, now,” Sogliardo said to his hidden companions.

Puntarvolo said to Sordido and Fungoso, “Stand by, retire yourselves a space.”

He then said to Fungoso, “Nay, please, don’t forget the use of your hat. The air is piercing.”

Because it was cold, Puntarvolo was giving Fungoso permission to put on his hat, which he had taken off to show respect to the knight, his godfather. This demonstrated magnanimity on Puntarvolo’s part.

Sordido and Fungoso withdrew to the side, and the lady — Puntarvolo’s wife — came to the window.

“What?” Fastidious Brisk said. “Won’t their presence prevail against the current of his humor?”

In other words, won’t Puntarvolo be too embarrassed to continue his role-play in the presence of Sordido and Fungoso?

“Oh, no, it’s a complete flood — a torrent — that washes away all before it,” Carlo Buffone said.

Puntarvolo said:

“What more than heavenly pulchritude is this?

“What storehouse or treasury of bliss?

“Dazzle, you organs to my optic sense,

“To view a creature of such eminence.

“Oh, I am planet-struck and in yonder sphere

“A brighter star than Venus does appear!”

“Planet-struck” meant “struck with awe due to the astrological influence of a planet.” In this case, the planet was his wife.

In Ben Jonson’s society, the word “planet” could refer to the sun and to stars. Planets were believed to be embedded in spheres around the Earth.

“What! In verse?” Fastidious Brisk said.

“A poetic ecstasy, an ecstasy, man!” Carlo Buffone said.

“Is it your desire to speak with me, sir knight?” Puntarvolo’s lady asked.

“He will tell you that soon,” Carlo Buffone said. “Neither his brain nor his body are yet molded for an answer.”

No real conversation would take place right now. Puntarvolo’s brain was filled with ornate language, and his body was stiff with courtly dignity. Part of his body may soon be stiff with blood.

Puntarvolo said, “Most debonair, gracious, and luculent — brilliant — lady, I decline me as low as the basis of your altitude.”

He bowed to her.

“Basis” and “altitude” were terms used in geometry.

Cordatus said, “He makes congees — ceremonious bows — to his wife in geometrical proportions.”

By “geometrical proportions,” he meant “angular movements.”

“Is it possible there should be any such humorist?” Mitis asked.

“Very easily possible, sir,” Cordatus answered. “You see there is. Just look in front of you.”

Puntarvolo said:

“I have scarcely collected my spirits, which were just now scattered — dazzled and confused — in the admiration of your form; to which, if the bounties of your mind be in any way responsive, I don’t doubt that my desires shall find a smooth and secure passage.”

“Desires”? “Smooth and secure passage”? Hmm. Later, he (and his wife) will talk about “entrance” to the “castle.” These words sound sexual. Role-play can be very sexual, indeed.

Puntarvolo continued:

"I am a poor knight-errant, lady, who, hunting in the adjacent forest, was by adventure in the pursuit of a hart — a female deer — brought to this place; which hart, dear madam, escaped by enchantment."

The hart could be the waiting-gentlewoman, whom Puntarvolo had complimented with the excuse that he thought she was the lady of the castle.

Puntarvolo continued:

"The evening approaching, I myself and my servant wearied, my suit is to enter your fair castle and refresh myself."

Puntarvolo's lady responded:

"Sir knight, although it is not usual with me, chiefly in the absence of a husband, to admit any entrance to strangers, yet in the true regard of those innate virtues and fair parts that so strive to express themselves in you, I am resolved to entertain you to the best of my unworthy power, which I acknowledge to be nothing when compared to the value that so worthy a person as you may deserve.

"May it please you to wait while I descend."

"Most admired lady, you astonish me," Puntarvolo said.

She and her waiting-gentlewoman exited from the window, and Puntarvolo joined Sordido and his son: Fungoso.

"What!" Carlo Buffone said. "She astonishes you by speaking a speech of your own penning?"

"Nay, look!" Fastidious Brisk said. "Please, peace. Please, be silent."

"A pox on it," Carlo Buffone said. "I am impatient of such foppery."

"Oh, let's hear the rest," Fastidious Brisk said.

Carlo Buffone said:

"What! Hear a tedious chapter of courtship, after Sir Lancelot and Queen Guinevere?"

Sir Lancelot and Queen Guinevere committed adultery, and so Queen Guinevere cuckolded her husband: King Arthur. Similarly, in this role play, Puntarvolo's wife was on the verge of committing adultery with a "stranger," and so she was "cuckolding" her husband: Puntarvolo.

Carlo Buffone continued:

"Leave! I marvel in what dull cold nook he found this lady out, that, being a woman, she was blessed with no more abundance of wit but to serve his humor thus. By God's blood, I think he feeds her with porridge, aye; otherwise, she could never have such a thick brain."

"Why, is porridge so hurtful, signor?" Sogliardo asked.

Carlo Buffone jested — or perhaps he believed — that thick porridge produces thick wits:

"Oh, there is nothing under heaven more prejudicial to those ascending subtle powers. There is nothing under heaven that does sooner abate that which we call *acumen ingenii* [acuteness of mental powers], than gross fare [food].

"Why, I'll give you an example: Your city wives, just observe them.

"You haven't more perfect true fools in the world bred than they are generally; and yet you see, by the fineness and delicacy of their diet — diving into the fat capons, drinking rich wines, feeding on larks, sparrows, potato-pies, and such good unctuous, fatty meats — how their wits are refined and rarefied; and sometimes a very quintessence of conceit flows from them, able to drown a weak intellect."

Larks, sparrows, and potato-pies were considered aphrodisiacs.

City wives were fools, but because of their rich diet — no porridge for them! — they were able to outwit those country folk who ate porridge.

"Silence! Here comes the lady," Fastidious Brisk said.

Puntarvolo's lady and her waiting-gentlewoman entered the scene.

Seeing Carlo Buffone, Fastidious Brisk, and Sogliardo, Puntarvolo's lady said, "God save me, here's company! Go back inside!"

She and her waiting-gentlewoman exited.

"By God's light, our presence has cut off the action of the jest," Fastidious Brisk said.

"All the better," Carlo Buffone said. "I am glad about it, for the outcome was very perspicuous: It was easy to foresee. Come, let's reveal our presence and greet the knight."

Carlo Buffone, Fastidious Brisk, and Sogliardo stepped forward and went over to Puntarvolo.

Puntarvolo said:

"Wait, who are these men who address themselves towards us?"

"What! Carlo! Now by the sincerity of my soul, welcome!"

He then said to Fastidious Brisk and Sogliardo:

"Welcome, gentlemen."

He then asked Carlo Buffone:

"And how do thou, thou grand scourge, or second untruss of the time?"

Satirists are known for scourging — whipping — those who need it. To "untruss" is to undress; for example, to make bare someone's back in preparation for a whipping. As a noun, an untress is literally someone who prepares someone's back for a whipping. Figuratively, an untress is a satirist.

The first British untress may have been John Marston, author of *The Scourge of Villainy*.

Carlo Buffone said:

"Indeed, I am spending my metal and mettle in this reeling, tottering world, here and there, as the sway of my feelings carries me."

"Metal" is metal coins, and "mettle" is natural vigor. To "spend one's mettle" is to ejaculate.

Carlo Buffone continued:

"And perhaps I stumble upon a yeoman fewterer, as I do now."

A "yeoman fewterer" is a dog-keeper. Puntarvolo was still holding his dog's leash.

Puntarvolo was a knight, but by holding his dog's leash instead of having a servant do that, he was acting like a yeoman fewterer.

Carlo Buffone continued:

"Or perhaps I stumble on one of fortune's mules laden with treasure, and an empty cloak-bag following him, opening his mouth wide when a bag will untie."

Sogliardo and Sordido were fortune's mules laden with treasure, and Fastidious Brisk and Fungoso were the empty cloak-bags following them, and they, like Carlo Buffone, were hoping to acquire some of these fortune's mules' wealth.

In particular, Fungoso would soon be asking his father, Sordido, for money with which to buy expensive clothing. Fastidious Brisk was a courtier who also wished to borrow money so that he could buy expensive clothing, although he borrowed money from someone other than Sogliardo and Sordido.

Actually, Carlo Buffone was following Sogliardo in order to make fun of him.

Puntarvolo said, "Silence, you bandog, peace!"

A "bandog" is 1) a mean dog that is kept tied up, 2) a fierce dog used in bear-baiting, or 3) figuratively, a savage satirist.

Pointing to Fastidious Brisk, Puntarvolo said, "What brisk nymphadoro is that in the white virgin boot there?"

Fastidious Brisk was fashionably dressed.

A nymphadoro is an effeminate courtier.

Carlo Buffone said, “By the Virgin Mary, sir, he is one whom I must entreat you to take a very particular knowledge of, and with more than ordinary respect: This is Monsieur Fastidious.”

Puntarvolo said to Fastidious Brisk, “Sir, I could wish that for the time of your vouchsafed abiding — your deigning to visit me — here, and for your more ample entertainment, that this my house stood on the Muses’ hill — Mount Parnassus — and that these my orchards were those of the Hesperides.”

The garden of the Hesperides contained trees that grew golden apples.

“I possess as much in your wish, sir, as if I were made lord of the Indies, and I pray that you believe it,” Fastidious Brisk said.

Carlo Buffone said to himself about these flattering words, “I have a better opinion of his faith than to think it will be so corrupted. I do not think that Puntarvolo will be taken in by Fastidious Brisk’s words.”

Sogliardo said to Sordido, “Come, brother, I’ll make you acquainted with gentlemen and good fellows, such as shall do you more grace than —”

Sordido interrupted, “— brother, I don’t hunger for such acquaintance.”

He did not want to know these people.

Carlo Buffone came toward them.

Sordido said, “Take heed, lest —”

Sogliardo interrupted, “— hush!”

He then said to Carlo Buffone, “This is my brother, sir, for lack of education, sir, somewhat nodding to the boor, the clown.”

“Nodding to” means “inclining toward.”

A “noddy” is a fool.

“But I request to speak to you in private, sir,” Sogliardo said to Carlo Buffone.

Sogliardo and Carlo Buffone talked quietly together.

Looking at Fastidious Brisk, Fungoso said to himself, “By Jesus, it’s a very fine suit of clothes.”

Cordatus said, “Do you observe that, signor? There’s another humor that has newly cracked the shell and sprung into existence.”

Fungoso’s humor was an obsession with fashionable clothing.

“What?” Mitis said. “He is enamored of the fashion, is he?”

“Oh, you anticipate the jest,” Cordatus said.

Fastidious Brisk and Puntarvolo talked together quietly.

Fungoso said to himself, “I wonder what such clothing might cost him.”

Sogliardo said to Fungoso, “Nephew?”

Still engrossed in his thoughts, Fungoso said to himself, “Before God, it’s an excellent suit, and as neatly becomes him.”

He then asked, “What did you say, uncle?”

“When did you see my niece?” Sogliardo asked.

His niece was Fungoso’s married sister, Fallace, who was living in London.

“By the Virgin Mary, yesterday I supped there,” Fungoso said.

He then said to himself about Fastidious Brisk’s boots, “That kind of boot is very splendid, too.”

“And what news did you hear?” Sogliardo asked.

Fungoso said to himself, “The gilt spur and all. I wish I would be hanged, if it isn’t exceedingly good.”

He then asked his uncle, “What did you say?”

“Your mind is carried away with something else,” Sogliardo said. “I asked you what news did you hear.”

“Indeed, we heard none,” Fungoso said.

He then said to himself, “In good faith, I was never so pleased with a fashion, in all the days of my life. Oh, if I might have but my wish, I’d ask no more of God now but such a suit, such a hat, such a flat linen collar, such a doublet, such a hose, such a boot, and such a —”

Sogliardo said, “They say there’s a new puppet-show about the city of Nineveh, with Jonah and the whale, to be seen at Fleet Bridge. You can tell me about it, nephew?”

Fungoso said to himself, “Here’s such a world of questions with him now! He is asking so many questions!”

He then said to his uncle, “Yes, I think there is such a thing. I saw the advertisement.”

He said to himself, “I wish he would once be satisfied! Let me see, the doublet, say, fifty shillings the doublet, and between three or four pounds the hose. Then boots, the hat, and band. Some ten or eleven pounds would do it all and suit me for the heavens!”

A band is a linen collar that is worn under a ruff.

The heavens were high: on the underside of the roof over the stage. Fashionable gentlemen were seated in the higher seats in the theater.

“I’ll see all those devices, if I come to London once,” Sogliardo said.

The devices were puppet-shows.

Fungoso said to himself, “By God’s eyelid, if I could acquire such clothing, it would be splendid.”

He then said out loud, “Listen, uncle.”

“What does my nephew say to me?” Sogliardo asked.

Fungoso said:

“Indeed, uncle, I’d have desired you to have made a motion — proposal — for me to my father in a thing, that — walk aside and I’ll tell you, sir — is no more than this:

“There’s a parcel of law books, some twenty pounds’ worth, that lie in a bookshop and sell for little more than half the money they cost, and I think for some twelve pounds or twenty marks I could go near to purchase them.

“There are books by Plowden, Dyer, Brooke, and Fitzherbert, and other eminent jurists and legal authors such as I must have before long; and you know I might as well save five or six pounds as not, uncle. Please, propose such a purchase to him for me.”

“That I will,” Sogliardo said. “When would you have me do it? Immediately?”

“Oh, aye, please, good uncle,” Fungoso said.

Sogliardo left to talk to Sordido.

“God send me good luck!” Fungoso said to himself. “Lord, if it is thy will, prosper it. Oh, Jesus, now, now, if my plan to get money for new clothes works — oh, Christ — I am made forever!”

Fastidious Brisk said to Puntarvolo, who had asked if he had found favor with a certain lord, “Shall I tell you, sir, by this air, I am the most indebted to that lord of any gentleman living. He does treat me the most honorably, and with the greatest respect, more indeed than can be uttered with any opinion of truth.”

“… more indeed than can be uttered with any opinion of truth”? Hmm. Sounds like Fastidious Brisk knows that he is lying.

“So then, you do know the Count Gratiato?” Puntarvolo said.

Fastidious Brisk replied:

“He is as truly noble a gentleman, too, as any gentleman who breathes. I am exceedingly endeared to his love. By Jesus, I protest to you, signor, I speak it not vaingloriously nor out of affectation, but there’s he, and the Count Frugale, Signor Illustre, Signor Luculento, and a group of them, who, when I am at the court, they share me among them.

“Happy is he who can enjoy me most privately. I do wish myself sometime an ubiquitary — that is, someone who can be everywhere — for their love, in good faith.”

“Happy is he who can enjoy me most privately”? Hmm. Sounds like a homosexual subtext there.

Hearing him speak, Carlo Buffone said to himself, “There’s never a one of these gentlemen but might lie a week on the rack, before they could bring forth his name, and yet he pours them out as familiarly as if he had seen them stand by the fire in the royal presence chamber, aka reception room, or taken tobacco with them over the stage in the lords’ room.”

The rack is an instrument of torture: one that stretches one’s limbs painfully. Carlo Buffone guessed that influential people could be tortured for a week on the rack without remembering Fastidious Brisk’s name, although Fastidious tried to make it sound as if he knew well these people of influence.

A place by the fire is a privileged place because it is warm.

The lords’ room in the theater is where Fungoso has said that he would like to sit and smoke once he has new clothing.

Puntarvolo said, “Then you must of necessity know our court-star there, that planet of wit, Madonna Saviolina?”

“Oh, Lord, sir, she is my mistress!” Fastidious Brisk said.

A mistress is a woman whom a man admires and who returns that admiration. In this context, the word “mistress” does not necessarily imply sexual intercourse.

“Is she really your mistress?” Puntarvolo asked.

Good question.

Fastidious Brisk answered:

“Indeed, here are some slight favors — tokens of friendship or love — of hers, sir, that announce that she is: such as this scarf, sir, or this ribbon in my ear, or so.”

Audiologists sometimes remove long “ribbons” of dead skin and ear wax from ear canals.

Fastidious Brisk continued:

“This feather grew in her sweet fan sometimes, though now it is my poor fortunes to wear it as you see, sir — slight, slight, a foolish toy.”

“Well, she is the lady of a most exalted and ingenious spirit,” Puntarvolo said.

“Did you ever hear any woman speak like her?” Fastidious Brisk asked. “Or any woman so enriched with a more plentiful discourse?”

A woman with a plentiful discourse is a talkative woman.

Carlo Buffone said, “Oh, villainous! Nothing but sound, sound, a mere echo. She speaks as if she goes attired in cobweb lawn, light, thin — good enough to catch flies with.”

Cobweb lawn is flimsy, transparent linen.

According to Fastidious Brisk, Madonna Saviolina spoke at length.

According to Carlo Buffone, Madonna Saviolina had nothing to say.

Also according to Carlo Buffone, Madonna Saviolina’s conversation was good enough to attract flatterers such as Fastidious Brisk.

“Oh, manage your affections!” Puntarvolo said to Carlo Buffone. “Restrain your outbursts of feelings!”

He did not want to hear insults directed toward Madonna Saviolina.

He was chivalrous that way.

Fastidious Brisk said to Carlo Buffone, “Well, if thou are not plagued for this blasphemy one day —”

“Come, don’t pay attention to a jester,” Puntarvolo said. “It is in the power of my purse to make him speak well or ill of me.”

Fastidious Brisk said, “Sir, I affirm it to you, upon my credit and judgment, that Madonna Saviolina has the most harmonious and musical strain of wit that ever tested a true ear; and yet we see here that a rude tongue will profane heaven.”

It was Carl Buffone’s tongue that would profane heaven.

“I am not ignorant of it, sir,” Puntarvolo said.

Fastidious Brisk said, “Oh, wit flows from her like nectar, and she does give it that sweet, quick grace and exornation — rhetorical embellishment — in the composition that, by this good heaven, she observes as pure a phrase and use as choice figures of speech in her ordinary conversations as any that appear in the *Arcadia*.”

*Arcadia* is a pastoral romance by Sir Philip Sidney.

Carlo Buffone said, “Or rather in Greene’s works, from which she may steal with more security.”

Robert Greene was less admired and less read in intellectual circles than Sir Philip Sidney. Therefore, Madonna Saviolina could plagiarize Greene’s witticisms with less chance of being caught out than if she were to plagiarize Sir Philip Sidney’s witticisms.

Sordido said to Fungoso, “Well, if ten pounds will fetch the law books, you shall have the money, but I’ll part with no more.”

“I’ll try what that will do, if you please,” Fungoso said.

“Do so, and when you have the books, study hard,” Sordido said.

“Yes, sir,” Fungoso said.

He then said to himself, “If I could find a way to get forty shillings more now! Well, I will put myself into the fashion, as far as this money will go, immediately.”

“I wonder that it doesn’t rain!” Sordido said. “The almanac says we should have a store of rain today.”

Puntarvolo said to Fastidious Brisk, “Why, sir, tomorrow I will associate” — he meant “accompany” — “you to the court myself, and from thence to the city about a business, a project I have. I will expose” — he meant “explain” — “it to you, sir. I am sure that Carlo has heard of it.”

“What’s that, sir?” Carlo Buffone said.

Puntarvolo answered:

“I do intend, this year of jubilee, to travel; and because I will not altogether go at my own expense, I am determined to put forth some five thousand pounds to be paid me five for one, upon the return of myself, my wife, and my dog from the Turk’s court in Constantinople.”

Many people in a year of jubilee would travel to the Holy Land.

The Turk was the Ottoman Sultan.

Puntarvolo continued:

“If all or either of us miscarry in the journey, it is gone; if we should be successful, why, there will be twenty-five thousand pounds to entertain time with.”

Sordido started to leave.

Puntarvolo said:

“Nay, don’t go, neighbor Sordido.

“Stay tonight and help to make our society the fuller. Gentlemen, frolic and have fun.”

A traveler could bet that he could return from a hazardous journey within a certain time; others could bet that he would not be able to do it. The traveler would have to provide

evidence that he had successfully reached his destination.

Puntarvolo's bet was unusual in that it included the safe return of his dog.

"Carlo?" Puntarvolo said. "What? Dull now? Nothing to say?"

"I was thinking on your project, sir, if you call it so," Carlo Buffone replied. "Is this the dog that will go with you?"

"This is the dog, sir," Puntarvolo said.

"He doesn't go barefoot, does he?" Carlo Buffone asked.

Silly question.

"Go away, you traitor — you rascal — go away," Puntarvolo said.

Carlo Buffone said:

"Nay, before God, I speak sincerely. He may prick his foot with a thorn and be as much as the whole venture is worth."

If the dog does not return safely, then Puntarvolo loses his wager. The dog could die of natural causes. But also, rather than lose their bets, the people who bet against him may try to kill his dog.

Carlo Buffone continued:

"Besides, for a dog that never travelled before, it's a huge journey to Constantinople. I'll tell you now, if he were mine, I'd have some immediate conversation with a physician, what antidotes would be good to give him, and preservatives against poison, for I assure you, if once your money is put down for the wager, there'll be diverse attempts made against the life of the poor animal."

"Thou are always negative," Puntarvolo said.

Fastidious Brisk said to Sogliardo, "Is Signor Deliro's wife your kinswoman?"

"Aye, sir, she is my niece, my brother's daughter here, and my nephew's sister," Sogliardo replied.

"Do you know her, sir?" Sordido asked Fastidious Brisk.

"Oh, God, sir, Signor Deliro, her husband, is my merchant," Fastidious Brisk replied.

Merchants were often also money-lenders — that is, usurers.

Fungoso pointed to Fastidious Brisk and said to Sordido, "Aye, I have seen this gentleman there often."

"I beg your mercy, sir," Fastidious Brisk said. "Let me ask you what is your name, please."

"I am Fungoso, sir," he answered.

"Good Signor Fungoso, I shall request to know you better, sir," Fastidious Brisk said.

"I am her brother, sir," Fungoso said.

"In fair time, sir," Fastidious Brisk said.

This greeting meant something like "We are well met" or "It is good to meet you."

"Come, gentlemen, I will be your guide," Puntarvolo said. "I will lead you there."

They started to exit.

Fastidious Brisk said to Fungoso, "Nay, please, you go first, sir."

People would exit in order of social prominence. Fungoso, who admired Fastidious Brisk's clothing, wanted to allow him to exit first, but Fastidious, flattering Fungoso, insisted on Fungoso exiting first.

Fastidious Brisk said to Fungoso, "We shall meet at Signor Deliro's often."

Sogliardo said, "You shall find me at the heralds' office, sir, for a week or so, at my first coming up to London."

He then said, "Come, Carlo."

They exited.

Mitis said, “I think, Cordatus, he — Asper the playwright — dwelt somewhat too long on this scene; it hung in the hand.”

Like a hand dragging a weight hung on a string, this scene dragged on.

Cordatus said, “I don’t see where he could have settled for less, and still have made the humors perspicuous — easily understood — enough.”

In other words, the scene needed to be long in order to competently develop the characters and their humors.

Mitis replied, “True, as his satire of humors lies; but he might have altered the shape of the plot and explicated the characters and their humors better in single scenes rather than in one long scene.”

“That had been single — singular — indeed,” Cordatus said. “Why, aren’t they the same persons in this one long scene as they would have been in those shorter scenes? And isn’t it an object of more flowering, flourishing state to behold the scene full of characters, and furnished with a variety of speakers to the end, than to see a vast empty stage and the actors come in one by one, as if they were dropped down with a feather into the eye of the audience?”

In Ben Jonson’s society, feathers were used as eyedroppers to drop small amounts of liquid onto an eye.

Mitis said, “You are better acquainted with these things than I, and therefore I’ll submit to your judgment.”

He added that he still wanted to make criticisms of the play: “By the Virgin Mary, you shall give me permission to make objections.”

“Oh, what else?” Cordatus said. “It’s the special intention of the author that you should do so, for thereby others who are present — that is, the members of the audience — may as well be satisfied who perhaps would happily object the same as you do.”

Mitis asked, “That is so, sir, but when does Macilente appear again?”

Macilente, Deliro, and Fido entered. Fido was carrying flowers, herbs, and incense. Fido was Deliro and Fallace’s boy-servant. Deliro was married to Fallace.

Cordatus said:

“By the Virgin Mary, he waited just until our silence gave him an opportunity to appear again. Here he comes, and with him Signor Deliro, a merchant, at whose house he has come to sojourn.

“Make your own observation now, only transfer your thoughts to the city with the scene change, where you may suppose they speak.”

## — 2.3 —

This scene was set in the backyard of Deliro’s house in London.

Deliro said to a client just off-stage, “I’ll tell you by and by, sir.”

He then said, “Welcome, good Macilente, to my house to sojourn even forever, if my best in delicate, choice foods and every sort of good entreaty may persuade you to stay with me.”

Deliro turned to his serving-boy, Fido, and signaled, and Fido began strewing the flowers on the ground to act as air fresheners to please Deliro’s wife.

“I thank you, sir,” Macilente replied.

He then said to himself:

“And yet the muffled — inscrutable — Fates, had it pleased them, might have supplied me from their own full store without this utterance, ‘I thank you,’ to a fool.

“I see no reason why that dog called Chance should fawn upon this fellow more than me. I am a man, and I have limbs, flesh, blood, bones, sinews, and a soul as well as he.”

Chance is Old Lady Chance, aka Lady Fortune.

He continued:

“My parts are in every way as good as his. If I would have said that my parts are better, why, I would not have lied.

“Nonetheless, his wealth, simply nodding with casual generosity on my wants, must make me bow and cry, ‘I thank you, sir.’”

Deliro said to Fido, “Hurry. Take heed your mistress doesn’t see you.”

This kind of mistress is a female boss.

“I promise you, she won’t see me, sir,” Fido said as he exited.

All that they had done to perfume the air was done to prepare for the arrival of Deliro’s wife.

Deliro said, “Nay, gentle, distinguished friend, be merry, raise your looks out of your bosom. I protest, by heaven, that you are the man most welcome in the world.”

“I thank you, sir,” Macilente replied.

He said to himself, “I know my cue, I think!”

Fido returned with two censers. Censers are incense-burners. Burning incense and herbs sweetened the air.

“Where will you have them burn, sir?” Fido asked.

“Here, good Fido,” Deliro said. “What? She did not see thee?”

“No, sir,” Fido said.

“That’s well,” Deliro said. “Strew, strew, good Fido, the freshest flowers. Good.”

“What does this mean, Signor Deliro?” Macilente asked.

Deliro said to Fido, “Cast in more frankincense. Yet more. Well done.”

He then answered Macilente, “Oh, Macilente, I have such a wife, so surpassingly beautiful, so passing-fair — superbly — unkind, and of such worth and right to be unkind, since no man can be worthy of her kindness.”

He adored his wife.

In Ben Jonson’s society, wives were supposed to be kind — affectionate and submissive — to their husbands. Deliro’s wife was not kind to him.

“What, no man is worthy of her?” Macilente said.

Deliro said:

“No, that is sure as death; no man alive is worthy of her. I do not say ‘is not’ but instead I say ‘cannot possibly be worth’ her kindness.

“Nay, that is certain; let me do her right.

“What did I say? ‘Do her right’?

“As though I could! As though this dull gross tongue of mine could utter the rare, the true, the pure, the infinite rights that sit, as high as I can look, within her.”

“This is such dotage as was never heard,” Macilente said.

Dotage can mean 1) infatuation, and 2) foolishness.

“Well, what I have said about my wife must necessarily be granted to be true,” Deliro said.

“Must be granted, did you say?” Macilente asked.

Deliro replied:

“Nay, Macilente, do not so discredit the goodness of your judgment to deny it, for I speak the very least of her.”

“I speak the very least of her” is ambiguous. It can mean, “The praise I give her does not come close to what she deserves.” Or it can mean, “Although I praise her, you can tell that she does not deserve any of that praise.”

Deliro continued:

“And I would crave and beg no more of heaven, for all my fortunes here, but to be able to utter first, in fit terms, what she is, and then the true joys I conceive in her.”

Chances are, Deliro wanted to have children with her. He certainly wanted the sexual rights of a husband.

“Is it possible she should deserve as well as you pretend?” Macilente asked.

“Pretend” can mean 1) profess, and/or 2) assert without evidence or belief.

Deliro replied:

“Aye, and she knows so well her own value that, when I strive to enjoy it” — as a husband, he could, or was supposed to, enjoy his wife, including sexually — “she weighs the things I do with what she merits and deserves, and, seeing my worth outweighed so in her graces, she is so formal, so scrupulous, so hard to please and headstrong that no courteous attention I can give to her can make her kind to me. If she finds fault, I mend that fault, and then she says I faulted in that I did mend it.

“Now, good friend, advise me how I may temper — lessen and control — this strange spleen in her.”

Macilente answered:

“You are too amorous and fond of her, too obsequious, and you make her too assured she may command you.

“When women doubt most of their husband’s loves, they are the most loving. Husbands must take heed that they give no gluts of kindness to their wives, but treat them like their horses, whom they feed not with a manger-full of meat — food — together, but half a peck at a time, and keep them so always with an appetite to that which they give them.”

Macilente believed that husbands can be too subservient to their wives.

He also believed that wives ought to be like horses: legal possessions.

He was also talking about sex. The word “meat” can refer to a penis, and the word “appetite” can refer to sexual appetite. But it seems unlikely that Deliro’s wife ever had sex with him, at least not recently.

Macilente continued:

“He who desires to have a loving wife must bridle and check all the show of that desire. Be kind, not amorous. Do not reveal kindness as if love wrought it, but act out of considerate and deliberate legal and moral duty and obligation.

Macilente advised that Deliro act out of reason, not love-passion.

Macilente quoted a maxim:

“‘*Offer no love-rites, but let wives still [always] seek them,*

“‘*For when they come unsought, they seldom like them*.’”

Deliro said:

“Believe me, Macilente, this is gospel.

“Oh, that a man were his own man so much to rule himself thus! I will strive, in faith, to be more strange and careless — distant and emotionally uninvolved; yet I hope that I have now taken such a perfect course to make her kind to me and live contented that I shall find my kindness well returned and have no need to fight with my affections.

“She lately has found much fault with every room within my house. One was too big, she said. Another was not furnished to her liking, and so through all the rooms in my house. All of which rooms I have altered.

“Then here she has a place, on my back side, wherein she loves to walk, and that, she said, had some ill smells about it.”

Deliro’s back side is 1) Deliro’s backyard or back garden, or 2) Deliro’s backside, aka butt. Backsides can at times have ill smells.

Deliro continued:

“Now this walk have I, before she knows it, thus perfumed with herbs and flowers, and laid in diverse places, as it were on altars consecrated — dedicated — to her, perfumed gloves and delicate necklaces of amber to keep the air in awe of her sweet nostrils.”

Perfumed gloves and delicate amber necklaces were popular lovers’ gifts.

Deliro was mistaken about amber (fossilized resin), which does not have a scent unless it is heated.

Deliro continued:

“This I have done, and this I think will please her.

“Look, she is coming.”

Fallace, Deliro’s wife, entered the scene.

She complained:

“Here’s a sweet stink indeed!

“What, shall I always be thus crossed by and plagued by and sick of my husband? Oh, my head aches, as if it would be split in two with these savors and smells!

“All my rooms are altered, and just one poor walk that I delighted in, and that is made so fulsome and cloying with perfumes that I am afraid — my brain does sweat so! — that I have caught the plague.”

“Why, gentle wife, is now thy walk too sweet-sweeting?” Deliro said. “Thou said recently it had sour airs about it, and thou found much fault that I did not correct it.”

“What if I did find fault, sir?” Fallace said.

“Nay, dear wife,” Deliro said. “I know thou have said thou have loved perfumes, and no woman better loves them than thee.”

Fallace said:

“Aye, long ago, perhaps, but now that sense has changed.”

“You want me, like a puddle or a standing, stagnant pool, to have no motion nor no spirit within me.

“No, I am like a pure and sprightly quickly flowing river that moves forever, and yet is always the same, or fire that burns much wood, yet is always one flame.”

The Greek philosopher Heraclitus said that you can’t step into the same river twice because it is constantly changing.

“Only yesterday, I saw thee at our garden smelling roses and purple flowers,” Deliro said. “And since then, I hope, the humor of thy sense has not at all changed.”

“Why, those were growing flowers, and these within my walk are cut and strewed,” Fallace said.

“But yet they have one and the same scent,” Deliro said.

Fallace asked:

“Is that really true?”

She answered her own question:

“In your gross judgment.

“If you make no difference between the scent of growing flowers and cut ones, you have a sense to taste lamp-oil, truly.”

She was accusing him of being insensitive: The only thing he could smell was something strong such as lamp-oil. Also, she was saying that if that was what his sense of smell was like, he must think that lamp-oil smells good and he would like to taste it.

Fallace continued:

“And with such judgment you have changed the chambers, leaving no room that I can feel joy to be in, in all your house; and now my walk and all you smoke me from, as if I were a fox,

and you long, it is likely, to drive me quite away."

Hunters used smoke to drive a fox from its lair.

Fallace continued:

"Well, you walk there, and I'll walk where I wish."

"What shall I do?" Deliro said. "Oh, I shall never please her."

Macilente said to himself:

"Get out of here, you dotard!

"What star — astrological influence — ruled his birth that brought him such a star — such a beautiful woman? Blind Fortune always bestows her gifts on such as cannot use them.

"How long shall I live before I am so happy to have a wife of this surpassing body shape?"

Deliro said to Fido:

"Take these things away! I wish I had broken a joint when I thought up this that should so displease her.

"Away, carry everything away!"

Fido carried the gloves, censers, and other love-tokens away as he exited.

Fallace said:

"Aye, do, for fear anything that is there should please her — by whom I mean me.

"Oh, this man, how cunningly he can conceal himself and make it seem as though he loved! Loved? Nay, honored and adored!"

"Why do you say that, my sweetheart?" Deliro asked.

Fallace said:

"Sweetheart? Oh, better still!

"And asking, 'Why? Wherefore?' And looking strangely, as if he were as white as innocence.

"Alas, you're simple and unsophisticated, you. You cannot change, look pale at your pleasure — when you please — and then look red with wonder.

"No, no, not you.

"I did but cast an admiring eye even now upon a pair of gloves that I somewhat liked, and immediately he noted it, and gave the command that all should be taken away."

"May those gloves be my bane, my poison, then, if they are taken away," Deliro said.

He called, "What! Sirrah! Fido!"

Fido returned.

Deliro ordered, "Bring in those gloves again you took away from here."

Fallace said to Fido, "By God's body, sirrah, do not do that. Bring in no gloves to spite me. If you do —"

Fido exited.

"My lot in life is sorrow!" Deliro said. "I am very wretched. How my wife misinterprets me!"

Macilente said to himself:

"Oh, how she tempts my heartstrings with her eye, to knit them to her beauties, or to break!

"What moved the heavens that they could not make me such a woman, but made me a man, a beast, who has no bliss like to others?

"I wish to God, in revenge for my misfortunes, that I would be turned into some fair water-nymph, so that, set upon the deepest whirlpool of the ravenous seas, my adamantine — magnetic — eyes might headlong hale this iron world to me, and drown it all."

Macilente knew that Fallace was a beautiful woman, but he envied more her power: She bossed her husband.

In mythology, the iron age is the last and most evil age. The first and best age is the golden age.

To a savage satirist, the present age is always the iron age.

Fungoso entered the scene. He was wearing a replica of the suit of clothing that Fastidious Brisk had been wearing earlier.

Cordatus said to Mitis, “Look, see the translated gallant!”

“Oh, he is welcome,” Mitis said.

Fungoso said to Deliro and Fallace, “God save you, brother-in-law and sister.”

He said to Macilente, “God save you, sir.”

He said to Fallace, his sister, “I have commendations for you from out in the country.”

He then said to himself, “I marvel that they haven’t noticed my new suit of clothing.”

He then continued talking to Fallace:

“My uncle Sogliardo is in town.

“Sister, I think you are melancholy. Why are you so sad? I think you mistook me for Master Fastidious Brisk, sister, didn’t you?”

He was trying to draw attention to his new clothes.

“Why should I mistake you for him?” Fallace asked.

“Nay, no reason,” Fungoso said.

Then he added, “I was lately in Master Fastidious’ company, and I think we are very similar.”

“You have a fair suit of clothing, brother-in-law,” Deliro said. “May God give you joy of it.”

“Indeed, it is good enough to ride in, brother,” Fungoso said. “I had it made to ride in.”

This implies that he had other fancy suits of clothing to wear when he was not riding on horseback.

“Oh, now I see the cause of his frivolous question was his new suit of clothing,” Fallace said.

Deliro said quietly to Fungoso, “Please, good brother-in-law, see if you can change her mood.”

Fallace seemed to always be in a peevish mood.

Fungoso replied quietly, “I assure you I will. Leave it to me. I’ll put her out of her dumps.”

He then said to Fallace, “Sister, how do you like my suit of clothing?”

“Oh, you are a gallant in print — a perfect gallant — now, brother,” Fallace said, referring to his clothing.

Since Fungoso had gotten the money by claiming he needed it to buy books but had instead spent it on clothing, he was indeed a gallant in print.

Fungoso replied, “Indeed, how do you like the fashion? It’s the last edition — the latest edition — I assure you.”

“I cannot but like it as it deserves,” Fallace replied.

Considering how Fungoso had gotten the money to get the new clothes, did they deserve to be praised?

“To tell the truth, sister, I was obliged to borrow these spurs,” Fungoso said. “I have left my gown as security for them. Please, lend me an angel.”

A gown is a kind of men’s upper garment that can be worn in public.

An angel is a gold coin.

“Now, beshrew — curse — my heart, then,” Fallace said.

She was reluctant to lend him money.

Fungoso said, “In good truth, I’ll pay you again at my next exhibition.”

His exhibition was his allowance. His father gave him money periodically to enable him to be a law student.

He continued, “I had just barely ten pounds from my father, and it would not reach to put me wholly into the fashion.”

He had bought everything except the spurs.

“I don’t care,” Fallace said.

“I had spurs of my own before, but they were not jinglers,” Fungoso said.

Fastidious Brisk had worn spurs that jingled, and so Fungoso had wanted some of his own.

Fungoso added, “Monsieur Fastidious will be here soon, sister.”

“You jest!” Fallace said.

“Never lend me one penny more, while you live, then, if I am jesting,” Fungoso said, “and that is something I’d be loath and reluctant to say, in truth.”

He was loath and reluctant to tell her to never lend him any more money.

“When did you see him?” Fallace asked.

“Yesterday,” Fungoso said. “I became acquainted with him at Sir Puntarvolo’s. Nay, sweet sister —”

Macilente said to himself:

“I would like to know of heaven, now, why yonder fool should wear a suit of satin. He? That rook — that fraud! That painted jay — flashily dressed fool — with such a deal of outside? He is all show and no substance. What is his inside, do you think? Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! Good heaven, give me patience!

“A number of these popinjays — chatterers — there are whom, if a man bring to mind and just compare their inward merit with the inward merit of such men as lack the popinjay’s financial resources, Lord, Lord, what things they are!”

Popinjays are literally chattering birds with fine feathers.

Macilente considered himself to be a man of inward merit who lacked the money to buy fine clothing.

Scholars and gallants are different. Scholars are supposed to seek a well-furnished mind; gallants are thought to seek a well-furnished — that is, well-clothed — body.

Fungoso was a law student, but he wanted to be dressed like a gallant. He valued clothing more than books.

Macilente thought of himself as a scholar, but he wanted to be dressed like a gallant.

Fallace said, “Come, when will you pay me again? Tell me now.”

She may or may not have given him money.

“Oh, God, sister!” Fungoso said.

He may have caught sight of Fastidious Brisk, who entered the scene while wearing a new suit of clothing in the newest fashion.

Seeing Fastidious Brisk, Macilente said to himself, “Here comes another.”

He meant another popinjay.

Fastidious Brisk greeted Deliro and Fallace:

“May God save you, Signor Deliro.

“How are thou, sweet lady? Let me kiss thee.”

Fungoso said, “What! A new suit of clothing? My lot is sorrow!”

He had thought he was wearing the latest fashion, but now he learned that he was not.

“And how does Master Fastidious Brisk?” Deliro asked.

Fastidious Brisk, who sometimes left words out of his sentences, said, “Indeed, [I] live in court, Signor Deliro, in favor and grace, I thank God, both of the noble masculine and feminine.”

He meant upperclass lords and ladies.

He added, “I must speak with you in private by and by.”

He wanted to borrow money.

“When you please, sir,” Deliro said.

“Why do you look so pale, brother?” Fallace asked.

“By God’s eyelid, all this money is cast away now,” Fungoso said.

He had spent much money on his clothing, and now his clothes were not the latest fashion.

Macilente said to himself, “Aye, there’s a newer edition come forth.”

The new edition was a new fashion.

“It is just my hard fortune,” Fungoso said. “Well, I’ll have my suit of clothing changed. I’ll go and fetch my tailor soon, but first I’ll devise a letter to my father. Have you any pen and ink, sister?”

“What would you do with it?” Fallace asked.

“I would use it,” Fungoso said. “By God’s light, if it had come but four days sooner, I would have had the fashion!”

If he had had the money four days earlier, he would have been fashionable for four days. Or, if Fastidious Brisk had worn his new suit of clothing four days earlier, Fungoso would have been able to copy it and would have been fashionable now.

He exited.

Fastidious Brisk said:

“There was a countess [who] gave me her hand to kiss today, in the presence chamber” — the royal reception room — “’did [which did] me more good, by Jesus, then — and yesternight sent her coach twice to my lodging to entreat me [to] accompany her, and my sweet mistress, with some two or three nameless ladies more.”

The ladies must be nameless out of discretion — or because they didn’t exist.

Fastidious Brisk again left out some words: *’did* above means “Which did,” and *This’* below means “This is.”

Fastidious Brisk continued:

“Oh, I have been graced by them beyond all aim of affection! This’ [This is] her garter my dagger hangs in. And they so commend and approve my apparel, with my judicious wearing of it, it’s above wonder.”

Fallace said, “Indeed, sir, it is a most excellent suit, and you do wear it as extraordinary — uncommonly well.”

Fastidious Brisk replied, “Why, I’ll tell you now, in good faith, and I swear by this chair — which, by the grace of God, I intend soon to sit in — I had three suits in one year [that] made three great ladies [fall] in love with me. I had three other [suits that] undid [ruined] three gentlemen in imitation, and three other [suits that] got three other gentlemen widows of three thousand pound a year.”

In other words: He claimed that he had three suits of clothing made in one year that made three great ladies fall in love with him. He also claimed that he had three other suits of clothing that financially ruined three gentlemen who imitated him. He also claimed that that he had three other suits of clothing that got three other gentlemen who imitated him widows who each had an income of three thousand pounds a year. Apparently, these three gentlemen married the three widows and got their money, as was the norm in Ben Jonson’s society.

“Is it possible?” Deliro asked.

“Oh, believe it, sir, a good face is the witch and good apparel is the spells that bring all the pleasures of the world into their circle,” Fastidious Brisk said.

The bawdy meaning of “circle” is vagina.

“Ah, the sweet grace of a courtier!” Fallace said.

Macilente said to himself, “Well, I wish my father had left me just a good face for my inheritance yet; even if I had shared the unfortunate wit that goes with it, I wouldn’t have cared. I might have passed for someplace in the world then.”

Macilente had inherited nothing except his intelligence, which he wishes he could exchange for a good face. With a good face, he would have a better chance of rising in the world.

Fastidious Brisk said to Deliro:

“Why, [I] assure you, signor, rich apparel has strange virtues:

“It makes him who has rich apparel without means, esteemed for an excellent wit.

“It makes him who enjoys rich apparel with means able to put the world in remembrance of his means.

“Rich apparel helps the deformities of nature and gives luster to nature’s beauties.

“Rich apparel makes continual holiday where it shines.

“Rich apparel sets the wits of ladies at work who otherwise would be idle.

“Rich apparel furnishes your two-shilling ordinary.

“Rich apparel takes possession of your stage at your new play.

“And rich apparel enriches your oars, as scorning to go with your scull.”

A two-shilling ordinary is an eating-place that sells two-shilling meals.

Fashionably dressed people in the audience may upstage the actors because people will look at their fashionable clothing.

A scull is a boat with only one oar. Water-taxis were more fashionable and had more oars. Fashionably dressed people would scorn to take a scull.

Macilente said, “Please, sir, add this: Rich apparel gives respect to your fools, and it makes many thieves, as many strumpets, and no fewer bankrupts.”

“Bah! Bah! You are unworthy to speak where he breathes!” Fallace said.

Fastidious Brisk asked Deliro about Macilente, “Who is he, signor?”

“A friend of mine, sir,” Deliro answered.

“By heaven, I wonder at you citizens. I wonder what kind of creatures you are,” Fastidious Brisk said.

“Why, sir?” Deliro asked.

“[I wonder] that you can consort yourselves with such poor seam-rent fellows,” Fastidious Brisk said.

Seam-rents are garments with ripped seams. Macilente lacked money and good clothing.

“He says the truth,” Fallace said.

“Sir, I will assure you, however you esteem of him, he’s a man worthy of respect,” Deliro said, defending Macilente.

“Why?” Fastidious Brisk asked. “What virtue has he in him that he should be respected? Huh?”

“By the Virgin Mary, he is a scholar, sir,” Deliro said.

“Nothing else?” Fastidious Brisk asked.

“And he is well travelled,” Deliro said.

“He should get himself good clothes,” Fastidious Brisk said. “I would cherish those good qualities learned from the experience of travel in him, and I would recommend him to some nobleman of high position.”

“Sir, such a benefit should bind me to you forever for my friend’s sake,” Deliro said, “and I don’t doubt that his merit shall more than justify my praise.”

“Why, if he had fine clothes, I’d carry him to the court with me tomorrow,” Fastidious Brisk said.

Deliro said, “He shall not lack fine clothes, sir, if gold and any place in the whole city will furnish him with credit.”

Gold would definitely furnish him with credit. With gold, he could pay the bill for clothing.

“You say well, sir,” Fastidious Brisk said. “Indeed, Signor Deliro, I have come to have you play the alchemist with me and change the species of my land into that metal you talk of.”

Fastidious Brisk wanted to borrow money, using his land as security. In alchemical terms, he would turn earth into gold.

In Ben Jonson’s society, one meaning of “species” is coined money. Certainly, land can be converted into money.

“With all my heart, sir,” Deliro said. “What sum will serve you?”

“Indeed, some three- or fourscore pounds,” Fastidious Brisk answered.

“To tell the truth, sir, I have promised to meet a gentleman this morning in St. Paul’s Cathedral, but upon my return I’ll quickly dispatch your business.”

“I’ll accompany you there,” Fastidious Brisk said.

“As you please, sir, but I’m not going there directly,” Deliro said.

“It doesn’t matter. I have no other designment — appointment — in hand, and therefore I might as well go along with you,” Fastidious Brisk said.

Deliro said to himself, “I might as well have a quartan fever follow me now, for I shall never be rid of him.”

A quartan fever is hard to get rid of. It is a fever that keeps recurring every few days.

Deliro called to his servants, “Bring me a cloak there, someone!”

He said to himself, “Still, with the aid of Fastidious Brisk’s help at the court, I am sure to be visited by notables. I was a beast to give him any hope. Well, I wish that I were in, that I am out with him once, and —”

The notables whom he would meet would raise his social status. Possibly, they would become his customers.

Deliro had already lent Fastidious Brisk money and he would like to have that repaid: He had lent money out and he would like to have it repaid with an introduction at court (or repaid into his moneybag). Also, he would like to be in a certain part of his wife’s body that he was currently out of, partly because his wife was infatuated with Fastidious Brisk.

Deliro then said, “Come, Signor Macilente, I must confer with you as we go.”

He said to Fallace, “Nay, dear wife, I ask thee to forsake these moods; look not like winter thus. Here, take my keys, open my money-counting houses, spread all my wealth before thee, choose any object that delights thee. If thou will eat of the spirit of gold, and drink dissolved pearl in wine, it is for thee.”

Small amounts of gold in food was thought to promote health.

Cleopatra once dissolved a very valuable pearl in wine and drank it in order to win a bet with Marc Antony that she would host the most expensive banquet in history.

Such waste of a valuable pearl is the epitome of the vice known as *Luxuria*.

So is poop glitter: gold flakes that people eat in order to make their poop glitter.

“So, sir,” Fallace said.

“Nay, my sweet wife,” Deliro said.

“Good Lord!” Fallace said. “How you are perfumed in your terms and all! Please leave us.”

“Come, gentlemen,” Deliro said.

“Adieu, sweet lady,” Fastidious Brisk said.

Everyone exited except Fallace.

Alone, Fallace said to herself about Fastidious Brisk:

“Aye, aye, let thy words forever sound in my ears, and thy graces — elegance and charms — disperse contentment through all my senses. Oh, how happy is that lady above other ladies who enjoys so absolute a gentleman to be her servant!”

In this context, a servant is a man who admires a woman.

Fallace continued:

“A countess give him her hand to kiss! Ah, foolish countess, he’s a man worthy — if a woman may speak of a man’s worth — to kiss the lips of an empress.”

Fungoso and his tailor entered the scene.

“What! Has Master Fastidious gone, sister?” Fungoso asked.

“Aye, brother,” Fallace said.

Still thinking about Fastidious Brisk, Fallace said to herself, “He has a face like a cherub.”

“God’s me, what luck’s this!” Fungoso said. “I have fetched my tailor and all. Which way did he go, sister? Can you tell me?”

“Not I, in good faith,” Fallace said.

Still thinking about Fastidious Brisk, Fallace said to herself, “And he has a body like an angel.”

“How long is it since he went?” Fungoso asked.

“Why, but just now,” Fallace said. “Didn’t you meet him?”

Still thinking about Fastidious Brisk, Fallace said to herself, “And a tongue able to ravish any woman in the earth.”

He could ravish a woman with flattery, with kisses, and/or with cunnilingus.

“Oh, for God’s sake!” Fungoso said.

He said to the tailor, “I’ll pay you for your pains.”

He said to Fallace, “But just now, did you say?”

He said to the tailor, “Come, good sir.”

He said to himself, “By God’s eyelid, I had forgotten it, too.”

He said to Fallace, “Sister, if anybody asks for my uncle Sogliardo, they shall find him at the heralds’ office yonder by St. Paul’s.”

Fungoso exited with his tailor.

Alone again, Fallace said to herself:

“Well, I will not altogether despair. I have heard of a citizen’s wife who has been beloved by a courtier, and so why shouldn’t I be beloved by one, too? Well, I will go into my private chamber, lock the door, and think over all his good parts one after another.”

“Heigh ho” expresses sadness: a sigh.

Fallace’s speech was filled with double entendres:

Her private chamber can be 1) her bedroom, and/or 2) her vagina.

A lock and key can be symbols of a vagina and a penis.

The door can be the entrance to her vagina.

Fastidious Brisk’s good parts can be his private parts.

Chances are excellent that she was going to masturbate while thinking about Fastidious Brisk.

Fallace exited.

Mitis said to Cordatus, “Well, I fear that this last scene will endure some grievous torture.”

“What?” Cordatus said. “You fear it will be racked by some hard construction?”

Ben Jonson wanted to avoid being accused of slander, and so Cordatus and Mitis talked here about Jonson’s words being tortured and misconstrued as attacking a particular person

instead of attacking a vice shared by many people.

“Don’t you fear that, too?” Mitis asked.

Cordatus said:

“No, in good faith.

“Unless my eyes could enable me to see beyond what I can physically see, I see no reason why this should be more liable to the rack than the rest.

“You’ll say perhaps the city will not take it well that the merchant Deliro is made here to dote so entirely upon his wife, Fallace, and also that she is so fastidiously affected as she is.”

“You have uttered my thought, sir, indeed,” Mitis said.

Cordatus said:

“Why, by that analogy, the court might as well take offence at him we call the courtier, and with much more reason, by how much the real place — the royal court — transcends and is superior in dignity and virtue.

“But can you imagine that any noble or true spirit in the royal court — whose sinewy and tough-minded and altogether unaffected graces very worthily express that he, the true spirit, is a courtier — will make any complaint at the opening of such an empty trunk as this Brisk is? Or think that his own worth is impeached by beholding his motley inside?”

No real, worthy courtier will take offense at the portrayal of Fastidious Brisk, who cannot possibly be thought to represent any real, worthy courtier. Only a courtier who actually is like Fastidious Brisk would take offense.

“No, sir, I do not,” Mitis said.

Cordatus said:

“No more, I assure you, will any grave wise citizen or modest matron object to this folly in Deliro and his wife, but rather apply it as the foil to their own virtues.”

A foil is a thin piece of metal placed under a gemstone to better display its glitter. Here, the follies of Ben Jonson’s characters are the foils that show off his audience’s virtues better by the contrast of folly and virtue.

Cordatus continued:

“For to take personal affront at a satiric character would be to affirm that a man writing of Nero should mean all emperors, or speaking of Machiavelli, comprehend all statesmen, or in our character Sordido, all farmers, and so of the rest; than which, nothing can be uttered that is more malicious and absurd.

“Indeed, there is a kind of these narrow-eyed decipherers, I confess, who will extort strange and abstruse meanings out of any subject, although it is ever so obvious and innocently delivered.

“But to such — wherever they sit concealed — let them know that the author defies them and the writing-tablets that they use to write down what they perceive as slanders, and the author hopes no sound or trustworthy judgment will infect itself with their contagious comments, who indeed come here only to pervert and poison the sense of what they hear, and for nothing else.”

Seeing another actor walking onto the stage, Mitis asked, “Wait! What new mute is this who walks so suspiciously?”

# CHAPTER 3

## — 3.1 —

Cavalier Shift, holding two *si quises* — notices to be posted in St. Paul's Cathedral — in his hand walked onto the stage. Shift was a swaggerer and a pimp. *Si quis* is Latin for "if anyone." The notices could request employment and information, or they could be about lost items. Cavalier Shift's notices were about employment.

Cordatus said, "Oh, by the Virgin Mary, this is one for whose better illustration we must desire you to imagine that the stage is the middle aisle in St. Paul's Cathedral, and that, the west end of it."

The middle aisle was a place for people to meet and gossip; the west end is where the notices were posted.

"So, sir, and what follows?" Mitis asked.

"Indeed, a whole volume of humor, and it is worthy the unclasping."

Many books of the time had clasps to keep them shut when not in use.

"As how?" Mitis asked. "What name do you give him first?"

"He has shift of names, sir," Cordatus answered. "Some call him Apple-John, some Signor Whiff. By the Virgin Mary, his main standing — most used — name is Cavalier Shift; the rest are but as clean shirts to his natures."

An apple-john may be an apple-squire, aka pimp. An apple-john is an apple that will not rot quickly, and an apple-squire is a pimp with a steady supply of prostitutes. Since a "john" is a man, and "apple" can refer to the fruit of the tree of knowledge, aka the forbidden fruit, an apple-john may also be a prostitute's client.

Signor Whiff refers to Shift's habit of smoking tobacco.

Cavalier Shift shifted — changed — his alias frequently — as frequently as some men change their shirts. He did this in order to suit whatever character he was adopting.

"And what is he doing in St. Paul's now?" Mitis asked.

"Truly, as you see, for the promotion of a *si quis* or two, wherein he has so varied himself and presented himself in various roles that if any one of them take, he may hull up and down in the humorous world a little longer."

In his notices, he varied his character, and he probably used various names. If one advertisement got a taker, he would keep using that character and name. He would be like a ship and follow that current and wind for a while. As you might guess, the word "shift" meant "stratagem."

"It seems, then, he bears a very changing sail?" Mitis said.

In other words, Cavalier Shift can change direction very often. If one stratagem doesn't work, he moves in another direction and tries another.

"Oh, as the wind, sir," Cordatus said. "Here comes more actors."

Orange, a coxcomb, entered the scene. Coxcombs are fools.

"This is splendid," Cavalier Shift said. "I have set up my bills without being noticed."

Being noticed might result in his being arrested.

"What? Signor Whiff?" Orange said. "What fortune has brought you into these west parts?"

Cavalier Shift (aka Signor Whiff) answered, "Indeed, signor, nothing but phlegm. I have been taking an ounce of tobacco nearby here with a gentleman, and I have come to spit privately in St. Paul's. God save you, sir."

Spitting phlegm in a cathedral? Yuck.

“Privately” means alone and not in front of others.

“Adieu, good Signor Whiff,” Orange said.

He walked aside.

Clove, Orange’s friend, entered the scene. Like Orange, Clove was a coxcomb, aka a fool.

“Master Apple-John!” Clove said. “You are well met. When shall we sup together, and laugh and be fat with those good wenches? Huh?”

“Indeed, sir, I must now leave you upon a few humors and occasions. But when you please, sir,” Cavalier Shift (aka Master Apple-John) said.

He exited.

“Farewell, sweet Apple-John,” Clove said. “I wonder that there is no greater number of gallants here?”

“Who are these two, signor?” Mitis asked Cordatus about Orange and Clove.

“By the Virgin Mary, they are a couple, sir, who are mere strangers to the whole scope of our play, by chance come only to walk a turn or two in this scene set in St. Paul’s.”

Orange and Clove would have very small parts in the play.

Orange and Clove walked together.

“May God save you, good Master Clove,” Orange said.

“Sweet Master Orange,” Clove replied.

“What?” Mitis said. “Clove and Orange?”

Sometimes, cloves were stuck in oranges.

Cordatus said:

“Aye, and they are well met, for it is as dry an orange as ever grew.”

Dry fruit is withered. This man Orange lacked juice and taste. He lacked wit and intelligence.

Cordatus continued:

“Their conversation is nothing but salutation, and ‘Oh, God, sir!’ and ‘It pleases you to say so, sir.’”

These were fashionable expressions.

Cordatus continued:

“Orange is one who can laugh at a jest for fellowship’s sake with a most plausible and extemporal grace, and some hour afterward will in private ask you what the jest was.”

Orange pretends to understand a joke but asks someone later, in private, to explain it.

Cordatus continued:

“The other, Monsieur Clove, is a more spiced — seasoned with ‘wit’ — youth. He will sit a whole afternoon sometimes in a bookseller’s shop reading the Greek, Italian, and Spanish, when he understands not a word of any of those languages. If he had the tongues to his suits, he would be an excellent linguist.”

If Clove actually knew the languages he pretended to know, and if he knew as many languages as he had suits of clothing, he would be an excellent linguist.

Continuing their private conversation, Clove asked, “Do you hear this reported for certainty?”

Orange replied, “Oh, good sir!”

Puntarvolo and Carlo Buffone entered the scene, accompanied by two serving-men following them. One serving-man was leading Puntarvolo’s dog and one was holding a cat in a bag.

Puntarvolo said to the serving-men, “Sirrah, take my cloak, and you, sir knave, follow me closer. If thou lose my dog, thou shall die a dog’s death; I will hang thee.”

Unwanted dogs were often killed either by hanging or by drowning.

Carlo Buffone said, “Tut, don’t worry about the serving-man’s vigilance, he’s a good lean rascal, he loves a dog well, I assure you. I see by his looks, aye, by the Mass, he’s somewhat like him.”

The dog and the serving-man resembled each other, or perhaps both were melancholy since dogs were proverbially melancholy.

He then whispered to the serving-man, “By God’s blood, poison him, make away with him with a crooked pin or something, man; thou may have more security of thy life.”

If the dog were to eat a crooked pin placed in its food, that could kill the dig.

If the dog were to die before Puntarvolo’s journey, he would almost certainly stay at home and not undertake the dangerous journey and take the servant with him.

Carlo Buffone then said to Puntarvolo, “And so, sir, what? You have not gotten financial backers for your whole venture yet, have you?”

“No, I still lack backers for some fifteen or sixteen hundred pounds,” Puntarvolo answered. “But my lady, my wife, is out of her humor; she does not now intend to go.”

Earlier, Puntarvolo, his wife, and his dog were to travel to Constantinople. Now his wife had decided to stay home.

“No?” Carlo Buffone said. “What then will happen?”

“By the Virgin Mary, I am now forced to change the terms of the wager, and make them upon the return of myself, my dog, and my cat,” Puntarvolo said.

“Your cat?” Carlo Buffone said. “Where is she?”

“My squire has her there in the bag,” Puntarvolo said.

He then said to the serving-man, “Sir, look after her.”

Puntarvolo wanted his dog and cat well taken care of so he could undertake and return successfully from his journey.

He then asked, “How do thou like my substituting of my cat for my wife, Carlo?”

In the slang of the time, “cat” could mean “prostitute.”

“Oh, for the better, sir,” Carlo Buffone said. “Your cat has nine lives, and your wife has but one.”

“Besides, she will never be seasick, which will save me so much money in medicines and herbal remedies,” Puntarvolo said.

Cats were supposed to be able to influence storms and ward them off.

Perhaps Puntarvolo’s wife had decided not to travel because of the danger of seasickness.

Puntarvolo then asked, “When did you see Signor Sogliardo?”

“I came away from him just now,” Carlo Buffone answered. “He is at the heralds’ office yonder. He requested me to go ahead of him and hire a serving-man or two for him in St. Paul’s, in preparation for when his cullison was ready.”

Servants wore liveries: distinctive clothing bearing the cullison, aka badge, that indicated whose servants they were. A serving-man or two wearing his cullison would give Sogliardo social prominence.

“What?” Puntarvolo said. “Has he purchased arms, then?”

Sogliardo had bought a coat of arms.

“Aye, and splendid ones too, of as many colors as ever you saw any fool’s coat in your life,” Carlo Buffone said.

Sogliardo’s coat of arms was parti-colored — of many colors — like the motley clothing that a Fool, aka jester, wore.

Most coats of arms were restrained in their use of color.

“I’ll go look among yonder bills to see if I can fit him with legs to his arms,” Carlo Buffone said.

The legs were those of the serving-men.

He was going to look at the bills to see if anyone was requesting employment as a servant.

“With legs to his arms!” Puntarvolo said. “Good.”

It was a good witticism.

He added, “I will go with you, sir.”

They went to look at the bills.

Fastidious Brisk, Deliro, and Macilente entered the scene.

Fastidious Brisk said:

“Come, let’s walk in the *Mediterraneum*.”

The Mediterraneum was the middle aisle of St. Paul’s.

The Mediterranean is the sea in the middle of land.

Fastidious Brisk continued:

“I assure you, sir, I am not the least respected among ladies, but let that pass.”

In other words: Ladies love Fastidious Brisk. So says Fastidious Brisk.

But his words were ambiguous: They could mean that ladies respect one or more other men than they respect Fastidious Brisk.

Or they could mean that ladies do not at all respect Fastidious Brisk.

Fastidious Brisk continued:

“Do you know how to go into the presence room, sir?”

The royal presence room was the royal reception room at court.

“Why, on my feet, sir,” Macilente said.

Fastidious Brisk answered:

“No, on your head, sir, for it is that which must bear you out — aid you and carry the day for you, I assure you.”

Of course, another meaning of “bear you out” is “carry you out of the royal presence room.”

Fastidious Brisk continued:

“I mean thus, sir: You must first have a special care so to wear your hat, [so] that it will not make a mess of this your predominant or foretop, because when you come at the presence door, you may, with once or twice stroking up your forehead thus, enter with your predominant perfect, that is, standing up stiff.”

The predominant or foretop was a hair style in which the forelock was grown long and brushed back.

Fastidious Brisk’s words contained sexual innuendo: “stroking up” and “standing up stiff.”

“Hair standing up as if one were frightened?” Macilente asked.

“Aye, sir,” Fastidious Brisk answered.

“Which indeed, a true fear of your mistress should do, rather than gum water, or whites of eggs, isn’t that so, sir?” Macilente said.

Men who love women sometimes tremble in the presence of those women.

Gum water and whites of eggs were used in hair-dressing. They made hair stand up straight.

“An ingenious observation,” Fastidious Brisk said. “Give me permission to ask your name, sir.”

“His name is Macilente, sir,” Deliro said.

Fastidious Brisk said:

“Good Signor Macilente, if this gentleman, Signor Deliro, furnish you as he says he will with clothes, I will bring you tomorrow by this time into the presence of the most divine and acute — sharp-witted — lady of the court. You shall see sweet silent rhetoric and dumb —

mute — eloquence speaking in her eye; but when she herself speaks, it is such an anatomy of wit, so sinewized and arterized, that it is the goodliest model of pleasure that ever was to behold.

"Oh, she strikes the world into admiration of her — oh, oh, oh! — I cannot express them, believe me."

An anatomy of wit is a model of understanding.

"So sinewized and arterized" means "so thoroughly examined, as if every sinew and artery were examined."

Fastidious Brisk's "oh, oh, oh!" may be orgasmic.

Fastidious Brisk's "cannot express them" means he cannot describe all of her good points.

"Oh, your only admiration is your silence, sir," Macilente said.

Proverbially, the greatest admiration is silence: One is so awed that one cannot speak.

Reading a notice, Puntarvolo said:

"Before God, Carlo, this is good. Let's read them again.

He read a notice out loud:

"*If there be any lady or gentlewoman of good carriage who is desirous to entertain, to her private uses, a young, straight, and upright gentleman of the age of five- or six-and-twenty, at the most, who can serve in the nature of a gentleman usher and has little legs of purpose, and a black satin suit of his own to go before her in (which suit, for the more sweetening, now lies in lavender), and can hide his face with her fan to give her privacy, if need require, or sit in the cold at the stair foot for her as well as another gentleman, let her write her name and place at the bottom of this notice, and diligent attention shall be given*."

The phrase "lady or gentlewoman of good carriage" is ambiguous. It can mean 1) lady or gentlewoman of good character or 2) prostitute or other woman who carries — or bears — the weight of the man in the missionary position.

Other words and phrases can be interpreted as referring to or necessitating a man with an erection: "desirous to entertain," "private uses," "straight," "upright."

A "gentleman usher" can provide "private uses" — that is, sexual services.

"Little legs" can be a series of erections, or the legs of a servant.

"Little legs of purpose" can be used in running errands, making bows, being a go-between between a lady and her lover, or providing sexual services.

The black satin suit that lies in lavender may be stored with lavender to make it smell good, but "lies in lavender" was then-current slang for "has been pawned."

The notice has two meanings: 1) I am a gentleman looking for a job as an usher to a gentlewoman, and 2) I am a man looking for a job as a pimp to a prostitute or as a gigolo to a gentlewoman.

"This is exceedingly excellent, huh?" Puntarvolo said.

Carlo Buffone pointed to another notice and said, "No, this, this, here's a fine servant."

Puntarvolo read out loud:

"*If this city or the suburbs of the same do afford any young gentleman of the first, second, or third generation, more or less, whose friends [relatives or guardians] are but recently deceased and whose lands are but newly come to his hands, who (to be as exactly qualified as the best of our ordinary gallants are) desires to learn to entertain the most gentlemanlike use of tobacco — as, first, to give it the most exquisite perfume, then to know all the delicate sweet forms for the use of it (as also the splendid supplement and practice of the Cuban ebullition, Euripus, and whiff) which he shall receive or take in — that is, inhale — here at London and evaporate — that is, exhale — at Uxbridge [sixteen miles from London], or farther, if it please him — if there be any such generous spirit who is truly enamored of these good arts, may it*

*please him, but (by a note of his hand) to specify the place or ordinary where he is accustomed to eat and lodge, and most sweet attendance with tobacco and pipes of the best sort shall be ministered.* Stet quaeso candide lector."

The Latin sentence meant: "Please let this stand, honest reader."

A gentleman of the first, second, or third generation is a new gentleman: an upstart.

The Cuban ebullition was a way of smoking that involved rapidly inhaling and exhaling a large amount of pipe-smoke.

Euripus was a way of smoking that involved alternating quick inhalations and exhalations and slow inhalations and exhalations.

Whiff was a way of smoking that involved inhaling smoke through the mouth and exhaling it through the nose.

Shift was advertising his availability to teach a new gentleman how to smoke tobacco.

"Why, this is without parallel, this is!" Puntarvolo said.

"Well, I'll mark this fellow for Sogliardo's use presently," Carlo Buffone said.

He wanted the man in the notice — Cavalier Shift — to be employed by Sogliardo.

Puntarvolo said, "Or rather, Sogliardo for his use."

Puntarvolo was able to guess that Sogliardo would be taken advantage of by the man in the notice.

The word "use" can be a sexual reference.

"Indeed, either of them will serve," Carlo Buffone said. "They are both good properties. I'll designate the other a place, too, where we can meet so that we may see him."

"Properties" meant "tools."

Carlo Buffone wanted Sogliardo to hire both men who had posted the notices. "Both men" were Cavalier Shift, but he had not put his name on the notices.

"No better place than the Mitre Tavern, so that we may be spectators with you, Carlo," Puntarvolo said.

Sogliardo entered the scene.

Puntarvolo added:

"Wait, look who enters here.

"Signor Sogliardo! God save you."

Sogliardo said:

"God save you, good Sir Puntarvolo. Your dog's in health, sir, I see.

"How are things now, Carlo?"

"We have taken some small pains to choose for you followers here," Carlo Buffone answered.

The followers were servants.

"Come hither, signor," Puntarvolo said to Sogliardo.

They showed Sogliardo the notices.

Clove and Orange had been strolling around, not hearing the others' conversation, except perhaps in snatches.

Clove said quietly, "Monsieur Orange, yonder gallants are observing us. Please, let's talk fustian a little and gull them and make them believe we are great scholars."

Fustian is pompous, pretentious language. Jargon can be fustian.

"Oh, Lord, sir!" Orange said.

"Nay, please let's, by Jesus," Clove said. "You have an excellent habit in discourse."

"It pleases you to say so, sir," Orange said.

Clove said:

"By this church, you have it, indeed! Nay, come, begin."

Clove began to use fustian:

"Aristotle in his *Daemonologia* approves Scaliger for the best navigator in his time, and in his *Hypercritiques* he reports him to be *Heautontimorumenos*. You understand the Greek, sir?"

Aristotle never wrote on demonology, although King James VI of Scotland (later King James I of England) did, and Julius Caesar Scaliger never contributed to travel literature.

A "navigator" is a traveler.

*Hypercritiques* means "hyper-critical."

*Heautontimorumenos* means "self-tormentor."

"Oh, God, sir!" Orange said.

Macilente said to himself, "For society's sake he does 'understand' the Greek, as well as Italian and Spanish. Oh, here are a couple of fine tame parrots."

Did Clove understand the Greek? On occasion, he pretended to.

Ladies kept tame parrots as pets and spent much money on them.

Note to Readers: If you don't understand the fustian above and the fustian that follows, don't worry. No one else understands it, either. In fact, it is nonsense and there is nothing to understand.

Clove said loudly to Orange:

"Now, sir, whereas the ingenuity of the time and the soul's *synderesis* [the innate understanding of good and evil] are but *embryons* [embryos] in nature, added to the paunch of *esquiline* [a latrine] and the *intervallum* [intervening space or time] of the zodiac, besides, the ecliptic line being optic [able to be seen by the naked eye] and not mental, but by the contemplative and theoric part thereof, does demonstrate to us the vegetable circumference and the ventosity [flatulence, and bombast] of the tropics, and whereas our intellectual or mincing capriole [leap in a dance], according to the *Metaphysics*, as you may read in Plato's *Histriomastix*.

"Do you understand me, sir?"

Plato did not write *Histriomastix*, which is an Elizabethan play.

"Oh, Lord, sir!" Orange said.

Clove continued using fustian loudly:

"Then coming to the ingenious animal, as reason long since is fled to animals, you know, or indeed for the more modelizing [shaping or framing] or enamelling [embellishing] or rather diamondizing [making brilliant] of your subject, you shall perceive the hypothesis or *galaxia* [the Milky Way], whereof the meteors long since had their initial inceptions and notions, to be merely Pythagorical, mathematical, and aristocratical; for you see, sir, there is always a kind of concinnity [stylistic elegance] and *species* [appearance of beauty] —"

He then said quietly to Orange, "— let us return to our former discourse, for they are not paying us any attention."

They walked aside.

Fastidious Brisk said, "By the Mass, yonder's the knight Puntarvolo."

"And my cousin Sogliardo, I think," Deliro said.

Sogliardo was the brother of Deliro's father-in-law.

Macilente said to himself, "Aye, and his familiar that haunts him, the devil with a shining face."

A familiar is a supernatural assistant to a witch or a devil.

The devil with the shining face is literally Lucifer, the shining one, and figuratively Carlo Buffone.

"Let them alone," Deliro said. "Don't notice them."

Sogliardo, Puntarvolo, and Carlo Buffone began to walk.

The middle aisle of St. Paul's Cathedral was a place for walking and for meeting people.

Sogliardo said, "Nay, I will have him, I am resolute for that. By this parchment, gentlemen, I have been so toiled among the harrots [heralds] yonder at the College of Heralds, you will not believe. They do speak in the strangest language, and they give a man the hardest terms for his money that ever you knew.'

The parchment was a sketch of his new coat of arms.

Heralds have their own vocabulary, which the uninitiated find hard to understand.

The "hardest terms" are those terms that are very hard to understand or they are exorbitant financial terms. In this case, they are both.

"But have you arms?" Carlo Buffone asked. "Have you arms?"

He was referring to a coat of arms.

"Indeed, I thank God I can sign myself as a gentleman now," Sogliardo said.

He showed them the parchment and said, "Here's my patent. It cost me thirty pounds, by this breath."

A patent is a document that authorizes the creation of a new coat of arms.

The patent included a sketch of his new coat of arms.

Puntarvolo said, "A very fair coat, well charged — full of heraldic devices — and full of armory."

"Well charged" can also mean overly expensive, and it can mean overly full of heraldic devices.

"It has as much variety of colors in it as you have seen a coat have," Sogliardo said. "How do you like the crest, sir?"

Two or three colors were best; too many colors were disgraceful.

The crest was the heraldic figure at the top of the shield bearing a coat of arms. Often the heraldic figure was a lion.

"I don't well understand it," Puntarvolo said. "What is it?"

"By the Virgin Mary, sir, it is a boar without a head, rampant."

A boar without a head is a stupid bore and/or a stupid boor.

A bore is a boring person, and a boor is an ill-mannered person or a peasant or both.

Of course, one person can be both a bore and a boor.

A boar rampant is a boar standing on two legs with its front legs raised; a bore/boor rampant is a bore/boor standing on two legs with his front arms raised.

The raised front legs suggest climbing. Sogliardo was a social climber.

Boars standing with front legs raised is an unnatural position.

Sogliardo's being a gentleman is also unnatural. He was not born a gentleman, and he did not have gentlemanly qualities.

"A boar without a head," Puntarvolo said. "That's very rare."

Carlo Buffone whispered to Puntarvolo, "Aye, and rampant, too. Indeed, I commend the herald's wit, he has deciphered — understood and depicted — him well: a swine without a head, without brain, wit, anything indeed, ramping to gentility."

A ramping woman is an immodest woman.

A farmer/peasant who ramps after gentility is a social climber.

Carlo Buffone said to Sogliardo, "You can blazon the rest, signor, can't you?"

"Blazon" means 1) describe using heraldic terms, and 2) boast.

"Oh, aye, I have it in writing here for that purpose. It cost me two shillings for the drawing."

The drawing was black and white; the colors were indicated with abbreviations.

"Let's hear," Carlo Buffone said. "Let's hear."

Puntarvolo said quietly to Carlo Buffone, “It is the most vile, foolish, absurd, palpable, and ridiculous escutcheon — shield — that this eye ever survised — surveyed.”

They greeted Fastidious Brisk, Deliro, and Macilente as they met in the walk.

Puntarvolo said, “God save you, good Monsieur Fastidious.”

“Silence, good knight,” Carlo Buffone said.

He then said to Sogliardo, “Go on, go on.”

Sogliardo read out loud:

“*Gyrony of eight pieces, azure and gules, between three plates a chevron engrailed checky, or, vert, and ermins, on a chief argent between two ann’lets sables, a boar’s head proper.’*”

The gyrony is the lower two-thirds of the shield.

The plates are small O’s, aka silver roundels.

The chevron is an inverted V.

“Checky” means “checked.”

Ann’lets sables are black rings.

Some more colors will be mentioned later.

These are the colors of Sogliardo’s coat of arms:

Argent: silver

Azure: blue

Ermine: white with black spots

Gules: red

Or: gold

Proper: a proper color for a boar

Sable: black

“What’s that?” Carlo Buffone said. “On a chief *argent*?”

The chief argent is the upper third of the shield, colored argent, aka silver.

Sogliardo read out loud:

“*On a chief argent, a boar’s head proper between two ann’lets sables*.’”

“By God’s blood, it’s a hog’s cheek and puddings in a pewter field, this,” Carlo Buffone said.

Puddings are entrails. Anlets are rings, and intestines are long circular tubes. Plates were made of pewter.

“How do you like them, signor?” Sogliardo asked Puntarvolo.

“Let the word be: *Not without mustard*,” Puntarvolo advised. “Your crest is very rare, sir.”

The crest was the heraldic figure at the top of a shield bearing a coat of arms.

The word is a motto.

Thomas Nashe wrote a play about Pierce Penniless, who went to sea and suffered hardships, including seasickness and eating salt fish without mustard. He made a vow never again to eat salt fish if God helped him get home safely, but once he got home safely, he qualified his vow: He would never again eat salt fish without mustard.

Some mottos in history include:

*Ad summa virtus*: Courage to the last

*Omnia vincit amor*: Love conquers all

*Semper fidelis*: Always faithful

*Spes mea superne*: My hope is from above

Carlo Buffone said to himself, “A frying pan to the crest would have no fellow.”

Yes, frying pans have never yet been seen in coats of arms.

Fastidious Brisk, Deliro, and Macilente approached again.

The strollers changed strolling companions:

Fastidious Brisk paired with Puntarvolo; Carlo Buffone paired with Sogliardo; Deliro paired with Macilente. Clove and Orange were the fourth couple.

A fifth couple was the two servants with the dog and the cat.

Fastidious Brisk said to Carlo Buffone, “Entreat your poor friend — Sogliardo — to walk off a little distance, signor, I will salute the knight.”

Carlo Buffone said to Sogliardo, “Come, lap’t up, lap’t up.”

This can mean, “Come closer.” A dog laps up water to bring it closer to its throat so it can swallow it.

Sogliardo had been lapping up insults because he was too stupid to know that they were insults.

Sogliardo walked over to Carlo Buffone, and Fastidious Brisk walked over to Puntarvolo.

Fastidious Brisk said to Puntarvolo, “You are right well encountered, sir. How does your fair dog?”

“My dog is in a reasonable state, sir,” Puntarvolo said. “What citizen is that you were coupled with? A merchant of any worth?”

“He is Signor Deliro, sir,” Fastidious Brisk said.

“Is it he?” Puntarvolo said.

As Puntarvolo and Deliro walked past each other, Puntarvolo said, “God save you, sir.”

Deliro returned the greeting: “Good Sir Puntarvolo.”

Macilente said to himself, “Oh, what an abundance of fools would this place supply to one endowed with patience to observe it!”

Carlo Buffone said to Sogliardo:

“Nay, look, sir, now you are a gentleman, you must carry a more exalted presence, change your mood and habit to a more austere form, be exceedingly proud, stand upon your gentility and be a snob, and scorn every man.

“Speak nothing humbly, never discourse with anyone lower than the status of a nobleman; even if you never saw him except when he rode to the Star Chamber, it doesn’t matter.”

The Star Chamber was an English Court that tried cases of great importance.

Carlo Buffone was not a nobleman, and so he was advising Sogliardo not to talk to him. That’s good advice.

Carlo Buffone continued:

“Love no man, trust no man, speak ill of no man to his face, and speak well of no man behind his back.

“Salute them fairly to their front, and wish them hanged when they turn their backs.

“Spread yourself upon his bosom and publicly hug him whose heart you would eat in private.

“These are principles; think on them.

“I’ll come to you again soon.”

Carlo Buffone exited.

Sogliardo mingled with Puntarvolo and Fastidious Brisk.

Puntarvolo said to a serving-man, “Sirrah, keep close, yet not so close; thy breath will thaw — collapse — my ruff.”

The lower classes were noted for having bad breath.

Fungoso arrived, accompanied by his tailor.

Sogliardo said to Fungoso, “Oh, good cousin, I am a little busy. How does my niece? I am to walk with a knight here.”

In Ben Jonson’s society, “cousin” meant “relative”; Fungoso was Sogliardo’s nephew.

Fungoso pointed to Fastidious Brisk and said to his tailor, “Oh, he is here. Look, sir, that’s the gentleman.”

“Who, he in the blush-colored satin?” the tailor replied.

Fastidious Brisk was wearing a blush-colored suit of clothing.

“Blush-colored” meant “maiden’s blush”: The color was damask-rose.

“Aye, he, sir, although his suit blushes, he does not — he wears the clothing with pride,” Fungoso said. “Look, that’s the suit, sir. I would have for me such a suit exactly the same as his: such fabric, such a wing, such a sleeve, such a skirt, belly, and all.”

A wing is a shoulder flap. It hides the seam between the torso of the coat and a detachable sleeve.

The skirt is the lower part of a man’s coat.

“Therefore, please, observe it,” Fungoso said. “Have you a writing tablet?

The tailor used his writing tablet to write notes.

Fastidious Brisk said to Puntarvolo:

“Why, do you see, sir? They say I am fantastical.”

He thought Fungoso and the man with him were criticizing his suit of clothing.

The word “fantastical” can mean 1) excessively foppish in attire, and/or 2) excessively grotesque in attire.

Fastidious Brisk continued:

“Why, true, I know it, and I pursue my humor still in contempt of this censorious age. By God’s light, if a man should do nothing but what a bunch of stale judgments about this town will approve in him, he would be a sweet ass. I’d beg him, indeed. I never knew any persons more likely to find fault with a fashion than they who didn’t know how to put themselves into it. For my own part, as long as I please my own appetite for fashion, I don’t care what the fusty, musty, old-fashioned world speaks of me. Puh!”

Fastidious Brisk ignored conventional public opinion when it came to fashion: He wore what he wanted to wear.

If someone were financially well-to-do but mentally impaired, another person could go to court and beg — a legal term — him for a fool. That way, they would get custody of the person and the use of the person’s financial assets.

Of course, Fastidious Brisk was wrong in this case. He knew that Fungoso was closely looking at his clothing, but Fungoso wanted to copy it, not criticize it.

Fungoso said to the tailor, “Do you see how it hangs from the knee there?”

“I assure you that I do, sir,” the tailor replied.

“For God’s sake, do — note everything,” Fungoso said. “Do you see the collar, sir?”

“Fear nothing,” the tailor said. “The suit of clothing I shall make for you shall not differ in a stitch from his suit of clothing, sir.”

“Pray God it doesn’t,” Fungoso said. “You’ll make these linings serve, and help me to a merchant for the outside, won’t you?”

The linings of the suit of clothing he was wearing now would serve as the linings of the new suit of clothing.

He would borrow money from a merchant, aka money-lender, so he could buy fabric for the outside of the suit of clothing.

“I’ll do my best, sir,” the tailor said. “You’ll soon take off the suit of clothing you are wearing now?”

“Aye,” Fungoso said. “Go with me to my chamber, and you shall have it. But make haste of it, for the love of Christ, for I’ll sit in my old suit or else lie in bed and read the *Arcadia* until you have done.”

Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* was a pastoral romance.

Fungoso and the tailor exited.

Carlo Buffone entered the scene and said to Fastidious Brisk, Puntarvolo, and Sogliardo, "Oh, if ever you were struck with a jest, gallants, now one is coming, now! I can usher you to the strangest piece of military profession that ever was discovered in *Insula Paulina*."

*Insula Paulina* is a pun: 1) Paul's isle, and 2) St. Paul's aisle.

"Where?" Fastidious Brisk asked. "Where?"

"What kind of creature is he?" Puntarvolo asked.

"A pimp, a pimp, whom I have observed yonder, the rarest *superficies* — face or surface — of a humor. He comes every morning to empty his lungs — cough up phlegm and spit — in St. Paul's here, and offers up some five or six hecatombs of faces and sighs, and then goes away again."

A hecatomb is literally a hundred animal sacrifices.

Cavalier Shift habitually sighed many times while making the appropriate face before he left St. Paul's.

Carlo Buffone said, "Here he comes — nay, walk, walk, don't be seen to look at him, and we shall have excellent entertainment."

Shadow-fencing with his rapier, Cavalier Shift walked by them.

"By God's eyelid, he heaved such a sigh just now that I thought he would have blown up the church," Puntarvolo said.

"Oh, you shall have him give a number of those false fires — deep sighs — before he departs," Carlo Buffone said.

"See! Now he is conversing with his rapier," Fastidious Brisk said. "Look! Look!"

"Did you ever in your days observe better passion — strong emotion — about a hilt and sword?" Carlo Buffone said.

"Unless it were in the person of a cutler's boy, or that the fellow were nothing but vapor, I should think it impossible," Puntarvolo, a knight, said.

A cutler's boy is an apprentice to a man who makes, repairs, and sells knives.

Cavalier Shift was acting so strangely with his rapier that he must be in the business of repairing swords or else he must be mentally ill.

"See, again, he claps his sword on the head, like one who should say, 'Well, come on!'" Carlo Buffone said.

Cavalier Shift had slapped his rapier on the hilt.

"Oh, violence!" Fastidious Brisk said. "I wonder the blade can contain itself, being so provoked."

Possibly, Cavalier Shift now hit himself in the head while doing a maneuver with his rapier.

Carlo Buffone recited:

"*With that, the moody squire thumped his breast,*

"*And reared his eyes to heaven for revenge*."

"Indeed, if you are gentlemen, let's make them friends, and mend the quarrel between his rapier and him," Sogliardo said.

"Nay, if you intend that, you must dispose of the problem," Carlo Buffone said, "for this rapier, it seems, is in the nature of a hanger-on, and the good gentleman would happily be rid of him."

A hanger-on is 1) something (such as a rapier) that hangs from a loop on a belt, or 2) a human parasite.

“By my faith, if it is to be suspected that he would like to sell his rapier, I’ll ask him,” Fastidious Brisk said.

Macilente said to Deliro:

“Oh, here’s rich stuff for people to laugh at.

“For Christ’s sake, let us go. A man would wish himself a senseless pillar rather than view these monstrous prodigies, aka freaks of nature:

“*Nil habet in foelix paupertas durius in se*,

“*Quam quod ridiculos homines facit*.”

The Latin quotation, which is from the satirist Juvenal (*Satires* 3.152-153), means:

“Harsh in itself, poverty has no effect more unfortunate than to expose paupers to ridicule.”

Macilente and Deliro exited.

Fastidious Brisk approached Cavalier Shift, while the others watched from a distance.

“Signor,” Fastidious Brisk said.

“At your service,” Cavalier Shift responded.

“Will you sell your rapier?” Fastidious Brisk asked.

Observing Shift’s reaction, Carlo Buffone said, “By God’s blood, he has turned wild upon the question! He looks as if he had seen a sergeant.”

Sergeants had the power to arrest people.

“Sell my rapier?” Cavalier Shift said. “Now God bless me!”

Being without a sword was a grave indignity for a military man.

“Amen,” Puntarvolo said.

They were in St. Paul’s Cathedral, after all.

“You asked me if I would sell my rapier, sir?” Cavalier Shift asked.

“I did indeed,” Fastidious Brisk said.

“Now Lord have mercy upon me!” Cavalier Shift said.

“Amen, I say still,” Puntarvolo said.

“By God’s blood, sir, what should you behold in my face, sir, that should move you, as they say, sir, to ask me, sir, if I would sell my rapier?” Cavalier Shift asked.

“Nay, let me ask that you, sir, not be moved — angered,” Fastidious Brisk said. “I protest I would rather have been silent than in any way offensive, had I known your nature.”

Cavalier Shift said loudly:

“Sell my rapier? By God’s eyelid! Nay, sir, for my own part as I am a man who has served in military actions, and such, so I am not apt to injure any gentleman in the degree of behaving without honor.”

This is ambiguous: Who would be behaving without honor? Cavalier Shift? Any gentleman? Would Cavalier Shift injure any gentleman if that would mean that Cavalier Shift would be behaving without honor? Or would Cavalier Shift not injure any gentleman who was behaving without honor?

Cavalier Shift continued:

“But sell my rapier?

“I will tell you, sir, I have served with this ‘foolish’ rapier where some of us dare not appear in haste. I name no man, but let that pass.

“Sell my rapier? Death to my lungs!”

His habit of using tobacco may have led him to make this curse.

Cavalier Shift continued saying loudly:

“This rapier, sir, has travelled by my side, sir, the best part of France and the Low Country. I have seen Flushing, Brill, and the Hague with this rapier, sir, in My Lord of Leicester’s time, and by God’s will, he who should try to dis-rapier me now, I would —”

He claimed to have participated in many military campaigns, including one or more in the Low Country — the Netherlands.

In 1586, My Lord of Leicester — Robert Dudley — led a military expedition that ended in disaster, being defeated by the Spanish. Sir Philip Sidney was one of those who died.

The current year was 1599, and according to one of Cavalier Shift's two *si quises*, he was twenty-six years old at the most, so in 1586, he would have been thirteen years old at the most.

Cavalier Shift then said quietly, "Look, sir, you presume to be a gentleman of good breeding, and so likewise your friends here."

Normally, one would say, "I presume you to be a gentleman of good breeding," but Cavalier Shift's word choice may be accurate.

He continued:

"If you have any disposition to travel, for the sight of service or so, one, two, or all of you, I can lend you letters to diverse officers and commanders in the Low Countries who shall for my sake do you all the good offices that shall pertain or belong to gentlemen of your —"

The Low Countries are the Netherlands, but a person with a bawdy mind who is aware that Cavalier Shift is a pimp might think that the Low Countries are between women's legs.

Gentlemen of good breeding, indeed.

Cavalier Shift then pleaded directly:

"Please show the bounty of your mind, sir, and impart some ten groats or half a crown to our use, until our ability to earn is of growth enough to return it, and we shall think ourself —"

Fastidious Brisk turned away and joined his group.

Cavalier Shift said loudly:

"By God's blood, sell my rapier!"

Sogliardo asked Fastidious Brisk, "Please, what did he say, signor? He's a proper man — a good-looking man."

"By the Virgin Mary, he tells me that if I please to show the bounty of my mind, I can impart some ten groats or so to his use," Fastidious Brisk said.

Puntarvolo advised, "Break his head, and give it to him."

"Break his head" meant to hit his head hard enough to draw blood.

"Give it to him" probably meant "Give him the money."

"I thought he had been playing on the Jew's trump, I did," Carlo Buffone said.

"Playing on the Jew's trump" meant "scheming to get money."

A Jew's harp is a simple musical instrument.

A trump can be a trick.

Cavalier Shift approached Fastidious Brisk and remonstrated:

"My rapier? No, sir, my rapier is my guard, my defense, my revenue, my honor!"

He then said quietly to Fastidious Brisk:

"If you cannot impart money to me, then be secret and quiet about it, I beseech you."

Remonstrating, he said loudly:

"And I will maintain it, where there is a grain of dust or a drop of water!"

He then said quietly to Fastidious Brisk:

"Hard is the choice when the valiant must eat their arms or else clem — starve."

"Eat their arms" means to sell their weapons and use the money to buy food.

Remonstrating, Cavalier Shift said loudly:

"Sell my rapier?"

He addressed his rapier loudly:

"No, my dear, I will not be divorced from thee yet, I have always found thee true as steel, and —"

Cavalier Shift then quietly asked Fastidious Brisk:

“You cannot impart money to me, sir?”

He said loudly to the others:

“God save you, gentlemen.”

Cavalier Shift quietly said to Fastidious Brisk:

“Nevertheless, if you have a fancy to buy my rapier, sir ….”

Fastidious Brisk said to his companions, “Please, let’s leave now.”

Not seeing Deliro, he asked, “Has Signor Deliro departed?”

Ignoring the question, Carlo Buffone said, “Have you seen a pimp outface his own wants better?”

“Outface” can mean 1) brazen out, or 2) vehemently deny.

Cavalier Shift needed money, but he did not want the disgrace of selling his sword.

Fastidious Brisk wanted money, and he did not want to lose sight of Deliro.

“I commend that man who can dissemble them so well,” Sogliardo said.

“True, and having no better a cloak for it than he has, neither,” Puntarvolo said.

A cloak can be a cover. Cavalier Shift’s cloak for his needs is the notices he had put up in order to attempt to get money.

Also, he was trying to cover up the fact that he was actually willing to sell his rapier to Fastidious Brisk.

Fastidious Brisk’s cloak, or suit of clothing, was costly, but it was also something to draw the negative notice of other people (not including Fungoso).

“By God’s precious body, what mischievous — evil — luck is this!” Fastidious Brisk said. “Adieu, gentlemen.”

“To where are you going in such haste, Monsieur Fastidious?” Puntarvolo asked.

“After my merchant, Signor Deliro, sir,” Fastidious Brisk answered.

Carlo Buffone said to the others, “Oh, don’t hinder him; he may perhaps lose his tide.”

Fastidious Brisk might lose his opportunity to get money since Deliro had left.

Carlo Buffone added, “A good flounder, indeed.”

Fastidious Brisk could be floundering because of debts, and he could have opened his mouth wide like a wide-mouthed flounder — bottom feeder — when he learned that Deliro had left earlier.

Fastidious Brisk exited.

Orange and Clove called Cavalier Shift over to them.

“Listen, Signor Whiff, may we have a word with you?” Orange asked.

“What?” Carlo Buffone said. “Signor Whiff?”

He did not know that Cavalier Shift used that alias.

“What was the quarrel between that young gallant who’s gone and you, sir?” Orange asked.

The gallant was Fastidious Brisk.

“No quarrel,” Cavalier Shift said. “He would have given me five pounds for my rapier, and I refused it, that’s all.”

“Oh, was it no otherwise?” Clove said. “We thought you had been having words with each other.”

“No other than you saw, sir,” Cavalier Shift said.

“Adieu, good Master Apple-John,” Clove said.

Orange and Clove exited.

Carlo Buffone, who had been eavesdropping, said, “What! Whiff, and Apple-John, too? By God’s heart, what’ll you say if this be the appendix, accessory, or label to both yonder indentures?”

The appendix, accessory, or label was the name that should be attached to the notices. Cavalier Shift had many names.

The indentures were contracts for services. Carlo Buffone now guessed that Cavalier Shift had put up both notices.

“It may be,” Puntarvolo said.

“Solve the riddle for us, Janus, thou who look every way, or thou, Hercules, who have travelled all countries,” Carlo Buffone said.

Janus is a two-faced Roman god who can look forwards and backwards.

Hercules was a panhellenic hero who travelled to all countries and knew many notables.

“Nay, Carlo, don’t spend time in invocations now — it is late,” Puntarvolo said.

Invocations are appeals to gods such as Janus.

Carlo Buffone said to Cavalier Shift, “Signor, here’s a gentleman wanting to know your name, sir.”

The gentleman was Sogliardo.

“Sir, my name is Cavalier Shift. I am known sufficiently in this walk, sir.”

“Shift?” Carlo Buffone said. “I heard your name varied and altered just now, as I take it.”

Yes, he had heard Cavalier Shift called Whiff and Apple-John.

“True, sir, it pleases the world (as I am her excellent tobacconist) to give me the style of Signor Whiff; as I am a poor esquire about the town here, they call me Master Apple-John. A variety of good names does well, sir.”

An esquire is 1) a gentleman, and/or 2) a squire of ladies. This kind of squire can be a pimp.

“Aye, and good qualities to make those good names, out of which I imagine yonder bills to be yours,” Carlo Buffone said.

“Sir, if I should deny the scriptures — the notices — I would be worthy to be banished from the middle aisle of St. Paul’s forever,” Cavalier Shift said.

“I take you at your word, sir,” Carlo Buffone said. “This gentleman has subscribed to your notices, and he is most desirous to become your pupil.”

Sogliardo’s name was subscribed — written — on the notices to show his interest in interviewing and perhaps hiring the notice’s writer.

Carlo Buffone added, “By the Virgin Mary, you must use expedition and make haste.”

He then said, “Signor Insulso Sogliardo, this is the professor.”

Cavalier Shift professed to have certain skills, such as in the smoking of tobacco.

“In good time, sir,” Sogliardo said.

This was a polite greeting.

Cavalier Shift took off his hat.

Sogliardo said, “Nay, good sir, house your head.”

Cavalier Shift put on his hat.

“Do you profess these sleights in tobacco?” Sogliardo asked.

“Sleights” are “tricks” or “skills”: different ways of smoking.

Cavalier Shift replied, “I do more than profess, sir, and if you please to be a practitioner, I will undertake in one fortnight to teach you so well that you shall take it plausibly and with public admiration in any ordinary, theatre, or the Tilt Yard if need be, the most popular assembly that is.”

An ordinary is an eating-house.

The Tilt Yard was a place for tilting, aka jousting.

“But you cannot bring him to the whiff so soon?” Puntarvolo said.

“Yes, as soon as that, sir,” Cavalier Shift said. “He shall inhale the one, two, and three whiff, if it pleases him, and upon the inhalation take his horse, drink his three cups of canary wine, and expose — exhale and vomit — one (whiff of smoke and cup of wine) time at Hounslow, a second time at Staines, and a third time at Bagshot.”

Each of these three towns was over ten miles from London.

Apparently, Cavalier Shift was saying that he would teach new smokers how to inhale smoke and then exhale that smoke in three widely separate locations. Because they were new smokers, they would get sick and vomit their wine in these three locations.

“Bow-wow!” Carlo Buffone said.

The proverb “Bow-wows are no wedding” means that noisy protestations are not necessarily to be trusted.

To inhale smoke and then hold one’s breath in order to exhale the smoke at these three widely separated locations is impossible.

“You will not serve me, sir, will you?” Sogliardo said. “I’ll give you more than countenance.”

He was offering Cavalier Shift a job.

‘Countenance” is “maintenance,” aka “what is necessary to maintain oneself,” including monetary recompence.

It can also mean 1) patronage, and 2) goodwill.

By “serve,” Sogliardo meant “work as a servant.”

“Pardon me, sir, I scorn to serve any man,” Cavalier Shift responded.

One meaning of “serve” is “have sex with.”

Today, farmers still talk of a bull servicing a cow.

“Who? He serve?” Carlo Buffone said. “By God’s blood, he keeps high men and low men, he; he has a fair living at Fulham.”

“High men and low men” are servants, but another meaning of the phrase is loaded dice.

Cavalier Shift did not have servants, but he could very well gamble with loaded dice.

Loaded dice were also called high fulhams and low fulhams and were named after the town of Fulham, where many people gambled.

“But in the nature of a fellow, I’ll be your follower if you please,” Cavalier Shift said.

A fellow is a companion rather than a servant.

“Sir, you shall stay and dine with me, and if we can agree, we’ll not part in haste,” Sogliardo said. “I am very bountiful to men of quality. Where shall we go, signor?”

Men of quality are 1) men of skill, and/or 2) men of good birth.

“Mitre is the best house,” Puntarvolo said.

“I can make this dog take as many whiffs as I please, and he shall retain or effume them at my pleasure,” Cavalier Shift said about Puntarvolo’s dog.

“Effume” meant “puff out smoke.”

“By your patience,” Puntarvolo said.

“By your patience” meant “excuse me.”

He did not want his dog to be taught how to smoke. Smoking could make his dog ill, and he loved his dog.

He then said to his serving-men, who were taking care of his dog and cat, “Follow me, fellows.”

“Sir Puntarvolo!” Sogliardo said.

“Pardon me, my dog shall not eat in his company for a million pounds,” Puntarvolo said.

He, his serving-men, and his dog and cat exited.

Carlo Buffone said, “Nay, don’t you be amazed, Signor Whiff, whatever that stiff-necked gentleman says.”

Puntarvolo’s usual posture was stiffly upright. He was also stubborn, and he was determined to take care of his dog.

“No, for you do not know the humor of the dog as we do,” Sogliardo said.

Puntarvolo was very devoted to his dog. That was one of his humors.

“Where shall we dine, Carlo?” Sogliardo said. “I would like to go to one of these ordinaries, now that I am a gentleman.”

“So you may,” Carlo Buffone said. “Weren’t you ever at one yet?”

“No, indeed,” Sogliardo said, “but they say your most choice gallants resort there.”

Carlo Buffone replied:

“True, and the fashion is, when any stranger comes in among them, they all stand up and stare at him, as if he were some unknown beast brought out of Africa. But that’ll be helped with a good adventurous face: A bold manner can overcome their hostility.

“You must be impudent enough, sit down, and don’t be deferential. When anything’s propounded above your capacity to understand it, smile at it, make two or three faces, and it is excellent; they’ll think you have travelled — though you argue a whole day in silence thus, and discourse in nothing but laughter, it will pass.

“Only now and then give fire, discharge a good full oath, and offer a great wager — it will be admirable.”

“I assure you, I am resolute to do so,” Sogliardo said.

He then gave Cavalier Shift a coin and said, “Come, good signor, there’s a poor French crown for your ordinary — for your meal.”

“It comes well, for I had not so much as the least portcullis of coin before,” Cavalier Shift said.

A portcullis is a small coin: a silver half-penny.

They exited.

Mitis said to Cordatus, “I travail — am in labor with — with another objection, signor, which I fear will be charged against the author, before I can be delivered of it.”

“What’s that, sir?” Cordatus asked.

Mitis replied, “That the subject-matter of his comedy might have been of some other nature, as of a Duke to be in love with a Countess, and that Countess to be in love with the Duke’s son, and the son to love the lady’s waiting maid; some such cross-wooing, with a clown as their serving-man, and that would be better than to be thus nearly, closely, particularly, and familiarly linked to the current time and way of life.”

This description of comedic subject-matter applied to some of William Shakespeare’s comedies.

Cordatus said, “You say well, but I would like to hear one of these autumn-judgments define once the question ‘*Quid sit comoedia*?’”

“Autumn-judgments” are old critics, including those who are going senile.

*Quid sit comoedia* means: What should be comedy?

Cordatus continued:

“If he cannot, let him content himself with Cicero’s definition (until he have strength to propose to himself a better), who would have a comedy to be *imitatio vitae* [an imitation of life], *speculum consuetudinis* [a mirror of customs], *imago veritatis* [an image of truth]; a thing throughout pleasant, jocular, laughable, and ridiculous, and accommodated to the correction and improvement of social manners and behavior.

“If the poet-playwright should have failed in any particle of this, they may worthily and justifiably tax him, but if not, why, you (who are for them) should be silent, as I will be for the poet-playwright, and give way to the actors.”

**— 3.2 —**

Alone on his farm, Sordido, who had a noose around his neck because he was thinking about committing suicide, said to himself:

“By God’s precious blood, if the weather and the season are so indifferent to social conditions that beggars shall live as well as their betters, and that my hunger and thirst for riches shall not make them hunger and thirst with poverty, and that my sleeps shall be broken and their hearts not broken, and that my coffers shall be full and yet I still worry, and that their coffers shall be empty and yet they are merry, then it is time that a cross — a gibbet — should bear flesh and blood, since flesh and blood cannot bear this cross.”

His cross was that the weather had been good. He had expected excessive rain that would ruin the harvest and make his already stored grain much more valuable.

Mitis asked, “What! Will he hang himself?”

“Indeed, aye,” Cordatus said. “It seems his prognostication — predictive weather report — has not kept faith with him, and that makes him despair.”

“Curse me, he will be out of his humor then indeed,” Mitis said.

Sordido will no longer display his personal idiosyncrasy — his greed — because he will be dead.

Sordido continued:

“Tut, these star-monger knaves, these astrological weather predictors, who would trust them? One says ‘dark and rainy’ when it is as clear as crystal, another says ‘tempestuous blasts and storms’ and it is as calm as a milk bowl.

“Here are sweet rascals for a man to trust his whole fortunes to.

“You sky-staring coxcombs, you; you fat brains, a curse upon you! You are good for nothing but to sweat into night-caps and make scholars’ rug-gowns expensive.

“You are learned men, and yet haven’t a legion of devils *à votre service, à votre service* — *at your service, at your service*?”

Scholars such as Doctor Faustus summoned demons who would act as their servants for a predetermined number of years as long as Satan received the scholar’s soul at the end of the demons’ service.

Sordido continued:

“By heaven, I think I shall die a better scholar than they.”

Seeing a servant enter the scene, he said, “But wait.”

Then he asked, “What is it now, sirrah?”

The servant handed him a document and said, “Here’s a letter that has come from your son, sir.”

“From my son, sir?” Sordido said. “Why would my son write, sir? Some good news, no doubt.”

Because of his mood, he was sarcastic.

He began to read the letter out loud:

“*Sweet and dear father:*

“*Desiring you first to send me your blessing, which is more worth to me than gold or silver, I desire you likewise to be informed that this Shrovetide, contrary to custom, we are accustomed always to have revels, which is indeed dancing, and makes an excellent show, in*

*truth, especially if we gentlemen are well-attired, which our seniors — barristers and benchers — of the Inns of Court note, and think the better of our fathers the better we are maintained; and that they — the barristers and benchers — shall know if they — the fathers — come up and have anything to do in the law*."

Shrovetide is the Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday before Ash Wednesday, which is the first day of Lent. Lent is a six-week period of fasting and penitence observed by some branches of Christianity before Easter.

Christmas revels usually ended on Candlemas, February 2.

In his letter, Fungoso was hinting that the seniors of the Inns of Court would take note if he wore new clothing and they would therefore respect Sordido more if he ever had a case in the law courts.

Sordido continued to read the letter out loud:

"*Therefore, good father, these lines in my letter are, for your own sake as well as mine, to re-desire you that you let me not lack that which is fit for the setting-up of our name in the honorable volume of gentility, so that I may say to our calumniators with Tully,* Ego sum ortus domus meae, tu occasus tuae."

The Latin lines stated this: "I am the rising star of my house; you are the falling star of your house."

Marcus Tullius Cicero is not known to have written those lines. The lines are derived from Plutarch.

Sordido continued to read the letter out loud:

"*And thus, not doubting of your fatherly benevolence, I humbly ask for your blessing, and I pray to God to bless you.*

"*Yours, if his own*."

Sordido said to himself:

"What's this? 'Yours, if his own'? Isn't he my son, unless he is his own son?

"Likely, this is some new kind of subscription the gallants use."

A subscription is a complimentary close to a letter; for example, "yours" or "yours sincerely."

The complimentary close could mean, "I am yours, if I am my own man."

Such a close could be meant to be complimentary: If I am a man, it is because I have had you as my father and you have raised me well.

Unfortunately, in the letter, Fungoso was asking for money and so he was not his own man. He also hardly seemed to be the rising star of his house.

Sordido said to the servant, "Well, why do thou stay, knave? Away, go."

The servant exited.

Sordido said to himself:

"Here's a letter indeed! Revels? And benevolence? Is this a weather to send benevolence? Or is this a season to revel in? By God's eyelid, the devil and all conspire to vex me, I think."

In Ben Jonson's society, "benevolence" meant 1) affection and goodwill, and 2) a gift of money.

Sordido continued:

"This letter would never have come now else, now, now, when the sun shines and the air is thus clear.

"By my soul, if this good weather continues, we shall shortly have an excellent crop of corn spring out of the highways; the streets and houses of the town will be hid with the rankness — the fertility — of the fruits that grow there in spite of good husbandry."

To Sordido, “good husbandry” was stockpiling grain in order to sell it at high prices in a time of famine.

Sordido was despairing much too early. The time was before Ash Wednesday, and the earliest that Ash Wednesday can occur is 4 February, and the latest it can occur is 10 March. In 1599, Ash Wednesday fell on 21 February. Since the location was Britain, the time was much too early to worry about the harvesting of grain.

In this play, time moves differently for Sordido than it does for other characters.

Sordido continued:

“Bah, I’ll prevent the sight of it. Come as quickly as it can, I will prevent the sight of it. I have this remedy, heaven.

“Wait, I’ll test the pain thus a little.”

He was going to test the pain of hanging by experiencing the pull of the noose at his neck.

He climbed up a ladder, attached the noose to something that would hold his weight, grabbed the rope, and pulled at his neck.

Sordido continued:

“Oh, nothing, nothing.”

The pain was nothing he thought he couldn’t handle.

Sordido continued:

“Well, now shall my son gain a benevolence — a generous inheritance — by my death? Or shall anybody be the better for my gold or so forth?

“No.

“Alive, I kept it from them, and dead, my ghost shall walk about it and preserve it; my son and daughter shall starve before they touch it. I have hidden it as deep as hell from the sight of heaven, and to it I go now.”

He dropped from the ladder.

Five or six rustics — country folk — one after the other, entered the scene.

Seeing the hanging Sordido, the first rustic said, “Oh, what pitiful sight is this! Help! Help! Help!”

“What is it now?” the second rustic asked. “What’s the matter?”

The first rustic answered, “Oh, here’s a man who has hanged himself! Help me to get him down and revive him again!”

The first rustic cut the hanging rope.

“Hanged himself?” the second rustic said. “By God’s eyelid, carry him before a justice; it is chance-medley, on my word.”

Actually, “chance-medley” is manslaughter, not deliberate suicide.

“What is this now?” the third rustic said. “What’s going on here?”

“How did this happen?” the fourth rustic asked.

“Someone has executed himself contrary to the order of law, and by my consent he shall answer for it,” the second rustic said.

To do that, the man would have to recover from the hanging.

“I wish he were in a condition to answer for it,” the fifth rustic said.

Sordido began to revive.

“Stand aside,” the first rustic said. “Give him room. He recovers. Give him breath.”

“Oh!” Sordido said.

The fifth rustic said to the first rustic, “By the Mass, it was well you went by way of the footpath and not by way of the highway, neighbor.”

“Aye, if I had not cut the noose,” the first rustic said.

“What?” Sordido said. “Cut the noose? Aye me, I am undone! I am undone!”

“Aye me” is an expression used when upset or worried.

The meaning of this “undone” is “ruined.”

“By the Virgin Mary, if you had not been undone, you would have been hanged, I can tell you,” the second rustic said.

The meaning of this “undone” is “cut down from the noose.”

Sordido said, “You threadbare horsebread-eating rascals, if you had to meddle, couldn’t you have untied the rope, but instead you must cut it? And in the middle, too? Aye me!”

He was complaining because the rope was ruined after having been cut in the middle.

Horsebread was beans and grains that are used as horse fodder: lentils, oats, peas. Poor people ate them when wheat and barley were too expensive.

“Curse me, it is the caterpillar Sordido!” the first rustic said. “How cursed are the poor because the viper was blessed with this good fortune!”

A caterpillar is metaphorically a rapacious person.

Sordido was literally a rapacious person.

The other rustics turned against the first rustic.

“Nay, how accursed are thou, who are the cause of the curse of the poor!” the second rustic said to the first rustic.

The first rustic had kept Sordido alive, and Sordido had behaved badly toward the poor.

“Aye, and to save so wretched a caitiff — a villain!” the third rustic said.

“Cursed be thy fingers that loosed him!” the fourth rustic said.

“May some desperate Fury possess thee, so that thou may hang thyself, too!” the fourth rustic said.

The Furies are avenging spirits that come from hell.

“Never may thou be saved and receive salvation, who saved so damned a monster!” the fifth rustic said.

Hearing all this, Sordido said to himself:

“What curses these men utter! How have my deeds made my looks differ from another man’s, with the result that they should thus detest and loath my life?

“Curses on my wretched humor! It is that which makes me thus monstrous in true human eyes.”

His humor was greed.

Sordido then said to the rustics:

“Pardon me, gentle friends. I’ll make fair amends for my past foul errors, and twenty-fold I will restore to all the men whom with wrong I robbed. My barns and garners shall stand open continually to all the poor who come, and my best grain shall be made alms-bread — charity-food — to feed half-famished mouths.

“Although hitherto among you I have lived like an unsavory muckhill — stinking manure-heap — to myself, yet now my gathered heaps, being spread outside my home, shall turn to better and more fruitful uses.”

A proverb stated, “Money, like dung, does no good unless it is spread.”

Sordido pointed to the first rustic and said:

“Bless then this man. Curse him no more for saving my life and soul and keeping them together.

“Oh, how deeply the bitter curses of the poor do pierce!

“I am by a wonderful miracle changed. Come in with me and witness my repentance.

“Now I prove:

“No life is blest that is not graced with love.”

He exited.

The wonderful miracle was to see himself as others saw him.

Later, the Scottish poet Robert Burns would write:

"*O wad some Power the giftie gie us, to see oursels as ithers see us!*"

["*Oh, would some Power the gift give us, to see ourselves as others see us*."]

Sordido was now a man out of his humor. His humor had been to make lots of money even if it meant disobeying the law and withholding grain from the market even though the result was that impoverished people would starve. Now he wanted to make amends and become a good person.

"Oh, a miracle!" the second rustic said. "See when a man has grace."

"Wouldn't it have been a pity that so good a man should have been cast away?" the third rustic said.

According to Sordido's society, he would have been damned and cast into hell if he had succeeded in committing suicide.

"Well, I'll get our parish clerk to put his conversion in the chronicle — the church records," the second rustic said.

"Do, for I will assure the cleric that Sordido is a virtuous man," the fourth rustic said.

"Oh, God, how he wept, if you noticed it!" the fourth rustic said. "Did you see how the tears trilled?"

"Trilled" can mean 1) flowed in a steady steam, or 2) rolled along like a ball.

"Yes, believe me, like master vicar's bowls upon the green, for all the world," the fifth rustic said.

The third or fourth rustic said to the first rustic, "Oh, neighbor, God's blessing on your heart, neighbor, it was a good, pleasing deed!"

They exited.

Cordatus said, "What do you think now, Mitis? What's that you are thinking about so seriously?"

Mitis replied:

"Indeed, I am thinking about that which does in fact please me: the warping and twisting condition of this green and soggy — waterlogged with tears — multitude.

"But in good faith, signor, your author has largely outstripped my expectation in this scene — I will liberally confess it. For when I saw Sordido so desperately intending to do a desperate act, I thought I had a grasp — an understanding — of him then."

"What?" Cordatus said. "You supposed he should have hung himself indeed?"

Mitis replied, "I did, and I had framed and fashioned my objection to it ready, which may yet be very fitly and aptly urged, and with some necessity; for though his purposed violence lost the effect and extended not to death, yet the intent and horror of the object was more than the nature of a comedy will in any sort allow."

"Oh?" Cordatus said. "What do you think of Plautus in his comedy called *Cistellaria* there, where he brings in Alcestimarchus with a drawn sword ready to kill himself, and as he is ready to fix his breast upon it, he is restrained from his resolved outrage and act of violence by Silenium and the Bawd? Doesn't Plautus' authority have the power to give our scene approbation and approval?"

*Cistellaria* is the play *The Casket*, aka *The Small Chest.*

Mitis replied, "Sir, this your single example has left me to say this: I think it is so indeed, your memory is happier than mine. But I wonder what device the playwright will use to bring the rest out of their humors?"

Cordatus said:

"That will appear soon. Don't occupy your imagination with other thoughts.

“Let your mind keep company with the scene still, which now removes itself from the country to the court. Here comes Macilente and Signor Brisk freshly outfitted in new clothing.

“Don’t get lost in side issues, for now the *epitasis* or busy part of our subject is in action.”

Ben Jonson divided his play into three parts:

Protasis: the beginning, in which his characters demonstrate their humors.

Epitasis: the middle, in which his characters have experiences that take away their humors. This has already happened with Sordido.

Catastrophe: the conclusion. This occurs in the final scene of this play: 5.6.

**— 3.3 —**

At court, Macilente, Fastidious Brisk, and Cinedo talked together. Macilente and Fastidious Brisk were wearing new suits of clothing, and Cinedo was holding tobacco. Cinedo was Fastidious Brisk’s page.

A viola da gamba was hanging up. was also known as a bass viol, and it was played between the legs like a cello, inspiring some wits to make bawdy comments about it.

“Well, now, Signor Macilente, you are not only welcome to the court, but also to my mistress’ withdrawing-chamber,” Fastidious Brisk said.

This chamber was a drawing-room, a large room in which guests could be received.

He then said to Cinedo, his page, “Boy, get me some tobacco.”

Cinedo prepared a pipe of tobacco.

Fastidious Brisk said to Macilente, “I’ll just go in and show I am here, and come to you presently, sir.”

He exited.

Macilente said to himself:

“What’s that he said? By heaven, I wasn’t paying attention to him. My thoughts and I were of another world.

“I was admiring my own outside — my new suit of clothing — here. I was thinking what privilege and palm — emblem of excellence — it bears here in the court.

“No matter how vile a man is in wit, in judgment, manners, or what else, if he can just purchase a silken cover of fine clothing, he shall not only pass, but pass well regarded.

“In contrast, let a man be poor and meanly clad, although ever so richly talented and intelligent, you shall have a fellow who knows nothing but his beef — and so is beef-witted and stupid and uncouth — or how to rinse his clammy guts in beer, who will take the poor man by the shoulders or by the throat and kick him down the stairs.

“Such is the state of virtue in bad clothes — ha, ha, ha, ha!

“That raiment should be in such high regard and so much in vogue! How long should I live and wait before I should take off my hat to my lord chancellor’s tomb or the shrieve’s posts? By heaven, I think, a thousand thousand years.”

“My lord chancellor’s tomb” was the impressive tomb of Sir Christopher Hatton in St. Paul’s Choir.

The shrieve’s posts were set up in front of the house of the sheriff or mayor. On it, proclamations were posted.

A shrieve is a sheriff.

If Macilente were to take off his hat to my lord chancellor’s tomb or the shrieve’s posts, he would be paying homage to appearances, the way that some people pay homage to fine clothing. Better to pay homage to a good person, no matter how well or badly they are dressed.

Macilente continued:

“Sir Christopher’s gravity, his wisdom, and his faith and loyalty to my dread sovereign — graces that survive him — these I could well bear to venerate, but not his tomb, no more than I’ll commend the chapel organ for the gilt on its outer surface, or this bass viol for the varnished face.”

He would pay respect to Sir Christopher’s gravity, wisdom, and loyalty to Queen Elizabeth I, but not to his tomb, impressive though it was. The same applied to other appearances, such as the gilt on the cabinet of an organ or the varnish on a bass viol.

Fastidious Brisk returned and said to Macilente, “Indeed, I have made you wait somewhat long, sir.”

He then said to Cinedo, “But is my tobacco ready, boy?”

“Aye, sir,” Cinedo replied.

“Give it to me,” Fastidious Brisk said.

He then said to Macilente, “My mistress is at the point of coming. You shall see her soon, sir.”

He puffed tobacco and said, “You’ll say you never accosted a more piercing wit.”

He then said to Cinedo, “This tobacco is not dried, boy, or else the pipe’s defective.”

He gave the pipe to Cinedo, who mended it.

Fastidious Brisk then said:

“Oh, your wits of Italy are nothing compared to her; her brain’s a very quiver of jests, and she darts them abroad with that sweet release of an arrow and judicial aim that you would —

“Here she comes, sir.”

Saviolina, a court lady, entered the scene.

Macilente said to himself, “It’s about time. His invention of archery metaphors would have bogged down if she had not come.”

Saviolina called to a servant, “Give me my fan there.”

She exited.

“How are you now, Monsieur Brisk?” Macilente said.

“A kind of affectionate reverence strikes me with a cold shivering, I think,” Fastidious Brisk said.

“I like such tempers well, such tempers as stand before their mistresses with fear and trembling, and before their Maker — their Creator — like impudent mountains,” Macilente said, sarcastically.

“By Jesus, I’d spend twenty pounds for my vaulting horse to stand here now, so that she might see me do just one trick!” Fastidious Brisk said.

“Why, does she love activity?” Macilente asked.

A trick can be a sexual act; activity includes sexual activity.

A vaulting horse was a piece of gymnastics equipment; a vaulting-house is a brothel.

Cinedo said, “Or if you just had your long stockings on to be dancing a lively galliard dance, as she comes by.”

“Aye, either of those,” Fastidious Brisk said. “Oh, these stirring humors make ladies mad with desire.”

“Stirring” means “sexually exciting.”

He then said, “She comes. May my good genius embolden me! Boy, give me the pipe quickly.”

His “good genius” was his guardian angel.

Saviolina returned.

Macilente said to himself, “Will he give her music?”

“Tunes” could be played on a different kind of pipe.

“A second good morrow to my fair mistress,” Fastidious Brisk said.

By “morrow,” Fastidious Brisk was using the now-obsolete meaning “morning.”

“Fair servant,” Saviolina said, “I’ll thank you a day hence — tomorrow — when the date of your salutation comes forth.”

This kind of mistress is a woman who is admired, and this kind of servant is a man who admires a woman.

“How do you like that answer?” Fastidious Brisk asked Macilente. “Isn’t it admirable?”

“I would be a simple-minded courtier if I could not admire trifles, sir,” Macilente said.

“Trifles” are trivial jokes.

Smoking, Fastidious Brisk punctuated his discourse with puffs on his pipe:

“Indeed, sweet lady, I shall” — puff — “be prepared to give you thanks for those thanks, and” — puff — “study more attentive and obsequious” — puff — “to your fair beauties” — puff.

He then said to Cinedo, “Mend the pipe, boy.”

He gave Cinedo the pipe.

Macilente said to himself, “I never knew tobacco taken as a parenthesis before.”

“Before God, sweet lady, believe it, I honor the meanest, lowliest rush in this chamber for your love,” Fastidious Brisk said.

Rushes were reeds that were used as floor coverings.

He prized the lowliest reed simply because Saviolina had trodden on it.

“For your love” meant “because of my love for you.”

“Aye, you need not tell me that, sir,” Saviolina said. “I think you do prize a rush before my love.”

She was pretending that Fastidious Brisk had said *’fore*, not *for*.

If he prized the lowliest reed before her love, then he prized the lowliest reed more than he prized her love.

Macilente, not impressed by her wit, said to himself, “Is this the wonder of nations?”

“Oh, by Jesus, pardon me, I said, ‘for your love,’ by this light,” Fastidious Brisk said, “but it is the accustomed sharpness of your ingenuity, sweet mistress to —”

By “ingenuity,” he meant “sharpness of wit.”

He interrupted himself, “— by the Mass, your viol’s newly strung, I think.”

Fastidious Brisk took down the bass viol from the wall and began to tune it.

Macilente said to himself, “Ingenuity? I see his ignorance will not suffer him to slander her, which he would have done most notably, if he had said ‘wit’ for ‘ingenuity,’ as he meant it.”

Macilente thought that Fastidious Brisk had said the truth about Saviolina when he mentioned “ingenuity,” which Macilente was pretending to be “ingenuous,” or well-born.

In Ben Jonson’s society, the adjective form of “ingenuity” could be either “ingenious” or “ingenuous.”

Macilente knew that Saviolina was well-born; he did not believe that she was witty.

Humming, Fastidious Brisk began to tune the bass viol, “By the soul of music, lady. Hum, hum.”

“I wish that we might hear it once,” Saviolina said.

Either Fastidious Brisk’s tuning was taking a long time, or his tuning already provided evidence that his playing would be bad and so once was enough.

Fastidious Brisk said, “I do more adore and admire your — hum, hum — predominant and powerful perfections than — hum, hum — ever I shall have power and faculty to express — hum.”

“Upon the viol da gamba, do you mean?” Saviolina said.

“It’s miserably out of tune, by this hand,” Fastidious Brisk said.

“Nay, rather by the fingers,” Saviolina said.

Fastidious Brisk’s fingers were miserably tuning the bass viol.

Macilente said to himself, “It makes good harmony with her wit.”

The bass viol and her wit were both out of tune, in his opinion.

“Sweet lady, tune it,” Fastidious Brisk said, giving up.

He handed her the bass viol and then said to Cinedo, “Boy, some tobacco.”

Macilente said to himself, “Tobacco again? He does court his mistress with very exceedingly good changes.”

The changes were in his behavior, but the word “changes” is also a musical term.

Fastidious Brisk said, “Signor Macilente, you take no tobacco, sir?”

He puffed.

“No, unless I had a mistress, signor, it would be a great indecorum for me to take tobacco,” Macilente said.

“How do you like her wit?” Fastidious Brisk said.

He puffed.

“Her ingenuity is excellent, sir,” Macilente said.

Again, in Ben Jonson’s society, the adjective form of “ingenuity” could be either “ingenious” or “ingenuous.”

Indicating Saviolina tuning the bass viol, Fastidious Brisk said:

“You see the subject of her sweet fingers there?”

He puffed.

“Oh, she tickles it so that she makes it laugh most divinely.”

He puffed.

“I’ll tell you a good jest now, and you yourself shall say it’s a good one: I have wished myself to be that instrument, I think, a thousand times, and not so few as a thousand times, by heavens.”

He puffed.

Macilente said, “That’s not unlikely, sir, but how? To be cased up and hung by on the wall?”

“Cased up” means the bass viol would be put in its case.

In Ben Jonson’s society, the word “case” meant vagina, and jokes were made about male instruments being put in feminine cases.

Fastidious Brisk said, “Oh, no, sir, to be in use, I assure you, as your judicious eyes may testify.”

He puffed.

“In use” referred both to the musical instrument and to male and female sexual parts.

Offering Fastidious Brisk the bass viol, Saviolina said, “Here, servant, if you will play, come.”

Continuing to puff, Fastidious Brisk said:

“Instantly, sweet lady.

“In good faith, I say that here’s most divine tobacco.”

“Nay, I cannot stay to dance after your pipe,” Saviolina said.

The word “pipe” sometimes was used to refer to the male sexual instrument.

A bawdy ballad titled “The Shaking of the Sheets” had an alternate title: “Dance After My Pipe.”

She began to leave.

“Good — nay, dear lady, stay,” Fastidious Brisk said. “By this sweet smoke, I think your wit is all fire.”

He puffed.

Macilente said to himself, “And he’s the salamander that lives by it.”

Ben Jonson’s society believed that salamanders were able to live in fire.

“Is your tobacco perfumed, sir?” Saviolina asked. “Is that why you swear by the sweet smoke?”

Fastidious Brisk said:

“Still more excellent. Before God and these bright heavens, I think” — he puffed — “you are made of ingenuity, I do.”

He puffed.

Macilente said to himself, “True, as your discourse is. Oh, abominable!”

“Will Your Ladyship take any tobacco?” Fastidious Brisk asked.

“Oh, be quiet, I ask you,” Saviolina said. “I don’t love the breath of a woodcock’s head.”

Pipe-smokers had bad breath.

Woodcocks were fools.

“Meaning my head, lady?” Fastidious Brisk asked.

“Not altogether so, sir,” Saviolina said. “But, as it were fatal to their follies who think to grace themselves with taking tobacco when they lack better entertainment, you see your pipe bears the true form of a woodcock’s head.”

Fastidious Brisk’s pipe bowl was carved into the image of a woodcock, an easily caught bird that was therefore deemed to be stupid.

Saviolina was saying that people who smoke pipes when they have nothing better to do may think they look sophisticated but they resemble the woodcock.

“Oh, admirable simile!” Fastidious Brisk said.

“It is best leaving you in admiration, sir,” Saviolina said.

Fastidious Brisk was doing little except praising Saviolina. Some praise can be good, but excessive admiration is cloying and can lead to the admired person’s dislike.

Saviolina exited.

Macilente said to himself, “Are these the admired lady-wits, who, having so good a plainsong, can run no better division upon it?”

Plainsong is the theme, and division is a variation on the plainsong.

He added, “By God’s heart, all her jests are of the fashion March was fifteen years ago.”

*Every Man Out of His* Humor was first performed in 1599. In 1583 the Throckmorton plot against Elizabeth I and England was discovered. Part of the plot was to free Mary, Queen of Scots. Sir Francis Throckmorton was arrested in November 1583, and he was executed on 10 July 1584.

Also on 10 July 1584, William the Silent, aka William Prince of Orange was assassinated. From 1581, Balthasar Gérard plotted to assassinate him. The assassination led Parliament to pass the Bond of Association, a document intended to protect Elizabeth I.

According to Wikipedia:

*The document obliged all signatories to execute any person that:*

*• attempted to usurp the throne*

*• successfully usurped the throne*

*• made an attempt on Elizabeth’s life*

*• successfully assassinated Elizabeth*

*In the last case, the document also made it obligatory for the signatories to hunt down the killer.*

March 1584 was no time to be making jokes.

Macilente was unimpressed with Saviolina, whose jokes he regarded as old.

Macilente asked out loud, “Is this the blazing comet of wit, Monsieur Fastidious, whom your gallants wonder at so?”

Fastidious Brisk replied:

“Heart of a gentleman, to neglect me in the presence of a guest like this!

“Sweet sir, I beg you to be silent and don’t tell anybody about my disgrace. By Jesus, I never was in so vile a humor in my life. And her wit was at the flood, too.

“Don’t gossip about it for a million pounds, good sir. Let me be so far endeared to your love.”

They exited.

Mitis said, “What follows next, Signor Cordatus? This gallant’s humor is almost exhausted, I think; it ebbs apace, with this contrary breath of his mistress.”

Cordatus replied:

“Oh, but it will flow again, for all this, until there shall come a general drought of humor among all our actors, and then I don’t doubt that his will fall as low as any.

“See who presents himself here!”

That person was Fungoso.

“What! In the old case?” Mitis asked.

The old case could be 1) in the same condition of needing money, or 2) in the same clothing he was wearing before.

Cordatus replied:

“Indeed, that which makes it the more pitiful.

“Do you understand where the scene is?”

# CHAPTER 4

## — 4.1 —

Fungoso and Fallace talked together in Deliro's house.

"Why are you so melancholy, brother?" Fallace asked.

"I am not melancholy, I thank you, sister," Fungoso replied.

"Why aren't you merry, then?" Fallace asked. "There are just two of us siblings in all the world, and if we should not be comforts to one another, God help us."

Fungoso said, "Indeed, I cannot tell, sister, but if a man had any true melancholy in him, it would make him melancholy to see his yeomanly father cut his neighbors' throats to make his son a gentleman; and yet when he has cut them, he will see his son's throat cut, too, before he makes him a true gentleman indeed, before death cuts his own throat. I must be the first head of our house, and yet he will not give me the head until I am made so. Is any man termed a gentleman who is not always dressed in the latest fashion? I would like to know that."

The "first head" is a first-generation gentleman.

"Give me the head" means "give me freedom."

Fallace said:

"If you are melancholy for that, brother, I think I have as much cause to be melancholy as one, for I'll be sworn I live as little in the fashion as any woman in London.

"By the bible of heaven (beast that I am to say it), I have not one friend in the world besides my husband."

The word "friend" can mean 1) lover, or 2) well-wisher or patron.

Fallace then asked, "When did you see Master Fastidious Brisk, brother?"

Fungoso said:

"Just a while ago, sister, I think. I don't know well, in truth.

"By God's eyelid, I could fight with all my heart, I think."

"Nay, good brother, don't be resolute to brawl," Fallace said.

"I sent him a letter, and he writes me no answer neither," Fungoso said.

By "him," Fungoso meant their father, Sordido, but Fallace immediately thought of Fastidious Brisk.

Fallace said:

"Oh, sweet Fastidious Brisk! Oh, fine courtier! Thou are he who makes me sigh and say, 'How blessed is that woman who has a courtier as her husband! And how miserable a dame she is who has neither husband nor friend in the court!'

"Oh, sweet Fastidious! Oh, fine courtier!

"How comely he makes a bow in his curtsy! How full he hits a woman between the lips when he kisses! How upright he sits at the table! How daintily he carves meat! How sweetly he talks and tells news of this lord and of that lady! How cleanly he wipes his spoon at every spoonful of any white-meat he eats, and what an elegant case of toothpicks he carries about him always!

"Oh, sweet Fastidious! Oh, fine courtier!"

White-meat is made of dairy foods — milk, cheese, and curds — and of eggs.

Toothpicks were fashionable.

Deliro entered the scene with a band of musicians.

"See, yonder she is, gentlemen," Deliro said. "Now, as ever you'll bear the name of musicians, touch your instruments sweetly. She has a delicate ear, I tell you; don't play a false note, I beg you."

“Don’t worry, Signor Deliro,” a musician said.

“Oh, begin, begin, play some sprightly thing,” Deliro said.

The musicians played.

“Lord, how my imagination races with thoughts of the success of it!” Deliro said. “Well done. Good, indeed! Heaven grant it will please her. I’ll not be seen, for then she’ll be sure to dislike it.”

He hid himself.

Hearing the music, Fallace said, “Heyday, this is excellent. I’ll bet my life this is my husband’s dotage.”

Her husband was foolishly in love with her.

Seeing her husband, she said, “I thought so. Nay, never play peekaboo with me. I know you do nothing but study how to anger me, sir.”

Her husband was peeking out from his hiding place.

“Anger thee, sweet wife?” Deliro asked. “Why, didn’t thou send for musicians to play during supper last night thyself?”

“To supper, sir?” Fallace said. “Now come off it! To supper, I say to you! As though there were no difference between suppertime when folks should be merry and this time when they would be melancholy! I would never take upon me to take a wife if I had no more judgment to please her.”

“Be pleased, sweet wife, and they shall have finished,” Deliro said.

He motioned to the musicians to stop playing and leave.

He then said, “And I wish to Christ that my life were done, if I can never please thee!”

The musicians exited.

Macilente entered the scene and said, “May God save you, lady. Where is Master Deliro?”

“Here, Master Macilente,” Deliro said. “You’re welcome from the court, sir. No doubt you have been graced exceedingly by Master Brisk’s mistress, and the rest of the ladies, for his sake.”

Macilente replied:

“Alas, the poor fantasist, he’s scarcely known to any lady there, and those who know him know him to be the simplest — most foolish and least sophisticated — man of all they know.

“They deride and play upon his amorous humors, although he just apishly — ridiculously — imitates the most gallant courtiers, kissing ladies’ pumps — shoes — holding to the side the cloth hanging over a doorway for them, praising their wits, and servilely observing everyone who may do them pleasure, fearful to be seen with any man, although that man is ever so worthy, who’s not in grace with some who are the greatest.

“Thus courtiers do, and these he counterfeits, but he does not set such a sightly carriage upon their vanities as they themselves, and therefore they despise him; for indeed he’s like a zany clown to a tumbler, who tries tricks after him to make men laugh.”

Fastidious Brisk tries to imitate the real courtiers, but his imitation is poor.

The ladies laugh at him.

Fallace said to herself, “Here’s an unthankful spiteful wretch! The good gentleman — Fastidious Brisk — condescended to make him his companion because my husband put him into a few rags, and now see how the unrude — dreadful — rascal backbites him.”

The “rags” were Macilente’s new set of clothing.

“Is he no more graced among them then, say you?” Deliro asked.

“Indeed, he is like a pawn at chess,” Macilente said. “He fills up a space, that’s all.”

The pawn is the least valuable piece in a game of chess.

Fallace said to herself, “Oh, monster of men! Can the earth bear such an envious caitiff, such an envious wretch?”

“Well, I repent that I ever believed him so much,” Deliro said. “But, now that I see what he is and that his masquing visor is off, I’ll forbear — endure and tolerate — him no longer.”

A masquing visor is a mask that a person would wear at an entertainment called a masque.

Deliro continued, “All his lands are mortgaged to me, and they are forfeited. Besides, I have bonds of his in my hand for the receipt of now twenty pounds, now thirty, now twenty-five. Still, as he has had a fan but wagged at him, he would be in a new suit.”

If a woman wagged her fan at him, it raised his hopes and made him want a new set of clothes to impress her.

Deliro continued, “Well, I’ll salute him by a sergeant the next time I see him, indeed, I’ll suit him.”

He will sue Fastidious Brisk with a lawsuit, and a sergeant will arrest him.

“Why, you may soon see him, sir, for he is to meet Signor Puntarvolo at a notary’s by the Royal Exchange, soon, where he means to take up upon return,” Macilente said.

Puntarvolo was going to get his travel wager written up as a formal contract.

Fallace said to Macilente, “Now, out upon thee, Judas! Can’t thou be content to backbite thy friend, but thou must also betray him? Will thou seek the undoing and ruin of any man? And of such a man, too?”

She then asked Deliro, “And will you, sir, get your living by the counsel of traitors?”

A living is an income. Deliro could get Fastidious Brisk’s land and get the income from it.

“Dear wife, have patience,” Deliro said.

“The house will fall, the ground will open and swallow us!” Fallace said. “I’ll not stay here for all the gold and silver in heaven.”

Fallace exited.

“Oh, good Macilente, let’s follow and appease her, or the peace of my life is at an end,” Deliro said.

Deliro exited.

“Now peas, and not peace, feed that life whose head hangs so heavily over a woman’s manger!” Macilente said.

Peas are horse-fodder — and ass-fodder.

A manger can be 1) a sumptuous feast, or 2) an open box or trough from which animals can eat fodder.

The reader can decide for him- or herself which definition better applies to what Deliro’s wife metaphorically provides him.

Macilente exited.

Fallace ran into a room, shut the door, and called, “Help me, brother!”

Deliro was outside the door.

She told him, “By God’s body, if you come here, I’ll do myself an evil!”

Deliro said, “Nay, hear me, sweet wife, unless thou will have me go, I will not go.”

He would not leave the house to have Fastidious Brisk arrested without her permission.

“Tut, you shall never have that advantage of me, to say you are undone and ruined by me,” Fallace said. “I’ll not bid you stay, I won’t.”

She gave Fungoso money and said:

“Brother, sweet brother, here’s four angels — gold coins — I’ll give you toward your suit of clothing. For the love of Jesus, and as ever you were born a Christian, make haste to the water-side — you know where Master Fastidious is accustomed to land — and give him warning of my husband’s intent, and tell him of that lean rascal’s — Macilente’s — treachery.

“Oh, Jesus, how my flesh — gorge — rises at him!

“Nay, sweet brother, make haste. You may say I would have written to him, but that the necessity of the time would not allow it — he cannot choose but take it as an extraordinary sign of favor from me — and commend me to him, good brother.

“Say that I sent you.”

Fallace exited.

Fungoso said to himself, “Let me see: These four angels, and then forty shillings more I can borrow on my gown in Fetter Lane by pawning it — well, I will go soon, try on my suit of clothing, pay as much money as I have, and swear myself into credit with my tailor for the rest.”

Fungoso exited.

## — 4.2 —

Deliro and Macilente spoke together.

“Oh, on my soul, you wrong her, Macilente,” Deliro said. “Although she is froward — unruly — yet I know she is honest and chaste.”

“Well, then I have no judgment,” Macilente said. “Would any woman, but one who were wild and licentious in her affections, have broken out into that immodest and violent passion against her husband? Or is it possible —”

“If you love me, stop,” Deliro said. “All the arguments in the world shall never wrest my heart to believe it.”

Macilente and Deliro exited.

Cordatus asked Mitis, “How do you like the depiction of Deliro’s dotage concerning his wife?”

Mitis replied:

“Oh, strangely and uncommonly, and of the other’s malice, too, who labors so seriously to set debate between a man and his wife.

“Wait, here comes the knight adventurer.”

“Aye, and his scrivener comes with him,” Cordatus said.

A scrivener is a notary who can write legal contracts and other documents.

## — 4.3 —

Puntarvolo and a notary talked together. Also present were a serving-man leading Puntarvolo’s dog and a serving-man holding Puntarvolo’s cat.

“I wonder that Monsieur Fastidious hasn’t come!” Puntarvolo said. “But notary, if thou will please take notes on the indentures — the legal contract — while we wait, I will give thee the theory.”

The theory was the terms and conditions: the rules that must be followed.

Fastidious Brisk was supposed to wager that Puntarvolo, his dog, and his cat would not successfully journey to Constantinople and back in the time allotted.

“With all my heart, sir, and I’ll write them down immediately,” the notary said.

“Well then, first, the amount of the wager is to be clearly written,” Puntarvolo said.

Writing down notes, the notary said, “Good, sir.”

“Next, our different names and the distinctive markings of my dog and my cat must be known,” Puntarvolo said.

He said to a serving-man, “Show him the cat, sirrah.”

“So, sir,” the notary said.

Puntarvolo said, “Then, write that the intended destination is the Turk’s court in Constantinople; the time limited for our return, a year; and that if any of us — me, my dog, or my cat — miscarry and fail to return on time, the whole venture — the whole amount of the wager — is lost — these are general articles, do thou understand? — or if any of us turn Turk.”

“Turn Turk” can mean 1) become a Muslim, 2) go to work for the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire (and become a traitor to one’s country), and/or 3) engage in homosexual acts with boys.

If Puntarvolo, his dog, or his cat were to turn Turk and do any of the above activities, then Puntarvolo would lose his wager.

“Aye, sir,” the notary said.

Puntarvolo said:

“Now for particulars:

“That I may make my travels by sea or land, to my best liking; and that, hiring a coach for myself, it shall be lawful for my dog and my cat to ride with me in the said coach.”

“Very good, sir,” the notary said.

Puntarvolo continued:

“That I may choose to or choose not to give my dog or my cat fish, for fear of bones, or any other nutriment that, by the judgment of the most authentic and authoritative physicians where I travel, shall be thought dangerous.”

“That is well, sir,” the notary said.

Puntarvolo continued:

“That, after the receipt of his money, Fastidious Brisk shall neither in his own person, nor any other, either by direct or indirect means, as magic, witchcraft, or other such exotic and foreign arts, attempt, practice, or conspire anything to the injury of me, my dog, or my cat; neither shall I use the help of any such sorceries or enchantments, such as ointments, to make our skins impenetrable, or to travel invisible by virtue of a powder or a ring, or to hang any three-forked charm about my dog’s neck, secretly conveyed into his collar — do you understand? — but that all shall be performed sincerely, without fraud or imposture.”

In the Middle Ages, before trials by combat, the participants swore that they were not using any enchantments.

“So, sir,” the notary said.

Puntarvolo continued:

“That, for testimony of the performance — proof that I actually completed my journey — I myself am to bring from Constantinople a Turk’s mustachio, my dog a hare’s lip, and my cat the train or tail of a rat.”

A train can be a trap or snare.

“It is done, sir,” the notary said. “I have written it down.”

Puntarvolo said:

“It is said, sir, not done, sir.

“But let’s go forward:

“That upon my return and landing on the Tower Wharf with the aforesaid testimony, I am to receive five for one, according to the proportion of the sums wagered.”

Fastidious Brisk was wagering five to one that Puntarvolo or his dog or his cat would not return by the appointed time. If they returned on time, he would pay Puntarvolo five hundred pounds.

“That is well, sir,” the notary said.

Puntarvolo said:

“Provided that, if before our departure or setting-forth, either I myself or my dog or my cat should be visited with sickness or any other unexpected accident, so that the whole course of the adventure be hindered thereby, that then the wager is off. He is to return, and I am to receive the prementioned proportion, upon fair and equal terms. In other words, all money wagered is to be returned.”

“Very good, sir,” the notary said. “Is this all?”

Puntarvolo said, “It is all, sir, and dispatch it all, good notary. Write out the legal contract.”

“As fast as is possible, sir,” the notary said.

He exited.

Seeing Carlo Buffone coming toward him, Puntarvolo said, “Oh, Carlo, welcome. Have you seen Monsieur Brisk?”

“Not I,” Carlo Buffone said. “Did he make an appointment to meet you here?”

“Aye, and I wonder that he should be so tardy,” Puntarvolo said. “He is to wager a hundred pounds on my venture, if he maintains his promise.”

“Is his hour past?” Carlo Buffone asked. “Has he missed his appointment?”

“Not yet, but the end of it comes on quickly,” Puntarvolo said.

“Tut, don’t be mistrustful of him,” Carlo Buffone said. “He will sooner break all the ten commandments than his hour. Upon my life in such a case, trust him.”

“I think, Carlo, that you look very smooth?” Puntarvolo said. “Huh?”

“Smooth” can mean 1) clean-shaven, or 2) glib and flattering.

“Why, I come but now from a hothouse, so I must necessarily look smooth,” Carlo Buffone said.

A hothouse can be 1) a bathhouse, or 2) a whorehouse.

“From a hothouse?” Puntarvolo said.

“Aye, do you make a wonder of it?” Carlo Buffone said. “Why, it’s your only medicine. Let a man sweat once a week in a hothouse and be well rubbed and frotted with a good plump juicy wench, and sweet, fresh linen, and he shall never have the pox.”

“Frotted” means massaged or rubbed, including sexual rubbing.

“What!” Puntarvolo said. “The French pox?”

“The French pox? Our pox!” Carlo Buffone said. “By God’s blood, we have the pox in as good form as they, man, what!”

The French pox is syphilis, but pox can also be the plague.

“Let me perish and go to hell, but I must say that thou are a villain,” Puntarvolo said. “Was your newly created gallant there with you? Sogliardo?”

“Oh, porpoise!” Carlo Buffone said. “Hang him, no!”

Porpoises were thought to be neither flesh nor fish. They lived in the sea, but they kept jumping out of the water.

Sogliardo was not born a gentleman, but he became one by paying money.

Carlo Buffone said, “He’s a lodger at Horn’s Ordinary, yonder. His villainous Ganymede — Cavalier Shift — and he have been puffing a tobacco pipe there as if he were puffing a bagpipe, ever since yesterday noon.”

Ganymede was a beautiful youth who became the cup-bearer and lover of Jupiter, king of the gods.

“Who? Signor Tripartite, the man who would give my dog the whiff and teach him how to smoke?” Puntarvolo asked.

Cavalier Shift was also known as Apple-John and Signor Whiff, and so he had three names.

Carlo Buffone said:

“Aye, he.

“They have hired a chamber and tobacco paraphernalia, private, to practice in, for the making of the patun, the receipt reciprocal, and a number of other mysteries not yet seen in public.”

“Patun” was a Native American name for tobacco.

The receipt reciprocal may be a French form of smoking in which the smoker inhales simultaneously with mouth and nose.

Carlo Buffone continued:

“I brought some dozen or twenty gallants this morning to view them, as you’d do a piece of perspective, in at a keyhole.”

In perspective painting one looked at the image through a peephole that was attached to the frame at an oblique angle. Look at it straight on and the picture was distorted.

Carlo Buffone continued:

“And there we might see Sogliardo sit in a chair, holding his snout up like a sow under an apple-tree, while the other opened his nostrils with a poking-stick to give the smoke a more free delivery. They had spit some three- or fourscore ounces of phlegm between them before we came away.”

“What!” Puntarvolo said. “Spit three- or fourscore ounces!”

“Aye, and preserved it in soup bowls, as a barber does his blood when he pricks a vein,” Carlo Buffone said.

Barbers would bleed some patients as a medical treatment to restore the correct proportion of their humors. In the Middle Ages, barbers were also surgeons.

“Get out, pagan and infidel!” Puntarvolo said. “How do thou prick the vein of thy friend!”

Carlo Buffone casually said bad things about Sogliardo behind his back. This offended Puntarvolo’s sense of honor.

“Friend?” Carlo Buffone said. “Is there any such foolish thing in the world? Ha? By God’s eyelid, I have never yet relished friendship.”

“Thy humor is the more dangerous,” Puntarvolo said.

Carlo Buffone’s humor was to be cynical. This was more dangerous than friendship.

Carlo Buffone said:

“No, not a whit, signor.

“Tut, a man must keep time in all situations: He must suit his behavior to the situation. I can oil my tongue and speak flatteringly when I meet him next and look with a good slick — sleek and smooth and pleasant — forehead; it will take away all soil of suspicion, and that’s enough.

“What Lynceus can see my heart?”

Lynceus was one of the Argonauts who sailed with Jason on the *Argo*. His eyesight was so keen that he could see objects buried underground.

Carlo Buffone continued:

“Pish, the title of a friend, it’s a vain idle thing, only venerable and respectable among fools.

“No one who has any reputation for wit and intelligence will affect it.”

Deliro and Macilente entered the scene.

“God save you, good Sir Puntarvolo,” Deliro said.

“Signor Deliro!” Puntarvolo said. “Welcome.”

“I ask you, sir, did you see Master Fastidious Brisk?” Deliro said. “I heard he was to meet Your Worship here.”

“You heard no incorrect statement, sir,” Puntarvolo said. “I expect him every minute that my watch strikes.”

Some watches struck the hour — not the minute.

Travelers were advised not to carry such watches: Someone could hear the chime and know that the person wearing the watch had money. Such watches were expensive.

“In good time, sir,” Deliro said.

This was a polite way to end a conversation.

He walked aside with Macilente.

Carlo Buffone pointed to Deliro and said:

“There’s a fellow now, who looks like one of the stern patricians of Sparta. By the Virgin Mary, his wit’s after ten in the hundred.”

Ten percent interest was the legally allowed amount.

Carlo Buffone continued:

“A good bloodhound, a close-mouthed dog, he follows the scent well.”

A moment later, he said:

“By the Virgin Mary, he’s at a fault now, I think.”

Bloodhounds were silent while following a scent. They bayed when they saw the prey.

Being at a fault means: He’s lost the scent.

“I would marvel at any creature who is free from the danger and dominion of thy tongue,” Puntarvolo said.

Carlo Buffone was quick to talk about people behind their back.

“Oh,” Carlo Buffone said, “I cannot abide these limbs of satin, or rather Satan indeed, that’ll walk like the children of darkness all day in a melancholy shop, with their pockets full of blanks, ready to swallow up as many poor unthrifts as come within the Verge.”

Tradesmen wore satin jackets.

The limbs of Satan were the devils that follow Satan’s orders.

The children of darkness were dishonest shopkeepers.

A melancholy shop was poorly lit on purpose so that customers couldn’t clearly see the lack of quality of the goods offered for sale.

Blanks were contracts with blank areas to be filled in.

The Verge was an area where people could not be arrested for debt.

“So, and what have thou for him who is with him now?” Puntarvolo asked.

The person with Deliro now was Macilente, who was wearing a new suit of clothes.

“Oh, damn me, immortality!” Carlo Buffone said. “I’ll not meddle with him, the pure element of fire, all spirit, extraction.”

The four elements were fire, water, earth, and air.

Extraction is an alchemical process that was supposed to produce the essence of something.

Carlo Buffone was cynical and harsh-talking; Macilente could match Carlo’s words and even best him. Therefore, Carlo would leave him alone — may immortality damn Carlo if he did not.

“What, Carlo!” Puntarvolo said. “Ha, who is he, man?”

Carlo Buffone replied, “He is a scholar named Macilente. Don’t you know him? A lank and lean raw-boned skeleton, he walks up and down like a charged musket, no man dares encounter him. That’s his rest there.”

The “rest” was Deliro, who was Macilente’s support. A rest is a support for a musket.

“His rest?” Puntarvolo said. “Why, has he a forked head?”

A forked head has horns that can be used as a rest for a musket.

In Ben Jonson's society, people joked that a cuckold — a man with an unfaithful wife — had invisible horns growing on his head.

"Pardon me, that's to be suspended," Carlo Buffone said.

He wanted to suspend the joke.

"You are too quick, too perceptive," Carlo Buffone added.

Puntarvolo caught onto his jokes quickly and matched his puns and similes.

They walked aside.

Deliro and Macilente returned.

Deliro said to Macilente, "Indeed, now I think on it — think about arresting Fastidious Brisk for debt — I'll defer it until some other time."

"By God's precious blood, not by any means, signor, you shall not lose this opportunity," Macilente said. "He will be here soon now."

"Yes, indeed, Macilente, it is best not to pursue the arrest now," Deliro said. "For look, sir, I shall so exceedingly offend my wife in it that —"

Macilente said:

"Your wife?

"Now for shame, lose these thoughts and become the master of your own spirits."

"Spirits" can be semen.

Macilente said:

"Should I, if I had a wife, suffer myself to be thus passionately carried to and fro with the stream of her humor? And should I neglect my deepest affairs of business to serve her affections? By God's blood, I would geld myself first."

"Oh, but signor, if you had such a wife as mine is, you would —" Deliro said.

Many men with a wife like that would castrate themselves, at least metaphorically. Maybe more than metaphorically.

Macilente said:

"Such a wife?

"Now God hate me, sir, if ever I discerned any wonder in your wife yet, with all the power of sight I have. I have seen some who have been thought fairer than she, in my time; and I have seen those who have not been altogether so tall, esteemed proper handsome women; and I have seen less — smaller — noses grow upon sweeter faces, who have done very well, too, in my judgment.

"But in good faith, signor, for all this, the gentlewoman is a good pretty-proud and hard-favored — very proud but unpleasant — thing, by the Virgin Mary, not so peerlessly — without equal — to be doted upon, I must confess.

"Nay, don't be angry."

Deliro said, "Well, sir, however you please to forget yourself and behave inexcusably, I have not deserved to be thus played upon. But henceforth, I tell you to keep away from my house, for I can scarcely endure the smell of a person's breath at my table who shall thus treat me like a jade and insult me in return for my courtesies."

A jade is a poor-quality horse.

"Then, signor," Macilente said, "let me tell you that your wife is no proper woman, by Jesus, and I suspect her chastity, what's more, which you may likewise suspect, if you please. Do you see? I'll urge you to nothing against your inclinations, but if you please, you may suspect it."

"Good, sir," Deliro said.

This was a polite response, but Deliro did not believe Macilente.

Deliro exited.https://universitypublishingonline.org/cambridge/benjonson/k/works/emo/facing/

Macilente said, "'Good, sir'? Now may horn upon horn pursue thee, thou blind egregious dotard! May you be cuckled over and over."

Carlo Buffone said quietly to Puntarvolo, "Oh, you shall hear him speak like Envy — like Malice."

He then said out loud, "Signor Macilente, have you seen Monsieur Brisk lately? I heard you were with him at the court."

"Aye, Buffone, I was with him," Macilente replied.

"And how is he respected there?" Carlo Buffone asked. "I know you'll speak plainly and truthfully to us. Is he made much of among the sweeter sort of gallants?"

The sweeter sort of gallants are the perfumed gallants.

"Indeed, aye, his civet — his perfume — and his casting glass — his bottle for sprinkling perfume — have helped him to a place among the other perfumed gallants, and there his seniors give him good slight looks in their fashion, and they smile and greet in French with some new compliment," Macilente said.

"What, is this all?" Carlo Buffone said.

Macilente said:

"Why, suppose that they should show the frothy, frivolous fool such grace as they pretend comes from the heart. Then he would have a mighty windfall and it would benefit him, no doubt."

The windfall would be something good he did not expect, but it would consist of wind — empty talk.

Macilente continued:

"Why, all their graces are not to do grace to virtue or desert, but to ride both with their gilt spurs quite breathless away from themselves."

This kind of riding was deriding.

The courtiers don't care to show favor to virtue or merit; instead, they drive — deride — them away.

Macilente continued:

"It is now esteemed precisianism in wit — pedantical and puritanical — and a disease in human nature to be kind toward earned merit, to love or seek good reputations.

"Who feeds himself with a good reputation? Who thrives with lovingly serving the commonwealth and doing acts of charity?

"Who can provide a feast for his own desires by serving others? Ha, ha, ha!

"It is folly by our wisest worldlings proved,

"If not to gain by love, to be beloved."

In other words: It is foolish to be beloved unless you can benefit in some way from the person who loves you.

Carlo Buffone said to Puntarvolo, "How do you like him? Isn't he a good spiteful slave? Ha?"

"Shrewd, shrewd," Puntarvolo said.

These days, the word "shrewd" is positive. In Ben Jonson's day, the word was negative and meant "evil-minded."

Who is shrewd?

Carlo Buffone? Macilente?

Both.

"Damn me, I could eat his flesh now, divine sweet villain," Carlo Buffone said.

“Nay, please stop,” Macilente said.

He did not want approval and attention from Carlo Buffone. He did not want to be called “divine sweet villain” by him.

Drawing Carlo aside, he asked him about Puntarvolo, “Who’s he there?”

Carlo Buffone quietly replied, “Who? This man in the stiffened-by-starch beard? It’s the dull stiff — pompous and straight-backed — knight Puntarvolo, man. He’s to travel now, very soon; he has a good knotty intelligence, by the Virgin Mary — he carries little intelligence out of the land with him.”

According to Carlo Buffone, Puntarvolo was knotty-pated; in other words, he was a knot-head or blockhead.

“How then?” Macilente said.

“He puts his intelligence forth in venture, as he does his money, upon the return of a dog and a cat,” Carlo Buffone said.

“Is this he?” Macilente said.

“Aye, this is he, a good tough gentleman,” Carlo Buffone said. “He looks like a chine of brawn — a sirloin roast of boar — at Shrovetide, out of date and ready to be thrown out, or a store of dried, salted cod upon Easter-Eve, cod that is left over from the cod that has furnished the table all Lent, as he has done the city this last vacation.”

During the vacation — Shrovetide and Lent — Puntarvolo was keeping some people such as the notary busy.

“Come, you’ll never leave your back-stabbing similes,” Macilente said. “I shall catch you aiming at me with them by and by, but —”

“Oh, renounce me then!” Carlo Buffone said. “Pure, honest, good devil, I love thee above my love for women: I could even melt in admiration of thee now. By God’s soul, look here, man. Here come Sir Dagonet and his squire.”

In Ben Jonson’s society, one kind of “melting” was having a sexual orgasm.

Carlo Buffone was calling Sogliardo Sir Dagonet, the Fool in stories about King Arthur and the Round Table. Sogliardo’s squire is Cavalier Shift.

Sogliardo and Cavalier Shift walked over to them.

Sogliardo said, “May God save you, my dear gallantos.”

By “gallantos,” Sogliardo meant “gallants.” The Italian *gallante* means the adjective “gallant.” The Italian *galano* means “wears gay clothing.” The Italian *galantino* means “pretty” or “darling.”

Sogliardo said to Cavalier Shift, “Nay, come, approach, good cavalier.”

He then said to Puntarvolo, “Please, sweet knight, become acquainted with this gentleman; he’s one whom it pleases me to treat as my good friend and companion, and therefore do him kindnesses and favors.”

He said to all the others about Cavalier Shift, “I beseech you, gentles, to become acquainted with him and know him.”

“Sir, for Signor Sogliardo’s sake, let it suffice I know you,” Puntarvolo said.

“Why, by Jesus, I thank you, knight, and it shall suffice,” Sogliardo said. “Listen, Sir Puntarvolo, you’d little think it, but he’s as brave a piece of man-flesh as any is in the world.”

“Indeed, sir?” Puntarvolo said.

“Upon my gentility, sir, on my word as a gentleman,” Sogliardo said.

He then said to Carlo Buffone, “Carlo, a word with you.”

He pointed to Cavalier Shift and said, “Do you see that same fellow there?”

“Who? Cavalier Shift?” Carlo Buffone asked.

“Oh, you know him,” Sogliardo said. “I cry you mercy! I beg your pardon! Before God, I think that he is the tallest — most valiant — man living within the walls of Europe.”

“The walls of Europe!” Carlo Buffone said. “Take heed what you say, signor. Europe’s a huge thing within the walls.”

Sogliardo said, “Tut, if the walls were as huge again — twice as huge — I’d still affirm what I speak. By God’s eyelid, he swaggered even now in a place where we were. I never saw a man do it more resolutely.”

“Nay, indeed, swaggering is a good argument of resolution,” Carlo Buffone said.

In one sense, no. In another sense, yes.

Resolution can mean 1) confidence and steadfastness of mind, or 2) decay.

Resolute men ought not to swagger and especially they ought not to swagger among prostitutes who can give them venereal disease.

Carlo Buffone asked Macilente, “Do you hear this, signor?”

“Aye, to my grief,” Macilente said.

He then said to himself:

“Oh, that such muddy flags — dirty battle-standards — for every drunken flourish should achieve the name and reputation of manhood, while true perfect valor, hating to show itself out of modesty, goes by despised!”

A flourish is a wave of a sword in the air.

Macilente continued:

“By God’s blood, I do surely know now, in a fair just cause, I dare do more than he, a thousand times. Why shouldn’t they — notable people — take knowledge of this, huh? And give my worth allowance before his? Because I cannot swagger. Now may the pox alight on your Pickt-hatch prowess!”

Pickt-hatch is a London district frequented by prostitutes.

Sogliardo said:

“Why, I tell you, sir, he has been the only bid-stand — highwayman — who ever was, and kept Newmarket, Salisbury Plain, Hockley-i’the-Hole, Gad’s Hill, all the chief places that people talk about.

“He has had his mares and his geldings, he has, which have been worth forty, threescore, a hundred pounds a horse, and would have sprung you over hedge and ditch like your greyhound.

“He has done five hundred robberies in his time, more or less, I assure you.”

“What!” Puntarvolo said. “And escaped?”

“Escaped!” Sogliardo said. “Indeed, aye. He has broken the jail when he has been in irons and more irons, and been out and in again, and out and in, forty times and not so few, he.”

Macilente said to himself, “Sogliardo is a fit trumpet to proclaim such a person.”

“But can this be possible?” Carlo Buffone asked.

Cavalier Shift said, “Why it is nothing, sir, when a man gives his affections — his emotional commitment — to it.”

Sogliardo said, “Good Pylades, tell about a robbery or two, to satisfy these gentlemen of thy worth.”

Pylades and Orestes were two good friends. When Agamemnon returned home to Greece after fighting the Trojan War for ten years, his wife, Clytemnestra, killed him. She had taken a lover during the years that he was away from home. Her son, Orestes, killed her because she killed his father, and Orestes was sentenced to die. His friend Pylades was willing to die in Orestes’ place, although Orestes did not want him to, so both told the executioners, “I am Orestes!”

Cavalier Shift replied, “Pardon me, my dear Orestes, causes have their quiddities, and it is ill jesting with bell-ropes.”

“Causes” could be 1) law cases, or 2) reasons. Law cases have their abstruse legal points that common citizens don’t know, and robberies have some points that are kept secret from those who are not robbers because if word gets out about who committed a robbery, the robber can be hung.

Cavalier Shift was reluctant for good reason to talk about robberies in front of people he did not know.

A hanged criminal was called a “gallows-clapper.”

Clappers were the tongues of bells.

A proverb stated: “No jesting with the bell-ropes.”

Jests about robberies to the wrong people could get one hung.

“What?” Carlo Buffone said. “Pylades and Orestes?”

Sogliardo replied, “Aye, he is my Pylades, and I am his Orestes. How do you like the comparison?”

Carlo Buffone replied, “Oh, it’s an old-fashioned and stale interlude entertainment. No, I’ll give you names myself. Look, he shall be your Judas, and you shall be his elder tree to hang on.”

Judas, who betrayed Jesus, hanged himself from an elder tree. In the comparison, Cavalier Shift was a hanger-on to Sogliardo.

Macilente said, “Nay, rather, let him be Captain Pod, and this his motion, for he does nothing but show him.”

A motion is a puppet or a puppet-show, and Captain Pod was a puppet master. Sogliardo was showing off Cavalier Shift: his puppet.

“Excellent!” Carlo Buffone said. “Or thus: You shall be Holden, and he your camel.”

Holden was an animal-trainer.

“You do not mean to ride, gentlemen?” Cavalier Shift said.

In addition to “ride” as in riding a camel, “ride” can mean 1) harass, and 2) sexually ride.

“Indeed, let me end this nicknaming game for you, gallants,” Puntarvolo said. “You shall be his Countenance, and he shall be your Resolution.”

Sogliardo will give Cavalier Shift a countenance (income), and he will countenance (approve of) Shift’s criminal behavior.

Cavalier Shift will be Sogliardo’s resolution, or swaggerer. He will swagger around Sogliardo and tell him stories about robberies.

Resolution can mean determination, as in having a resolute temper. It can also mean decay, as of one’s body — and it can mean death. Cavalier Shift’s kind of resolution was swaggering.

“Indeed, that’s pretty,” Sogliardo said. “What do you say, cavalier, shall it be so?”

“Aye, aye,” Carlo Buffone said. “Most voices — the majority — approve.”

“Indeed, I am easily yielding to any good impressions,” Cavalier Shift said.

Something that is resolute is firm; wax is softened so that it can take an impression of a seal.

“Then give hands, good Resolution,” Sogliardo said. “Let’s shake hands.”

“By the Mass, Cavalier Shift cannot say good Countenance now, properly, to Sogliardo again,” Carlo Buffone said.

Sogliardo does not have a good countenance: He is ugly. But he can pay a good countenance: a good maintenance, or allowance.

“Yes, by an irony,” Puntarvolo said.

Macilente said, “Oh, sir, the countenance of Resolution should, as he’s altogether grim and unpleasant.”

Resolution is Cavalier Shift. He and his stories are morally repugnant, and so his countenance should be ugly. He is the hanger-on to Sogliardo, who is his countenance and who is ugly.

The irony is that the wrong man is ugly.

Fastidious Brisk entered the scene.

He said:

“May good hours make music with your mirth, gentlemen, and keep time to your humors. May the times match your good humor.

“How are you now, Carlo?”

“Monsieur Brisk!” Puntarvolo said. “Many a long look have I extended for you, sir.”

Fastidious Brisk said:

“In good faith, I must ask your pardon. I was invited this morning, before I was out of my bed, by a bevy of ladies to a banquet of fruit and wine, whence it was almost one of Hercules’ twelve labors for me to come away, but that the respect of my promise did so prevail with me. I know they’ll take it very ill, especially one who gave me this bracelet of her hair as a love-token just last night, and this pearl another gave me that was dangling from her forehead; by the Virgin Mary, she —

“— what, are the writings ready?”

“I will send my man to find out,” Puntarvolo said.

He said to a serving-man, “Sirrah, go you to the notary’s and learn if he is ready. Leave the dog, sir.”

The serving-man exited.

Fastidious Brisk said:

“And how does my splendidly qualified and distinguished friend, Sogliardo?

“Oh, Signor Macilente! By these eyes, I didn’t see you, I would have greeted you sooner else, I swear on my truth.”

He said quietly to Macilente, “I hope, sir, I may presume upon you that you will not divulge my recent embarrassment or disgrace, indeed, sir.”

“You may, sir,” Macilente said.

Seeing, but not hearing, this exchange, Carlo Buffone said to himself, “By God’s heart, Macilente knows some notorious deed about this fool, and so he has Fastidious behaving so obsequiously and deferentially to him.”

Indicating Cavalier Shift, Sogliardo said, “Monsieur Fastidious, do you see this fellow there? Doesn’t he look like a clown? Would you think there’s anything in him?”

In this culture, clowns were rustics and peasants.

“Anything in him?” Fastidious Brisk said. “Curse me, aye, the fellow has a good ingenious — clever — face.”

“By this element — the sky — he is as ingenious and tall — clever and brave — a man as ever swaggered about London,” Sogliardo said. “He and I call each other Countenance and Resolution, but his name is Cavalier Shift.”

Puntarvolo said to Cavalier Shift, “Cavalier, did you know Signor Clog, who was hanged for the robbery at Harrow-on-the-hill?”

“Clogs” were heavy pieces of wood attached to a prisoner’s leg or neck in order to prevent escape. As a name, the word “Clog” means “Blockhead.”

“Know him, sir!” Sogliardo said. “Why, it was he who gave all the directions for the action.”

“What?” Puntarvolo said to Cavalier Shift. “Was it your project, sir?”

Cavalier Shift said to Sogliardo, “Pardon me, Countenance, you do me some wrong to make public that which I imparted to you in private.”

“By God’s will, here are none but friends, Resolution,” Sogliardo said.

“That’s all one,” Cavalier Shift said. “That doesn’t matter. Things of consequence must have their respects, for example regarding where, how, and to whom they are imparted.”

He then said to Puntarvolo:

“Yes, sir, he showed himself a true clog in the uniting together of that affair, sir; for if he had managed matters as they were corroborated and confirmed and entrusted to him, it would have been better for him by forty score or fifty score of pounds, sir, and he himself might have lived, in spite of Fate, to have fed on woodcocks with the rest.

“But it was his heavy fortunes to sink, poor Clog, and therefore let us talk no more about him.”

Clog had impeded his own actions by not following the plan, and so he had been caught. If he had followed the plan, he would have made money and been able to feast on woodcocks at an eating-place. So said Cavalier Shift.

“Why, had he more agents, then?” Puntarvolo asked.

“Oh, God, sir, aye, there were some present there who were the Nine Worthies to him, indeed,” Sogliardo said.

The Nine Worthies were nine great men: three from the Bible, three from classical times, and three from romances.

The three from the Bible were Joshua, King David, and Judas Maccabaeus.

The three from classical times were Hector of Troy, Alexander the Great, and Julius Caesar.

The three from romances were King Arthur, Holy Roman Emperor Charlemagne, and Godfrey of Bouillon (or sometimes Sir Guy of Warwick).

Cavalier Shift said:

“Aye, sir, I can satisfy you and give you more information at a more convenient conversation.

“But, for my own part, I have now reconciled myself to other courses of action, and I now earn a living out of my other skills and qualities.”

Sogliardo said to the others:

“He has left all that criminal behavior now, I assure you, and he is able to live like a gentleman by his quality.

“By this dog, he has the most rare gift in tobacco that ever you knew.”

Carlo Buffone said to Macilente, “By God’s heart, he keeps more ado with this monster than ever Banks did with his horse, or the fellow with the elephant.”

Banks had a famous horse that he had trained. His horse would bow when Queen Elizabeth I of England or King James VI of Scotland was mentioned, and it would bite when the King of Spain was mentioned.

The elephant had been often exhibited and perhaps was trained to do tricks.

Macilente said to Carlo Buffone, “He will shortly hang out his picture painted on a cloth banner — he will advertise himself — you shall see.”

“Oh, he does manage a quarrel the best that ever you saw, for terms and circumstances,” Sogliardo said. “He knows all about dueling.”

Fastidious Brisk said:

“Good faith, signor, now you speak of a quarrel, I’ll acquaint you with a difference that happened between a gallant and myself.

“Sir Puntarvolo, you would know him if I should name him. He is Signor Luculento.”

“Luculento!” Puntarvolo said. “What inauspicious chance interposed itself between the friendship of you two?”

Fastidious Brisk answered:

“Indeed, sir, the same that sundered Agamemnon and great Thetis’ son.”

Thetis’ son is Achilles. In the first book of Homer’s *Iliad*, he and Agamemnon quarreled. One way to look at the quarrel is that it was over women. When Agamemnon, the leader of the Greek army, lost his sex-slave, he took the sex-slave of Achilles, the greatest warrior of the Trojan War. (A better way to look at the quarrel is that it was over honor; Achilles was dishonored by Agamemnon, so Achilles declined to fight in the war.)

Fastidious Brisk continued:

“But let the cause escape, sir. Never mind the cause.

“He sent me a challenge, mixed with some few threats and boasts, which I responded to, and in short we met. Now, indeed, sir, I must tell you, he did fight at first very desperately, but without judgment; for look, sir, I cast myself into this figure.”

He struck a fencing pose.

Fastidious Brisk continued:

“Now he comes violently on, and, while he was advancing his rapier to strike, I thought to have hit his arm, for he had left his whole body open to my attack, and I was sure he could not recover his guard.

“Sir, I missed my purpose in his arm, for I slashed his doublet sleeve, ran him close by the left cheek, and through his hair.

“He in return struck me here — I had a gold cable hatband then in the latest fashion, which I wore about a mulberry-colored broad-brimmed French hat that I had. He cut my hatband (and yet it was massive, goldsmith’s work). He cut my hat brims, which, by good fortune, being thick-embroidered with gold twist and spangles, disappointed the force of the blow; nevertheless, his stroke grazed on my shoulder, and cut and took away six purls — loops of frilly lace edging on my collar — of an Italian cutwork collar I wore. It cost me three pounds in the Royal Exchange just three days before.”

“This was a strange encounter,” Puntarvolo said.

They were dueling, but the only thing being injured was their clothing.

Fastidious Brisk replied, “You shall hear, sir.”

He continued his description of the duel:

“With this we both fell out and rested and caught our breath.

“Now, upon the second sign of his assault, I resumed the former manner of my defense. He, on the other side, abandoned his body to the same danger as before, and followed me still with blows. But I, being loath to take the deadly advantage that lay before me of his left side, made a kind of stramazoun — a downright blow — and I ran him up to the hilts, through the doublet, through the shirt, and yet missed the skin.

“He, making a reverse blow — a backhand stroke — fell upon my embossed belt — I had thrown off the hangers for daggers and swords a little before — and he struck off a skirt of a thick-laced satin doublet I had, lined with some four taffetas, cut off two panes of cloth embroidered with pearl, and cut through the drawings-out of tissue, entered the linings, and skipped the flesh.”

Some jackets had slits cut in them to display the cloth underneath. The cloth could be pulled through the slits so it could be better seen. The cloth was of a different color than the jacket.

Carlo Buffone said to Macilente, “I marvel that he hasn’t mentioned his embroidered shirt.”

Fastidious Brisk continued his description of the duel:

“Here, because of the mutual damage we had done to each other, we paused.”

Well, damage to each other’s clothing, anyway.

Fastidious Brisk continued his description of the duel:

“But, before I proceed, I must tell you, signor, that in this last encounter, not having leisure to put off my silver spurs, one of the rowels caught hold of the ruffle of my boot, and, being Spanish leather and subject to tear, it overthrew and tripped me, tore two pairs of silk stockings that I put on — being somewhat a raw morning, a peach color and another — and struck some half-inch deep into the side of the calf.”

This was the first blood of the duel.

Fastidious Brisk fell because of the clothing he was wearing, which was not suitable to a duel. His opponent did not wound him; instead, Fastidious tripped because one of the rowels on his spurs caught on the top of one of his high boots, which was turned down in accordance with fashion. As Fastidious fell, his rowel cut him.

Fastidious Brisk continued his description of the duel:

“He, seeing the blood come, immediately took to his horse and rode away.”

Because his opponent fled, Fastidious Brisk won the duel.

Fastidious Brisk continued his description of the duel:

“I, having bound up my wound with a piece of my embroidered shirt —”

Carlo Buffone said quietly to Macilente, “Oh, now he mentions his embroidered shirt.”

Fastidious Brisk continued:

“— I rode after him, and, alighting at the court-gate both together, we embraced and marched hand in hand up into the royal presence chamber.”

By riding to the court, Fastidious Brisk’s opponent could get sanctuary and avoid arrest for dueling.

By embracing his opponent, Fastidious Brisk publicly showed that he thought that his opponent had fought well. Others may disagree.

Macilente said quietly to Carlo Buffone, “Well, by this we can guess what apparel the gentlemen wore.”

“Before God, it was an undertaking begun with much resolution, maintained with as much prowess, and ended with more humanity,” Puntarvolo said.

Puntarvolo, the knight, was perhaps sarcastic.

Seeing his serving-man return, Puntarvolo asked, “How are things now? What does the notary say?”

The serving-man answered, “The notary says he is ready, sir; he waits only at Your Worship’s pleasure.”

Puntarvolo said to Fastidious Brisk, “Come, we will go to him, monsieur.”

He then said to the others, “Gentlemen, shall we entreat you to be witnesses?”

“You shall entreat me, sir,” Sogliardo said. “Come, Resolution.”

“I follow you, good Countenance,” Cavalier Shift said.

Carlo Buffone said to Macilente, “Come signor, come, come.”

Macilente said to himself, “Oh, that there should be fortune to clothe these men, so naked and devoid of merit, and that the just and well-deserved storm and affliction of a wretched life does not beat them ragged for their wretched souls, since they are not only as fruitless as coals, but also as black as coals!”

The actors exited.

Mitis said to Cordatus, “Why, but signor, how does it happen that Fungoso did not give his sister’s information to Brisk?”

That information was that Deliro wanted to have him arrested for debt.

Cordatus answered, “By the Virgin Mary, because of the evil angels — money and demons — that she gave him, who have indeed tempted the good simple youth to follow the tail of the fashion and neglect the request of his friends.”

The four angels were evil angels because they tempted Fungoso to neglect the message that his sister had given to him and instead to order new clothing for himself.

Cordatus then said, “Look, here Fungoso comes, very worshipfully attended, and with good variety.”

A number of people were following Fungoso and flattering him by calling him “Your Worship.”

**— 4.4 —**

Fungoso walked on stage. Following him were his tailor, shoemaker, and haberdasher.

“Great thanks, good shoemaker,” Fungoso said. “I’ll get my own shoe-ribbons myself.”

The ribbons were used to lace shoes.

The shoemaker exited.

Fungoso said to the haberdasher, “Now, sir, let me see, how much money must you have for this hat?”

“Here’s the bill, sir,” the haberdasher said, presenting him with it.

Putting on the hat, Fungoso asked, “How does it become me? Well?”

“Excellent, sir,” the tailor said. “It is as excellent as any hat you ever had in your life.”

“Indeed, sir, the hat’s as good as any man in this town can make for you, and will maintain fashion as long,” the haberdasher said. “Never trust me for a groat if it doesn’t.”

A groat is a very small amount of money.

“Does it go well with my suit?” Fungoso asked.

“Exceedingly well, sir,” the tailor said.

“How do thou like my suit, haberdasher?” Fungoso asked.

“I swear by my truth, sir, it is very splendidly well made,” the haberdasher replied. “I never saw a suit fit better that I can recall.”

The tailor said, ironically, “Nay, we have no art to please our friends, not we.”

In other words: “We do have the art needed to please our friends, we do.”

Fungoso handed over some money to the haberdasher and said, “Here, haberdasher, count this money.”

“In good faith, sir,” the haberdasher said, “the suit of clothing makes you have an excellent body.”

Suits can be designed to hide body flaws.

The tailor had praised the hat, and then the haberdasher had repaid the favor by praising the suit of clothing.

Fungoso said, “Believe me, I think I have as good a body in clothes as anyone else.”

“You lack points — ties — to bring your apparel together,” the tailor said.

Doublets, aka jackets, were tied to hose, a kind of stockings.

Without shoe-ribbons and points, Fungoso was only partially dressed.

“I’ll have points soon,” Fungoso said.

Indicating the money, he asked, “How do things stand now? Is it the right amount?”

“Indeed, sir, it is too little, but upon farther hopes — I will give you credit and you can pay me the rest later,” the haberdasher said. “Good morning to you, sir.”

The haberdasher exited.

“Farewell, good haberdasher,” Fungoso said.

He then said to the tailor, “Well now, Master Snip, let me see your bill.”

Mitis said to Cordatus, “I think he pays and sends away his followers too thickly — one right after the other.”

“Oh, therein he saucily imitates some great man,” Cordatus said. “I assure you that although he turns them off, he keeps this tailor in the position of a page to follow him always.”

A page is a servant.

Fungoso was behaving like a big shot.

He said, “This bill is very reasonable, indeed. Listen, Master Snip. Truly, sir, I am not altogether so well furnished with money at this present time as I could wish I were. But, if you’ll do me the favor to take part payment in cash, you shall have all the cash I have now, by Jesus.”

The tailor began, “Sir —”

Fungoso interrupted, “— and just give me credit for the rest, until the beginning of the next term when the courts are in session.”

The tailor began, “Oh, Lord, sir —”

Fungoso interrupted, “— before God and by his light, I’ll pay you to the utmost, and acknowledge myself very deeply engaged — obliged and indebted — to you, by this hand.”

“Why, how much do you have there, sir?” the tailor asked.

“By the Virgin Mary, I have here four angels and fifteen shillings of white money,” Fungoso said. “It’s all I have, as I hope to be saved.”

White money is silver money.

“You will not fail me at the next term with the rest?” the tailor asked.

Many big shots were late in paying their bills, if they paid their bills.

“No,” Fungoso said. “If I do, I pray to God that I will be hanged. Let me never breathe again upon this mortal stage, as the philosopher calls it. By this air, and as I am a gentleman, I’ll keep my word.”

Cordatus said to Mitis, “He would be an iron-hearted fellow, in my opinion, who would not believe him and give him credit upon these monstrous oaths.”

The tailor said, “Well, sir, I’ll not be unreasonable with any gentleman over a trifle. You know what amount it is that remains to be paid?”

Fungoso said:

“Aye, sir, and I give you thanks, in good faith.

“Oh, God, how happy am I made in this good fortune!

“Well, now I’ll go seek out Monsieur Brisk.

“By God’s soul! I have forgotten the ribbon for my shoes, and I have forgotten the points. By God’s eyelid, what luck’s this! What shall I do?

“Master Snip, please let me reduct — get back — some two or three shillings so I can buy points and shoe-ribbons.

“By Jesus, I have utterly disfurnished myself of money in the default because of my bad memory.

“Please, let me be beholden and indebted to you; it shall come home to you and be paid in full when I pay the bill, believe me.”

“Indeed, sir,” the tailor said, “I can hardly depart with the money, but I’ll take up and send you some points and shoe-ribbons out of my stock by my serving-boy quickly. What color of

ribbon do you want?”

“Whatever color you shall think fitting, in your opinion, sir, for my suit of clothing,” Fungoso said.

“Well, I’ll send you some immediately,” the tailor said.

“And points, too, sir?” Fungoso asked.

“And points, too, sir,” the tailor replied.

“Good lord, how I shall endeavor to deserve this kindness of yours, sir!” Fungoso said. “Please let your youthful serving-boy make haste, for I should have finished a piece of business an hour ago, and now I fear that I shall come too late.”

The tailor exited.

Fungoso said, “Now, indeed, I am exceedingly proud of my suit!”

He exited.

Cordatus said to Mitis, “Do you observe the straits that this poor gallant is put to, signor, to purchase the fashion?”

“Aye, and to be still a fashion behind with the world, that’s the entertainment,” Mitis replied.

Fungoso was gifted at buying clothing just before that style of clothing went out of fashion.

“Wait,” Cordatus said, seeing some actors coming. “Oh, here they come from ‘sealed and delivered.’”

Puntarvolo and Fastidious Brisk had signed the contract and had it sealed and delivered to them. They each had part of the contract. Their two halves had irregular edges that fitted together perfectly and showed that it was a legal contract.

**— 4.5 —**

Puntarvolo, Fastidious Brisk, and the serving-men with the dog and the cat walked onto the stage.

Puntarvolo said, “Well, now that my whole journey is covered by wagers, I will resolve to depart shortly.”

“Indeed, Sir Puntarvolo, go to the court, and take leave of the ladies first,” Fastidious Brisk said.

“I don’t care if it should be this afternoon’s labor,” Puntarvolo said.

He then asked, “Where is Carlo?”

“Here he comes,” Fastidious Brisk said.

Carlo Buffone, Sogliardo, Cavalier Shift, and Macilente entered the scene.

Carlo Buffone said:

“Indeed, gallants, I am persuading this gentleman” — he pointed to Sogliardo — “to become a courtier. He is a man of fair revenue, and his estate will bear the expense well. Besides, for his other gifts of the mind, or so, why, they are as nature lent him them: pure, simple, without any artificial drug or mixture of these two threadbare beggarly qualities, learning and knowledge, and therefore the more suitable and genuine.”

Sogliardo was uneducated.

Carlo Buffone continued:

“Now, for the life of a courtier itself —”

Fastidious Brisk interrupted and described the life of a courtier as he understood it to be:

“Oh, the most celestial, and full of wonder and delight that can be imagined, signor, beyond all thought and understanding of pleasure! A man lives at court in such a divine rapture

that he will think himself in the third heaven — God's abode — for the time, and he will lose all sense of mortality whatsoever."

The third heaven is Earth's atmosphere, and the second heaven is the realm of the stars.

He continued:

"When he shall behold such glorious and almost immortal beauties, hear such angelical and harmonious voices, discourse with such flowing and ambrosian spirits — whose wit's as sudden as lightning and honeyed as nectar — oh, it makes a man all quintessence and flame, and lifts him up in a moment to the very crystal crown of the sky, where, hovering in the strength of his imagination, he shall behold all the delights of the Hesperides, the *Insulae Fortunatae*, Adonis' gardens, the beautiful Thessalian valley called Tempe, or whatever else is confined within the amplest verge of poesy and consider them to be mere *umbrae* — shadows — and imperfect figures, compared to the most essential felicity of your court."

The garden of the Hesperides with its golden apples was located in the west in the *Insulae Fortunatae* or Fortunate Islands.

The Elizabethans believed that Adonis' gardens were an earthly paradise.

Macilente said to Carlo Buffone, "Well, this encomium — fancy speech of praise — was not extemporal; it came too perfectly off."

Fastidious Brisk's praise had been written and rehearsed earlier.

Carlo Buffone said to Sogliardo, "Besides, sir, you shall never need to go to a hothouse; you shall sweat there with courting your mistress, or sweat from losing your money at the card game primero, as well as sweat from being in front of all the stoves in Flanders."

Sweating was a treatment for venereal disease.

The inns in Flanders had stoves for warmth in common rooms in the winter. Of course, the windows were kept closed. Wet clothes hung near the stoves, and people stayed near the stoves for warmth. Many people complained about the odor.

Carlo Buffone continued:

"By the Virgin Mary, this, too, sir:

"You must always be sure to carry a good strong perfume about you, so that your mistress' dog may smell you out among the rest; and, in wooing her, never fear to be out, for you may have a pipe of tobacco, or a bass viol shall hang on the wall on purpose, and either will put you in presently."

"To be out" meant 1) to be at a loss for words, or 2) to be sexually rejected.

Carlo Buffone continued saying to Sogliardo:

"The tricks your Resolution has taught you in tobacco — the whiff, and those tricks — will stand you in very good ornament — grace — there."

Fastidious Brisk said, "Aye, to some, perhaps. But, if he should come to my mistress Saviolina with tobacco, this gentleman knows" — he pointed to Macilente — "she'd reply sharply upon him, indeed. Oh, by this bright sun, she has the most acute, ready, and polished wit, that — tut, there's no spirit able to withstand her."

He then said to Macilente, "You can report it, signor, for you have seen her."

"Then he can report no less based on his judgment, I assure him," Puntarvolo said.

"Truly, I like her well enough, but she's too self-conceited, I think," Macilente said.

"Aye, indeed, she's a little too self-conceited," Fastidious Brisk said. "If it were not for that humor, she would be the most-to-be-admired lady in the world."

"Indeed, it is a humor that detracts from her other excellencies," Puntarvolo said.

"Why, her self-conceit may easily be made to forsake her, in my thought," Macilente said. "She can be taught not to be self-conceited."

"Easily, sir?" Fastidious Brisk said. "Then are all impossibilities easy."

“You conclude too quickly that I cannot do it, signor,” Macilente said. “What will you say if I make it so plainly and clearly appear now that you yourself shall confess that nothing is more possible?”

“By the Virgin Mary, I will say that if you can do it, I will both applaud you and admire you for it,” Fastidious Brisk said.

“And I will second him,” Puntarvolo said.

“Why, I’ll show you, gentlemen,” Macilente said. “Carlo, come here.”

Macilente, Carlo Buffone, Puntarvolo, and Fastidious Brisk whispered together, forming a plan.

Sogliardo said to Cavalier Shift, “Indeed, I have a great fancy to go to the court. What does my Resolution think? Shall I venture to go there?”

“Indeed, Countenance, do as you please,” Cavalier Shift said. “The court is a place of good reputation and capacity.”

“Capacity” may mean that the court is a large court, or that the people there have much mental capacity, or both.

“Oh, my tricks in tobacco, as Carlo says, will appear excellent there,” Sogliardo said.

“Why, you may go with these gentlemen now and see fashions, and afterward, do as you shall see fit,” Cavalier Shift said.

“You say the truth,” Sogliardo said. “Will you go with me, Resolution?”

“I will meet you, Countenance, about three or four o’clock,” Cavalier Shift said. “But to say that I will go with you, I cannot, for, as I am Apple John, I am to go before the cockatrice you saw this morning, and therefore please make my excuse, good Countenance.”

A cockatrice can be a prostitute.

“Farewell, good Resolution, but don’t fail to meet me there,” Sogliardo said.

“I swear as I live that I will,” Cavalier Shift said.

He exited.

Macilente, Carlo Buffone, Puntarvolo, and Fastidious Brisk broke off their whispered conversation.

“This plan is admirably excellent,” Puntarvolo said.

“If you can just persuade Sogliardo to go to the court, that’s what we need now,” Macilente said.

“Oh, leave it to me,” Carlo Buffone said. “That’s my task.”

Carlo took Sogliardo aside and talked to him.

“Now, by Jesus, Macilente, it’s above measure excellent,” Fastidious Brisk said. “It will be the only courtly exploit that ever proved a courtier ingenious.”

In other words: This will be the only courtly exploit that demonstrated that a courtier is intelligent.

“Upon my soul, it puts the lady quite out of her humor, and we shall laugh righteously,” Puntarvolo said.

Carlo Buffone returned to the others and said about Sogliardo, “Come, the gentleman was already resolved to go with you even before I urged it.”

“Why, then, gallants, you two and Carlo go ahead of us to prepare the jest,” Macilente said. “Sogliardo and I will come a little while after you.”

“Pardon me,” Carlo Buffone said. “I am not for the court.”

“That’s true. Carlo will not go to the court, indeed,” Puntarvolo said. “Well, you shall leave the plan to the ability of Monsieur Brisk and myself; upon our lives, we will manage it successfully and enjoyably. Carlo shall order supper at the Mitre Tavern in preparation for when we come back, where we will meet and dimple our cheeks with laughter at the success.”

“Aye, but will you all promise to come?” Carlo Buffone asked.

The bill for the meal would be high.

“I myself shall mansuete — manage — it concerning them,” Puntarvolo said. “I’ll bring them along tamely. He who fails, let his reputation lie under the lash of thy tongue.”

Wearing his new suit of clothing, Fungoso entered the scene.

“God’s so, look who comes here,” Carlo Buffone said.

“God’s so” means “By God’s soul,” but it is close to “Godso,” which is Italian slang for “penis.”

“What do you want, nephew?” Sogliardo asked.

“Uncle, God save you,” Fungoso said. “Did you see a gentleman, one Monsieur Brisk, a courtier? He goes in such a suit as I do.”

Pointing to Fastidious Brisk, Sogliardo said, “Here is the gentleman, nephew, but not in such a suit as you are wearing.”

“Another suit!” Fungoso said.

He fainted.

“How are you now, nephew?” Sogliardo asked.

Fastidious Brisk said to Fungoso, “Do you want to speak to me, sir?”

“Aye, when he has recovered himself, poor poll,” Carlo Buffone said.

A poll is a parrot. Parrots copy the speech of humans; Fungoso copies the clothing of Fastidious Brisk.

“He needs some *rosa solis*,” Puntarvolo said.

Literally “rose of the sun,” this was a medicinal drink.

“How are you now, signor?” Macilente asked Fungoso.

“I am not well, sir,” Fungoso said.

“Why, this is what it is to dog — follow — the fashion,” Macilente said.

“Come, gentlemen, remember your affairs,” Carlo Buffone said. “Fungoso’s disease is nothing but the flux — the fluctuation in fashion — of apparel.”

In medicine, “flux” is a discharge, including a discharge of excrement.

The affairs at hand concerned fooling Saviolina.

Puntarvolo said to his serving-men, “Sirs, return to the lodging. Keep the cat safe; I’ll be the dog’s guardian myself.”

The serving-men exited with the cat.

“Nephew, will you go to the court with us?” Sogliardo asked. “These gentlemen and I are for the court. Nay, don’t be so melancholy.”

“By God’s eyelid, I think no man in Christendom has that rascally fortune that I have,” Fungoso said.

“Indeed, your suit is well enough, signor,” Macilente said.

He thought that Fungoso was complaining about always being a little behind the latest fashion.

“Nay, not for that I protest, but I had an errand to carry information to Monsieur Fastidious, and I have forgotten the information,” Fungoso said.

Macilente replied:

“Why, go along to the court with us and remember it. Come.”

He then said:

“Gentlemen, you three take one boat, and Sogliardo and I will take another; we shall be there very quickly.”

“I am content with that,” Fastidious Brisk said.

He then said to Fungoso, “Good sir, grant us your pleasance — your company.”

“Farewell, Carlo,” Puntarvolo said. “Remember.”

In additional words: Remember to order the meal.

“I assure you I will,” Carlo Buffone said. “I wish that I had one of Kemp’s shoes to throw after you.”

Throwing a shoe after someone is supposed to bring that someone good luck. Will Kemp was a famous actor of the time.

Puntarvolo said, “Good fortune will close the eyes of our jest: No one will know what we are up to. Fear not, and we shall frolic and have fun.”

The actors exited.

Mitis said to Cordatus, “This Macilente, signor, begins to be more sociable all of a sudden, I think, than he was before. There’s some portent in it, I believe.”

“Oh, he’s a fellow of a strange nature,” Cordatus said. “Now does he, in this calm of his humor, plot and store up a world of malicious thoughts in his brain, until he is so full of them that you shall see the very torrent of his malice break forth, and against the course and charge of all their affections — emotions aroused by malice — oppose itself so violently that you will almost be amazed to think how it is possible the current of their dispositions shall receive so quick and strong an alteration.”

Mitis replied, “Aye, by the Virgin Mary, sir, this is that on which my expectation has dwelt all this while; for I must tell you, signor, although I was loath to interrupt the scene, yet I questioned in my own private thoughts how the playwright should properly call it *Every Man Out of His Humor* when I saw all his actors so strongly pursue and continue their humors.”

Cordatus said:

“Why, therein his art appears most full of luster, and approaches truest to life, especially when in the flame and height of their humors they are laid flat; it fills the eye better and with more contentment.

“How tedious a sight it would be to behold a proud lofty tree lopped and cut down by degrees, when it might be felled in a moment with one blow!

“And, to set the axe to it before it came to that pride and fulness, would be the same as not to have it grow.”

In other words: Ben Jonson was making sure that the humors of his characters were at their fullest height before he took the characters out of their humors. It would be a mistake to take the characters out of their humors too soon. But when he took them out of their humors, he would do so quickly.

“Well, I shall long until I see this fall you talk of,” Mitis said.

Cordatus said:

“To help your longing, signor, let your imagination be swifter than a pair of oars, and, by this imagination, suppose Puntarvolo, Brisk, Fungoso, and the dog arrived at the court gate and going up to the great hall.

“We’ll leave Macilente and Sogliardo them on the water until possibility and natural means may land them.

“Here come the gallants; now prepare your expectation.”

# CHAPTER 5

## — 5.1 —

Puntarvolo, Fastidious Brisk, Fungoso, and the dog walked onto the stage.

"Come, lordings," Puntarvolo said.

He then said to Fungoso, "Signor, you are sufficiently instructed in what you need to do?"

"Who, I, sir?" Fastidious Brisk asked.

Indicating Fungoso, Puntarvolo said, "No, this gentleman. But wait, I am worried about where to put my dog. He is no suitable companion for the presence chamber."

"By the Mass, that's true indeed, knight," Fastidious Brisk said. "You must not carry him into the presence chamber."

"I know it, and I, like a dull beast, forgot to bring one of my cormorants to attend me," Puntarvolo said.

Cormorants are literally rapacious large birds and figuratively gluttons. Masters frequently complained about the large appetites of their servants.

"Why, you would do best to leave him at the porter's lodge," Fastidious Brisk said.

"No," Puntarvolo said. "His worth is too well known among the porters to be returned when I wish."

The dog was valuable to him in part because it would accompany him in his voyage to and from Constantinople. If the dog were to die before Puntarvolo set out on his journey, all bets would be off and he would not make the journey. Puntarvolo, however, genuinely loved his dog.

"By God's light, what will you do then?" Fastidious Brisk asked.

"I must leave him with someone who is ignorant of my dog's worth, if I will have him kept safe," Puntarvolo said. "And look, here comes one who will carry coals, and therefore he will hold my dog."

The servants who carried charcoal were accustomed to doing menial work. Looking after a dog should be an OK task to them.

A servant carrying a basket of coals entered the scene.

"My trustworthy friend, may I commit the safekeeping of this dog to thy prudent care?" Puntarvolo asked.

"You may if you please, sir," the servant said.

"Please, let me find thee here at my return," Puntarvolo said. "It shall not be long until I will ease thee of thy employment and please thee."

What would please the servant would be a good tip.

To the others, Puntarvolo said, "Let's go forth, gentlemen."

Fastidious Brisk said to Puntarvolo, "Why, but will you leave your dog with so slight command, and impart no more admonitions upon the fellow?"

Didn't he have any instructions for the servant regarding the care of the dog?

"Admonitions?" Puntarvolo said. "No, there would be no strategy in that; that would be to let him know the value of the gem he holds, and so to tempt frail nature against her inclination to be honest."

He said to the servant, "No, please let thy honesty and trustworthiness be sweet and short."

By short, he meant for the short time the servant would need to look after the dog.

His words, however, could be interpreted as an insult: Didn't he think that the servant could be honest and trustworthy for a longer time?

"Yes, sir," the servant said.

Puntarvolo said to the others, “But listen, gallants, and chiefly Monsieur Brisk: When we come in eyeshot or the presence of this lady, don’t let other matters carry us away from our project, but if we can, let us single her forth to some place.”

“Single forth” was a hunting term meaning to separate one animal from the rest of the pack so it could be killed.

“I assure you we will,” Fastidious Brisk said.

“And don’t be too sudden, but let the plan induce itself with good circumstance,” Puntarvolo said. “Let it seem plausible and arise out of the situation and not out of a plot. Let’s go onward.”

“Is this the way?” Fungoso asked.

He looked at the wall hangings and said, “Truly, here are fine tapestries.”

Puntarvolo, Fastidious Brisk, and Fungoso exited.

Mulling over Puntarvolo’s words, the servant said to himself:

“Honesty, sweet — and *short*?

“By the Virgin Mary, it shall, sir, don’t doubt that.

“For even at this very instant if one would give me twenty pounds, I would not deliver the dog to him: There’s for the sweet.

“But now, an instant later, if any man would come and offer me just twopence, he shall have the dog: There’s the short — the short-lived honesty — now.

“By God’s blood, what a mad humorous gentleman is this to leave his dog with me. I could run away with him now if he were worth anything.

“Well, I pray God send the gentleman back quickly again.”

Puntarvolo had upset the servant, who thought he was being looked down on: He felt that Puntarvolo had insulted him.

Macilente and Sogliardo entered the scene.

“Come on, signor,” Macilente said. “Now prepare to court this all-witted lady, most naturally and like yourself.”

Sogliardo was a rustic whose “like [him]self” was unlikely to appeal to a court lady.

In Ben Jonson’s society, a “natural” was a half-wit.

Part of the meaning of “like yourself” was that Saviolina was like Sogliardo in being a half-wit. So Macilente said.

“Indeed, if you say the word, I’ll begin to court her while smoking tobacco,” Sogliardo said.

Macilente said:

“Oh, bah to tobacco.

“No, you shall begin with ‘How does my sweet lady?’ or ‘Why are you so melancholy, madam?’ Although she may be very merry, it’s all one — it doesn’t matter.

“Be sure to kiss your hand often enough.”

Kissing one’s hand was an action of courtly etiquette.

Macilente continued:

“Pray for her health and tell her how ‘more than most fair’ she is.

“Screw your face to one side like this” — he demonstrated — “and profess your devotion to her. Let her scoff and look askance and hide her teeth with her fan when she laughs a fit. The reaction will draw her into more conversation; that’s nothing to worry about.

“You must talk continuously, eagerly, and boldly. Although it may be without sense, as long as it is without blushing, it is most court-like and well.”

“But shall I not use tobacco at all?” Sogliardo asked.

“Oh, by no means use tobacco,” Macilente said. “It will but make your breath suspected of being bad and she may think that you use it only to cover up the rankness of your breath.”

“I will be advised, sir, by my friends,” Sogliardo said. “I will do what they advise me to do.”

He believed that his friends included Macilente.

“God’s my life, see where Sir Puntar’s dog is!” Macilente said, seeing the servant and the dog.

Macilente was shortening Puntarvolo’s name. A “punter” is a gambler.

The servant said to himself, “I wish the gentleman would return for his follower — his dog — here. I’ll leave him — the dog — to his fortunes else.”

Macilente said to himself, “By God’s heart, it would be the very best jest — notable deed — in the world to poison the dog now. Ha! By God’s will, I’ll do it, if I can but get him away from the fellow.”

He then said, “Signor Sogliardo, walk aside, and think upon some device to entertain the lady with.”

“So I do, sir,” Sogliardo said.

Sogliardo walked off, meditating.

Macilente said to the servant, “How are you now, my honest friend? Whose dog-keeper are thou?”

“Dog-keeper, sir?” the servant said. “I hope I scorn that, indeed.”

“Why, don’t thou keep a dog?” Macilente asked.

“Sir, now I do, and now I do not,” the servant said.

He released the dog and said, “I think this is sweet and short. Make me his dog-keeper, does he?”

The servant exited.

He had taken care of the dog as asked — that was the sweet. But he had taken care of the dog for only a short time — that was the short.

“This is excellent above expectation,” Macilente said to himself.

He said to the dog, “Nay, stay, sir. You’d be travelling to Constantinople, but I’ll give you a dose of medicine that shall shorten your voyage.”

He fed poison to the dog and said, “Here. So, sir, I’ll be bold to take my leave of you. Now go to the Turk’s court in the devil’s name, for you shall never go in God’s name.”

Macilente kicked the dog away.

He then called, “Sogliardo! Come.”

Sogliardo came over to him and said, “I have a device — a plan — indeed now, that will sting it.”

A sting was a tool that would repair a thatched roof.

Sogliardo had something in mind that would make him attractive to Saviolina.

The “sting” could also be his penis, which he could use to “sting” Saviolina.

“Take heed you don’t leese — accidentally lose — it, signor, before you come there,” Macilente said. “Preserve it and keep it safe.”

They exited.

Cordatus said to Mitis, “How do you like this first exploit of his?”

He was referring to poisoning the dog.

“Oh, it is a piece of true malice,” Mitis said. “But I eagerly await the conclusion of the other plot: the one involving Sogliardo and Saviolina.”

“Here the actors come,” Cordatus said. “They will make the conclusion of that plot appear.”

## — 5.2 —

Puntarvolo, Saviolina, Fastidious Brisk, and Fungoso entered the scene.

"Why, I thought, Sir Puntarvolo, that you had been gone on your voyage by now?" Saviolina said.

Puntarvolo replied, "Dear and most amiable — worthy to be loved — lady, your divine beauties do bind me to those courtly and attentive services, so that I cannot depart when I would."

"It is most courtly spoken, sir," Saviolina said, "but what might we do to have a sight of your dog and cat?"

"His dog's in the courtyard, lady," Fastidious Brisk said.

"And not your cat?" Saviolina said. "How dare you trust her to be left behind you, sir?"

"Indeed, madam, she has sore eyes and she stays in her chamber," Puntarvolo said. "By the Virgin Mary, I have left her under sufficient guard. Two of my servants are attending to her."

"I'll give you some medicinal herbal water for her eyes," Saviolina said. "When do you go, sir?"

"Certainly, sweet lady, I don't know," Puntarvolo said.

Fastidious Brisk said, "He does stay the rather, madam, to present your acute judgment with so courtly and well-parted — multi-talented — a gentleman, as yet Your Ladyship has never seen."

"Who's he, gentle Monsieur Brisk?" Saviolina asked.

She pointed to Fungoso and asked, "Not that gentleman?"

"No, lady, the man I mean is a kinsman of Justice Silence," Fastidious Brisk said.

He was referring to Sogliardo.

Puntarvolo said, "Please, sir, give me permission to describe him:

"He's a gentleman, lady, of such rare and splendid and admirable faculty, that I assert that I don't know his like in Europe.

"He is exceedingly valiant, an excellent scholar, and so widely travelled that he is able in discourse to deliver you a model of any prince's court in the world.

"He speaks the languages with that purity of phrase and facility of accent that it breeds astonishment.

"His wit is the most exuberant and (above wonder) pleasant of all that ever entered the concave of this ear!"

"It is most true, lady," Fastidious Brisk said.

He added something negative about Sogliardo: "By the Virgin Mary, he is no very excellent proper man: He is not a handsome man."

"His travels have changed his complexion, madam," Puntarvolo said.

Puntarvolo was saying that Sogliardo was tanned from his travels, but actually Sogliardo was tanned from his life on a farm in rural England.

Ben Jonson's society valued light complexions.

"Oh, Sir Puntarvolo, you must not think that every man was born to have my servant Brisk's features," Saviolina said.

She realized that not every man is handsome.

Puntarvolo said:

"But he has that which transcends all that, lady.

"He does so peerlessly imitate any manner of person for gesture, action, passion, or whatever —"

“Aye,” Fastidious Brisk said. “He does so imitate especially a rustic or a clown, madam, that it is not possible for the sharpest-sighted wit in the world to discern any sparks of the gentleman in him, when he does it.”

“Oh, Monsieur Brisk, don’t be so tyrannous to confine all wits within the compass of your own: Don’t judge the wit of other people by your own,” Saviolina said. “Not find the sparks of a gentleman in him, if he is a gentleman?”

She believed that if he were really a gentleman, she could find signs of it.

“No, in truth, sweet lady, I believe you cannot,” Fastidious Brisk said.

“Do you believe so?” Saviolina said. “Why, I can find sparks of a gentleman in you, sir.”

In other words: If I can find sparks of a gentleman in you, then I can find sparks of a gentleman in him.

“Aye, he is a gentleman, madam, and a reveler,” Puntarvolo said.

Playwright Francis Beaumont satirically identified three types of students at the Inns of Court: Revelers were law students who engaged in many entertainments. Young students were naïve first-year law students, and plodders were those who were studying law seriously in order to make a living from it.

“Indeed, I think I have seen Your Ladyship at our revels,” Fungoso said.

“Likely enough, sir,” Saviolina said. “But I wish that I might see this wonder you talk of. May one have a sight of him for any reasonable sum?”

“Yes, madam, he will arrive soon,” Puntarvolo said.

“And shall we see him play the clown and act like a country bumpkin?” Saviolina asked.

“Indeed, sweet lady, that you shall,” Fastidious Brisk said. “See, here he comes.”

Macilente and Sogliardo entered the scene.

“This is the man,” Puntarvolo said. “Please observe him, lady.”

“Curse me, but he clowns it properly indeed,” Saviolina said.

Sogliardo really did look like a country bumpkin.

“Closely observe his courtship,” Puntarvolo said.

“How is my sweet lady?” Sogliardo asked.

He took Saviolina’s hand and said, “Hot and moist? Beautiful and lusty? Ha!”

In Ben Jonson’s society, a hot and moist palm was regarded as a sign of a lecherous nature.

“Beautiful, if it pleases you, sir, but not lusty,” Saviolina replied.

“Oh, ho, lady, it pleases you to say so, in truth,” Sogliardo said. “And how is my sweet lady? Is she in health? *Bona-roba, quaeso que novelles? Que novelles*, sweet creature?”

*Bona-roba* refers to a woman as if she were a commodity: good stuff.

*Quaeso que novelles* is sort of Italian, sort of French, and sort of Spanish for “I ask what is the news?” The words “*Que novelles*” appeared at the openings of some satiric skits at the Inns of Court.

“Oh, excellent!” Saviolina said. “Why, gallants, is this the man who cannot be deciphered? They would be very bleary- and dim-witted, indeed, who could not discern the gentleman in him.”

“But do you, in earnest, see the gentleman in him, lady?” Puntarvolo asked.

Saviolina said:

“Do I, sir?

“Why, if you had any true court-judgment in the carriage of his eye, and that inward power that forms his countenance, you might perceive his counterfeiting as clearly as you perceive the noonday.”

“Carriage” is “bodily department” and seems to be ill matched with “eye.” “Countenance” is “facial features” and seems to be ill matched with “inward power.”

Saviolina continued:

“Alas — nay, if you wanted to have tested my wit indeed, you should never have told me he was a gentleman, but instead have presented him for a true clown indeed, and then have seen if I could have deciphered him.”

“Before God, Her Ladyship says the truth, knight,” Fastidious Brisk said to Puntarvolo.

He then asked Saviolina, “But doesn’t he imitate the clown most naturally, mistress?”

“Naturally” means 1) realistically (as if born to it), and/or 2) like a half-wit.

“Oh, she cannot but affirm that, out of the bounty and excellence of her judgment,” Puntarvolo said.

“Nay, no doubt he does well for a gentleman imitating a clown,” Saviolina said. “But I assure you, he graces his natural carriage — bodily deportment — of the gentleman much better than his clownery.”

“It is strange, indeed, that Her Ladyship should see so far into him,” Fastidious Brisk said.

“Aye, isn’t it?” Puntarvolo said.

“Indeed, as easily as may be,” Saviolina said. “Not decipher him, did you say?”

“In all seriousness, I wonder at it,” Fungoso said.

“Why, has she deciphered him, gentlemen?” Macilente asked.

“Oh, most miraculously, and beyond admiration,” Puntarvolo answered.

“Is it possible?” Macilente said.

“She has given in front of witnesses a statement about the most infallible signs of the gentleman in him, that’s for certain,” Fastidious Brisk said.

“Why, gallants, let me laugh at you a little,” Saviolina said. “Was this your plot to test my judgment in a gentleman?”

“Nay, lady, do not scorn us,” Macilente said. “Although you have this gift of perspicacy and clear-sightedness above others, what if he should be no gentleman now, but a clown indeed, lady?”

“What would you think of that?” Puntarvolo asked. “Wouldn’t Your Ladyship be out of your humor?”

“Oh, but she knows it is not so,” Fastidious Brisk said.

“What if he weren’t a man, you may as well say,” Saviolina said. “Nay, if Your Worships could fool me so indeed, you would be wiser than you are thought to be.”

“In good faith, lady, he is a very perfect clown, both by father and mother, that I’ll assure you,” Macilente said.

“Oh, sir, you are very jocular,” Saviolina replied.

Macilente said, “Just look at his hand, and that shall tell you the truth.”

He showed her one of Sogliardo’s palms, which was heavily calloused, and said, “Look, lady, what a palm is here.”

“Tut, that was with holding the plow,” Sogliardo said.

“The plow!” Macilente said. “Did you discern any such thing in him, madam?”

“Indeed, no, she saw the gentleman as bright as at noonday, she did,” Fastidious Brisk said. “She deciphered him from the first moment she saw him.”

“Truly, I am sorry Your Ladyship’s sight should be so suddenly struck,” Macilente said.

“Oh, you’re goodly beagles!” Saviolina said.

Beagles hunt in packs. So do Puntarvolo, Macilente, and Fastidious Brisk. To a much lesser extent, so does Fungoso.

Saviolina began to leave.

“What! Has she gone?” Fastidious Brisk said.

“Nay, stay, sweet lady!” Sogliardo said. “*Que novelles? Que novelles?* What news? What news?”

“Get out, you fool, you!” Saviolina said.

She exited.

“She’s out of her humor, indeed,” Fungoso said.

True, but she had been correct: Sogliardo was a gentleman; he had purchased a coat of arms.

“Nay, let’s follow it while it’s hot, gentlemen,” Fastidious Brisk said.

“Come, on my honor, we’ll make her blush in the presence chamber,” Puntarvolo said. “My spleen is great with laughter.”

In Ben Jonson’s society, the spleen was regarded as the organ most associated with laughter.

“Your laughter will be a child of a feeble life — it will be short-lived, I believe, sir,” Macilente said.

He then said to Fungoso, “Come, signor, your looks are too dejected, I think. Why don’t you mix mirth with the rest of us?”

“By God’s will, this suit of clothing frets me at the soul,” Fungoso said. “I’ll have it altered tomorrow, to be sure.”

They exited.

Cavalier Shift entered and said to himself:

“I have come to the court to meet with my Countenance, Sogliardo. Poor men must be glad of such patronage, when they can get no better. Well, need and poverty may insult and wound a man, but it shall never make him despair of being a man of consequence.

“The world will say, ‘It is base.’ Tush, base! It is base to live under the earth, not base to live above it, by any means.”

“Base” can mean “low,” as in “under the earth in a grave,” and it can mean “morally low.” To Cavalier Shift, it is not base to find a means — by any means — to get what you need to stay alive.

Puntarvolo, Fastidious Brisk, Sogliardo, Fungoso, and Macilente entered the scene.

Fastidious Brisk said, “The poor lady is most miserably out of her humor, indeed.”

“There was never so witty a jest played at the Tilt Yard of all the court wits who were ever born and christened!” Puntarvolo said.

The Tilt Yard was a place for tilting, aka jousting, and other sports. Wits tilt — jest — with words.

Macilente said to himself, “Oh, this applause taints it foully.”

All this self-congratulation was lessening the goodness of the practical joke, according to Macilente.

The purpose of the practical joke had been to lessen the too-great self-regard of Saviolina, but now most of the jokers were building too high their own self-regard.

“I think I did my part in courting,” Sogliardo said.

Noticing Cavalier Shift, he said, “Oh, Resolution!”

Looking for the servant who had been keeping his dog, Puntarvolo said, “Aye me, my dog!”

“Aye me” is a cry of distress.

“Where is he?” Macilente, who had poisoned Puntarvolo’s dog, asked.

“By God’s precious blood, go seek for the fellow, good signor,” Fastidious Brisk said to Fungoso.

Fungoso exited to look for the dog and the coal-carrier who had been supposed to take care of the dog.

“Here, here is where I left him,” Puntarvolo said.

“Why, no one was here when we came in now but Cavalier Shift,” Macilente said. “Ask him where the dog is.”

Fastidious Brisk asked Cavalier Shift, “Did you see Sir Puntarvolo’s dog here, cavalier, since you came?”

“His dog, sir?” Cavalier Shift replied. “He may look for his dog, sir; I see nothing of his dog, sir.”

Macilente said to Puntarvolo, “Upon my life, Shift has stolen your dog, sir, and he has been hired to do it by some who have bet money with you. You may guess this by his peremptory and obstinate answers.”

“That’s not unlikely, for he has been a notorious thief by his own confession,” Puntarvolo replied.

He asked Cavalier Shift, “Sirrah, where’s my dog?”

“Do you blame me for the loss of your dog, sir?” Cavalier Shift said. “I have nothing to do with your dog, sir.”

“Villain, thou lie!” Puntarvolo said.

Being called a liar was justification enough to challenge a man to a duel.

“Lie, sir?” Cavalier Shift said. “By God’s blood, you are merely a man, sir, and thus you are mortal and able to die.”

“Rogue and thief, restore my dog to me!” Puntarvolo said.

“Take heed, Sir Puntarvolo, what you do,” Sogliardo said. “He’ll bear no coals, I can tell you, on my word.”

“Bear no coals” means “bear no insult.”

“This is splendid,” Macilente, a troublemaker, said to himself.

Sogliardo said to Puntarvolo, “It’s a wonder he doesn’t stab you. By this light, he has stabbed forty men for forty times less matter, I can tell you, from my knowledge.”

“I will make thee stoop and obey me, thou abject man,” Puntarvolo said.

One meaning of “stoop” is a dog’s lowering its head to catch a scent. Another meaning is humble submission.

Puntarvolo and Shift threatened each other.

“Make him stoop, sir?” Sogliardo said. “Gentlemen, pacify him or he’ll — Puntarvolo will — be killed!”

“Is Shift so tall — brave — a man?” Macilente asked.

“Tall a man?” Sogliardo said. “If you love Puntarvolo’s life, stand between them. Make Cavalier Shift stoop!”

Puntarvolo said to Cavalier Shift, “Give me my dog, villain, or I will hang thee! Thou have confessed robberies and other felonious acts to this gentleman, thy Countenance —”

“I’ll bear no witness,” Sogliardo interrupted.

He would not give evidence that could get his friend, Cavalier Shift, hung.

Puntarvolo continued, “— and without my dog, I will hang thee for them!”

Cavalier Shift knelt before Puntarvolo. He was afraid of being hung.

“What! Kneel to thine enemy!” Sogliardo said, astonished.

“Pardon me, good sir,” Cavalier Shift said. “As God is my judge, I swear I never did robbery in all my life.”

Fungoso returned from looking for the dog and said, “Oh, Sir Puntarvolo, your dog lies giving up the ghost in the woodyard.”

Macilente, who had poisoned the dog, said to himself, “By God’s blood, isn’t he dead yet?”

“Oh, my dog was born to endure a disastrous fortune!” Puntarvolo said. “Please lead me to him, sir.”

Puntarvolo and Fungoso exited.

Sogliardo said to Cavalier Shift, “What! Did you never do any robbery in your life?”

“Oh, this is good,” Macilente said to himself.

He said to Sogliardo, “So he swore, sir.”

“Aye, I heard him,” Sogliardo said.

He asked Cavalier Shift, “And did you swear truly, sir?”

“Aye, as God shall have an interest in my soul, sir, I never robbed any man, I,” Cavalier Shift said. “I never stood by the highway side as a highwayman, sir, but only said I did so because I wanted to get myself a reputation and be accounted a brave man.”

Sogliardo said to Cavalier Shift:

“Now get out, base *viliaco* — *rascal*! Thou, my Resolution? I, thy Countenance?”

Sogliardo said to the others:

“By this light, gentlemen, he has confessed to me the most inexorable and unforgivable multitude of robberies, and he has damned himself in swearing that he did them — you never heard the like.”

Sogliardo said to Cavalier Shift:

“Out, scoundrel, get out, follow me no more, I command thee! Get out of my sight, go away from here and don’t speak! I will not hear anything you say! Away, *camouccio*!”

*Camouccio* is supposed to be an insult in a language that resembles but is not quite Italian.

Cavalier Shift exited.

Macilente said to himself:

“Oh, how I do feed upon this now, and fatten myself!”

He was feeding his humor — malicious envy — and metaphorically growing fat.

Macilente continued saying to himself:

“Here were a couple unexpectedly dishumored: Sogliardo and Cavalier Shift.”

Saviolina was expectedly dishumored.

Macilente continued saying to himself:

“Well, by this time, I hope, Sir Puntarvolo and his dog are both out of humor to travel.”

He then said out loud:

“Gentlemen, why don’t you seek out the knight and comfort him?

“Our supper at the Mitre must of necessity be held tonight, if you love your reputations.”

“Before God, I am so melancholy for his dog’s disaster, but I’ll go,” Fastidious Brisk said.

“Indeed, and I may go, too, but I know I shall be so melancholy,” Sogliardo said.

“Tush, melancholy?” Macilente said. “You must forget that now, and remember that you lie at the mercy of a Fury: Carlo will rack your sinews asunder and scold you to a dusty death, if you don’t come.”

The three Furies were avenging goddesses out of hell.

The actors exited.

Mitis said to Cordatus, “Oh, then their fear of Carlo, likely, makes them hold their meeting.”

Cordatus replied, “Aye, here he comes. Just imagine him to have entered the Mitre, and it is enough.”

**— 5.3 —**

Carlo Buffone walked on stage, which now represented the Mitre Tavern. Some others brought a table and chairs on stage.

Carlo Buffone said, “Holla! Where are these shot-sharks?”

Shot-sharks are bartenders who bring the drinkers the — sometimes inflated — bill.

A drawer — that is, a drawer of wine and ale, aka bartender — arrived, saying to an out-of-sight customer, “By and by.”

This meant: I’ll be there soon.

The drawer then said, “You’re welcome, good Master Buffone.”

“Where’s George?” Carlo Buffone said. “Call George here for me quickly.”

George was Carlo Buffone’s favorite drawer at the Mitre.

“What wine will you please to have, sir?” the drawer said. “I’ll draw you wine that’s neat, Master Buffone.”

Neat wine is undiluted.

“Go away, neophyte, and do as I tell you to do,” Carlo Buffone said. “Bring my dear George to me.”

George arrived before the drawer exited.

“By the Mass, here he comes,” Carlo Buffone said.

“Welcome, Master Carlo,” George said.

“Is supper ready, George?” Carlo Buffone asked.

“Aye, sir, almost,” George replied. “Will you have the cloth laid, Master Carlo?”

“Oh, what else?” Carlo Buffone said. “Have any of the gallants come yet?”

“None yet, sir,” George answered.

He began to leave, but Carlo Buffone said, “Wait, take me with you, George.”

This meant: Wait, I have more instructions for you, George.

He then said, “Let me have a good fat loin of pork laid to the fire immediately.”

“It shall be done, sir,” George said.

“And also, listen, draw me the biggest shaft you have out of the butt you know of,” Carlo Buffone said. “Go away now — you know which cask I mean, George — quickly.”

“Shaft” means “draught,” and “butt” means “wine cask.”

He wanted George to fill up the biggest flagon with Carlo’s favorite wine from the wine cask that George knew about.

“It will be done, sir,” George said as he exited.

Carlo Buffone said to himself:

“By God’s blood, I never hungered so much for anything in my life as I do to know our gallants’ success or lack of it at the court. Now is that lean bald-rib Macilente — that witty, stinging villain — plotting some evil plan, and he lies a-soaking in their frothy humors like a dry crust, until he has drunk them all up.”

The Elizabethans often floated a piece of dry bread or toast in ale and consumed both. Macilente is like a sop that soaks up *all* the ale.

Carlo Buffone continued talking to himself:

“Could the kex — that dry, hollow stem of a man — but hold up his eyes at other men’s happiness in any reasonable proportion, by God’s eyelid, the slave would be loved next to heaven, above honor, wealth, rich fare, apparel, wenches, all the delights of the belly and the groin — gluttony and lust, appetites and passions — whatever.”

Macilente does have the virtue of being a good social critic, but unfortunately his malicious envy makes him unlovable.

George returned, bringing wine in a flagon and two cups.

“Here, Master Carlo,” George said.

“Is it right, boy?” Carlo Buffone asked.

“Aye, sir, I assure you it is right,” George said.

“Well said, my dear George, depart now,” Carlo Buffone said.

George exited. The other drawer remained in the room.

Carlo Buffone said, “Come, my small gimlet, you in the false scabbard, go away!”

A gimlet is a boring-tool used to make holes in casks so that the wine or ale can be drawn out.

A scabbard is a sheath for a knife or a sword, both of which can be phallic symbols. The Latin word *vagina* means “sheath.” If the drawer were wearing a codpiece — a piece of clothing for holding male genitals — the codpiece could be a false sheath.

Carlo Buffone put the drawer out of the room and shut the door.

Alone, Carlo Buffone said to the huge flagon of wine George had brought, “Good. Now to you, Sir Burgomaster, let’s taste of your bounty.”

Mitis said to Cordatus, “Will he start drinking such quantities of wine alone?”

“You shall perceive that soon enough, sir,” Cordatus answered.

Carlo Buffone drank.

He then said to himself:

“Aye, by the Virgin Mary, sir, here’s purity. Here’s undiluted wine! Oh, George, I could bite off thy nose for this now!”

In Ben Jonson’s society, “I could bite off thy nose” was an endearment, similar to “I could eat you up.”

Carlo Buffone continued saying to himself:

“Sweet rogue, he has drawn nectar, the very soul of the grape. I’ll wash my temples and get pleasantly drunk with some of it now and drink some half-a-score draughts.

“It will heat the brain and kindle my imagination; I shall talk nothing but crackers and fireworks tonight. I will dazzle my hearers with eloquence.”

“Crackers” can be 1) firecrackers, or 2) liars and boasters.

George had brought two cups for wine-drinking. Carlo Buffone set the two cups apart.

He said, “So, sir, please you to be here, sir, and I here. Good.”

He was going to pretend to be two drinkers and drink out of one cup and then out of the other.

Cordatus said to Mitis, “This is worth the observation, signor.”

Carlo Buffone (first cup) said, “Now, sir, here’s to you, and I present you with so much of my love.”

He drank from the first cup.

Carlo Buffone (second cup) said, “I take it kindly from you, sir” — he drank from the second cup — “and will return to you the like proportion, but also, sir, remembering the merry night we had at the countess’ — you know where, sir.”

Carlo Buffone (first cup) said, “By Jesus, you do put me in mind now of a very necessary office that I will propose in your pledge, sir: the health of that honorable countess, and the sweet lady who sat by her, sir.”

Carlo Buffone (second cup) said, “By I do vail to it with reverence.”

“Vail” means respectfully lower one’s sails. Carlo Buffone bowed.

He drank from the second cup.

Carlo Buffone (second cup) added, “And now, signor, with these ladies, I’ll be bold to mix the health of your divine mistress.”

Wine was often diluted with water.

One meaning of “mix” is “have sexual intercourse with.”

Carlo Buffone (first cup) asked, “Do you know her, sir?”

Carlo Buffone (second cup) said, “Oh, lord, sir, aye, and in the respectful memory and mention of her, I could wish this wine were the most precious drug in the world.”

Carlo Buffone (first cup) said, “In good faith, sir, you do honor me in it exceedingly.”

He drank from the first cup.

Mitis asked Cordatus, “Whom would he be impersonating in this scene, signor?”

Possibly, Ben Jonson was not satirizing anyone in particular, but he did make jokes about his own wine-drinking, as in his play *The Staple of News* and in the Induction of this play.

“Indeed, I don’t know, sir,” Cordatus said, “Observe, observe him.”

Carlo Buffone (second cup) said, “If it were the basest filth or mud that runs in the channel, I am bound to pledge it, by God, sir.”

He drank from the second cup.

The particular channel he was talking about was for sewage.

Carlo Buffone (second cup) added, “And now, sir, here is again a replenished bowl, sir, that I will reciprocally return upon you to the health of the Count Frugale.”

As he was drinking, Carlo kept refreshing the wine-bowl with more wine.

Carlo Buffone (first cup) said, “The Count Frugale’s health, sir? I’ll pledge it on my knees, by Jesus.”

He knelt and drank from the first cup.

Carlo Buffone (second cup) said, “Will you, sir? I’ll drink it on my knees, then, by the Lord.”

He knelt and drank from the second cup.

Mitis said to Cordatus, “Why, this is strange.”

“Have you ever heard a better drunken dialogue?” Cordatus asked.

Carlo Buffone (second cup) said, “Nay, do me right, sir.”

Carlo Buffone (first cup) said, “So I do, in good faith.”

Carlo Buffone (second cup) said, “In good faith, you do not; my cup was fuller.”

Carlo Buffone (first cup) objected, “Why, by Jesus, it was not.”

When drinking toasts, people were supposed to drink the same amount of wine.

Carlo Buffone (second cup) said, “By Jesus, it was, and you do lie.”

Carlo Buffone (first cup) said, “Lie, sir?”

Carlo Buffone (second cup) said, “Aye, sir.”

Carlo Buffone (first cup) said, “By God’s wounds, you rascal!”

Carlo Buffone (second cup) said, “Oh, come, stab if you have a mind to it.”

Being called a liar was grounds for a duel that could be fought with swords and daggers.

Carlo Buffone (first cup) said, “Stab? Do thou think I don’t dare to?”

Carlo Buffone (as himself) said, “Nay, I beseech you gentlemen, what is the meaning of this? Nay, look, for shame, respect your reputations.”

He overturned the wine, pot, cups, and all else.

Macilente entered the scene and asked, “Why, how are you now, Carlo? What humor is this you are in?”

“Oh, my good mischief, have thou come?” Carlo Buffone asked. “Where are the rest? Where are the rest?”

“Indeed, three of our ordnance have burst,” Macilente said.

He was comparing three of their number to war machines that had blown up.

“Burst?” Carlo Buffone said. “How did that come to happen?”

“Indeed, they were overcharged, overcharged,” Macilente said.

“Overcharged” meant “overloaded with explosives.”

“But didn’t the train — the fuse — hold?” Carlo Buffone asked.

“Oh, yes, and the poor lady is irrecoverably blown up,” Macilente said.

He was comparing Saviolina to the target of war machines such as artillery.

“Why, but which of the weapons has miscarried, then?” Carlo Buffone asked.

Macilente replied, “*Imprimis*, Sir Puntarvolo; next, the Countenance and Resolution.”

*Imprimis* is Latin for “in the first place.”

The Countenance and the Resolution, of course, were Sogliardo and Cavalier Shift.

“What?” Carlo Buffone said. “How, for the love of God?”

“Indeed, the Resolution has been proven to be a coward, the Countenance has changed his copy, and the passionate knight is shedding funeral tears over his departed dog,” Macilente said.

“Changed his copy” means “changed his behavior and role model.”

Cavalier Shift was no longer Sogliardo’s hero.

“What about Puntarvolo’s dog?” Carlo Buffone asked. “Is he dead?”

Macilente replied:

“Poisoned, it is thought.

“By the Virgin Mary, how, or by whom, that’s left for some cunning woman — some witch — here on the Bankside to resolve.

“As for my part, I know nothing more than that we are likely to have an exceedingly melancholy supper of it.”

“By God’s life, and I had purposed to be extraordinarily merry,” Carlo Buffone said. “I had drunk off a good preparative of old sack here. But will they come, will they come?”

A “preparative” is 1) a medicinal drink, and 2) a military order to get ready.

Old sack is a kind of old wine.

“They will assuredly come,” Macilente said. “By the Virgin Mary, Carlo, as thou love me, run over them all freely tonight with your satiric attacks, and especially the knight. Spare no sulphurous jest that may come out of that sweaty forge of thine, but ply them with all manner of shot: minion, saker, culverine, or anything whatsoever thou will.”

A sweaty forge is 1) a forge on wheels used for military purposes, and 2) the creative imagination.

Minion, saker, and culverine are different sizes of cannon.

“I want thee, my dear case of petronels, so that I won’t stand in dread of thee, to second me and support me in satiric duels,” Carlo Buffone said.

A case of petronels is literally a pair of pistols and metaphorically satiric weapons. In this case, the satiric weapons were words from the mouth of Macilente.

Carlo Buffone wanted Macilente’s help as he mocked the others.

“Why, my good German tapster, I will,” Macilente said.

A tapster is a bartender, and soon Carlo Buffone will be pouring wine for the others.

The Germans and the Dutch were reputed to be big drinkers. At the moment, certainly, Carlo Buffone was a heavy drinker.

Carlo Buffone called, “What, George!”

Drunk, he danced as he sang: “*Lomtero! Lomtero!*”

George entered the scene and asked, “Did you call, Master Carlo?”

“More nectar, George.”

He sang: “*Lomtero! Lomtero!*”

A montero is a Spanish cap that has flaps to protect the ears. A lamb is an innocent person.

Innocent people need protection for their ears so they aren’t hurt by the satiric gibes of people such as Carlo Buffone and Macilente.

“Your meat and food’s ready, sir, if your company have come,” George said.

“Is the loin of pork cooked enough?” Carlo Buffone asked.

“Aye, sir, it is cooked enough,” George said.

Macilente said, “Pork? By God’s heart, what do thou with such a greasy dish? I think thou do varnish thy face with the fat on it — it looks so like a glue-pot.”

“Greasy” can mean 1) oily, and 2) filthy.

A glue-pot is used for melting glue.

Carlo Buffone replied:

“True, my raw-boned rogue, and if thou would farce — fill out — thy lean ribs with it, too, they would not, like ragged laths, rub out and fray as many doublets as they do.”

Laths are slats of wood.

Carlo Buffone continued:

“But thou don’t know a good dish, thou don’t. Oh, it’s the only nourishing meat in the world.

“It’s no wonder, though, that that saucy, insolent, and stubborn — because they rejected Christianity — generation that is the Jews were forbidden it; for what would they have done, when well pampered with fat pork, who dared to murmur at their Maker with a diet of garlic and onions?

“By God’s blood, fed with it, the whoreson strummel-patched (men made of straw), goggle-eyed grumbledories would have gigantomachized.”

“Strummel” is straw. A “patch” is 1) a simpleton, or 1) a piece of cloth used to repair a piece of clothing. Therefore, “strummel-patched” probably refers to straw men.

A “drumbledore” is a bumblebee. A “dory” is a fish. Therefore, “grumbledories” probably refers to grumbling non-human creatures.

“Gigantomachized” may mean “become like the Giants who fought against the gods.”

The suffix “-mach” means “fight with” whatever comes before the “-mach.”

“Gigantomachized” may mean “fight with the giants,” but “fight with” can mean 1) fight on the side of or 2) fight against. The word “Gigantomachized” may mean that the Jews are treacherous and can change sides.

Also, whether they fought on the side of the giants or on the side of the pagan gods, a Christian would say that they were fighting on the wrong side.

Whatever these words mean, they convey an anti-Semitic meaning.

George returned with wine and winecups.

Carlo Buffone said, “Well done, my sweet George! Fill the cups! Fill the cups!”

George served the wine, and then he exited.

“This savors too much of profanation,” Mitis said.

Carlo Buffone was being drunkenly profane. His opinions were not necessarily those of Ben Jonson.

Cordatus said, “*O, servetur ad imum, qualis ab incepto processerit, et sibi constet*.”

C. Smart translated the lines: “let it be preserved to the last such as it set out at the beginning, and be consistent with itself.”

The Latin is from Horace, *Ars Poetica* 126-127. Basically, Cordatus was saying that Carlo Buffone’s character had remained consistent from the beginning until now. His humor was now the same as it had been earlier.

Cordatus added, “The necessity of his vein compels a toleration; for, bar this, and dash him out of humor before his time.”

In other words: We now must tolerate his drunken blasphemy, for if we don’t, we will take him out of his humor before it is the best time to do so.

Carlo Buffone said:

"It is an axiom in natural philosophy: What comes nearest the nature of that it feeds, converts quicker to nourishment, and does sooner essentiate and become bodily substance.

"Now, nothing in flesh and entrails assimulates or resembles man more than a hog or swine."

"Assimulates" is a too-fancy way of saying "simulates," aka "imitates" or "counterfeits."

In other words: Since a man and a pig resemble each other closely, a pig's flesh when eaten by a man is converted quickly into man's flesh.

Carlo Buffone drank.

Macilente said, "True, and the man, to requite the pigs' courtesy, often takes off his own nature and puts on theirs, as when he becomes as churlish as a hog, or as drunk as a sow. But continue on to your conclusion."

Carlo Buffone was well on his way to being as drunk as a sow. He was already as churlish as a hog.

Macilente drank.

Carlo Buffone said:

"By the Virgin Mary, I say, nothing resembling man more than a swine, it follows, nothing can be more nourishing; for indeed, except that it shrinks from our nice nature and makes us squeamish, if we fed one upon another, we would shoot up a great deal faster, and thrive much better. I refer to your Long Lane cannibals, or such like."

Long Lane "cannibals" are greedy pawnbrokers and old-clothes dealers.

Carlo Buffone continued:

"But since cannibalism is so contrary to us, pork, pork, is your only feed."

Macilente said, "I take it the devil is of the same diet; he would never have desired to have been incorporated into swine otherwise."

Mark 5 (King James Version) tells about Jesus casting devils out of a man and, at their request, into swine:

*11 Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding.*

*12 And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them.*

*13 And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea.*

Puntarvolo, Fastidious Brisk, Sogliardo, and Fungoso entered the scene.

Macilente said, "Oh, here comes the melancholy dinner-party mess. Upon them, Carlo, charge, charge!"

A mess is a party of four.

Macilente was encouraging Carlo Buffone to satirically attack the others.

Carlo Buffone, who was drunk as a sow, was happy to do so.

In a mocking voice, he said, "Before God, Sir Puntarvolo, I am sorry for your heavy grief. By the body of Christ, I swear it was a grievous mischance. Why, didn't you have any unicorn's horn or bezoar's stone about you? Huh?"

Unicorn's horn and bezoar's stone were reputed to be antidotes for poison.

"Sir, I would request you to be silent," Puntarvolo said.

Wishing to cause trouble, Macilente said to Carlo Buffone, "Nay, go to him again."

Carlo Buffone said to Puntarvolo, "Take comfort, good knight, if your cat has recovered from her sore eyes, fear nothing; your dog's mischance may be helped."

Fastidious Brisk said:

“Say how, sweet Carlo, for so God mend me, the poor knight’s moans draw me into fellowship of his misfortunes.

“But be not discouraged, good Sir Puntarvolo. I am content your adventure shall be performed with only your cat: You shall go to Constantinople and back with your cat and leave the dog out of the contract.”

Macilente said to himself, “I believe you, musk-cod, I believe you; for rather than thou would make immediate repayment, thou would take it upon his own bare return from Calais.”

Literally, a musk-cod is a small bag for perfume. Figuratively, it is the perfumed Fastidious Brisk.

From London to Calais (across the English Channel and back) was a much shorter — and safer — journey than to Constantinople and back.

Macilente was saying that Fastidious Brisk did not want to return the 100 pounds that Puntarvolo had given to him as a deposit for their five-for-one wager, and therefore Brisk would agree to a different wager, even one that Puntarvolo could fairly easily win, such as going to Calais and back alone, as long as Brisk did not have to return the money now.

Overhearing Macilente’s words, Carlo Buffone said, “Nay, by God’s life, he’d be content, as long as he were well rid of his company, to pay him five for one at his next meeting him in St. Paul’s.”

“Well rid of his company” meant that Fastidious Brisk would not have to witness Puntarvolo’s grief at the death of his dog. But especially it meant that Fastidious Brisk would not have to immediately return the 100 pounds.

Carlo Buffone said to Puntarvolo, “But as for your dog, Sir Puntar, if he is not outright dead, there is a friend of mine, a quacksalver, who shall put life in him again, that’s certain.”

“Sir Puntar” was a nickname that Carlo Buffone was using for Sir Puntarvolo. A “punter” is a gambler.

A quacksalver is a medical quack: a fraudulent doctor.

“Oh, no, that comes too late,” Fungoso said.

Macilente pointed to Carlo Buffone and said to Puntarvolo, “By God’s precious blood, knight, will you endure this?”

Macilente was trying to stir up trouble between Carlo Buffone and Puntarvolo.

Puntarvolo called, “Drawer, get me a candle and hard wax, immediately.”

Hard wax was sealing wax. It was melted and dripped on a document to seal it.

Sogliardo called, “Aye, and bring up supper, for I am so melancholy.”

His courting of Saviolina had not gone well.

Carlo Buffone said to Sogliardo, “Ah, signor, where’s your Resolution?”

“Resolution! Hang him, the rascal!” Sogliardo said. “Oh, Carlo, if you love me, do not mention him.”

“Why, why not?” Carlo Buffone said. “Why not?”

“Oh, he is the arrantest crocodile — the most arrant hypocrite — that any Christian was acquainted with,” Sogliardo replied. “By Jesus, I shall think the worse of tobacco while I live, for his sake. I did think him to be as brave a man —”

Macilente whispered to Carlo, “Nay, Buffone, the knight, the knight.”

Macilente still wanted to stir up trouble between Carlo Buffone and Puntarvolo.

Hoping to make Puntarvolo angry, Carlo Buffone said to the others:

“By God’s blood, Puntarvolo looks like an image carved out of box, full of knots.”

“Box” is a kind of wood; it is similar to knotty pine.

Carlo Buffone continued:

“His face is, for all the world, like a Dutch purse, with the mouth downward; his beard’s the tassels, and he walks — let me see — as melancholy as one of the Master’s side in the Counter.

“Do you hear, Sir Puntar?”

Dutch purses had tassels.

Prisons had better quarters for those who could pay for them. One side of the prison contained the Knights’ ward, which was on the side of the Master: the prison Warden.

Puntarvolo’s grief showed in his face.

He said to Carlo Buffone, “Sir, I ask you no more, but instead I tell you to be silent, if you desire your peace and wish to avoid a fight with me.”

Carlo Buffone said, “Nay, but dear knight, understand (here are none but friends, and such as wish you well) that I would have you do this now: Skin your dog immediately (but in any case, keep the head), and stuff his skin well with straw, as you see these dead monsters at Bartholomew Fair —”

“I shall be sudden, I tell you,” Puntarvolo said.

When he took action, he would do so quickly.

Carlo Buffone continued:

“Or, if don’t you like that, sir, get a somewhat smaller dog and clap it into the skin.

“There’s a slave about the town here, a Jew, one Johan, or a fellow who makes wigs, who will glue it on artificially, it shall never be discerned; besides, it will be so much the warmer for the hound to travel in, you know —”

“Johan” is not a stereotypical Jewish name. In Ben Jonson’s society, Jews were stereotypically regarded as greedy, and a non-Jewish greedy person could be called a Jew.

A slave in this context is a working man whom Carlo Buffone looked down on.

Macilente said, “Sir Puntarvolo, by God’s death, how can you be so patient?”

Carlo Buffone continued:

“Or do this, sir:

“You may have, as you come through Germany, a familiar spirit that for little or nothing shall turn itself into the shape of your dog, or anything — what you will — for certain hours —”

A familiar spirit was an attendant spirit of a witch or demon. They often took the form of animals.

Puntarvolo drew his sword.

“God’s my life, knight, what do you mean?” Carlo Buffone said. “You’ll offer no violence, will you?”

Puntarvolo beat Carlo Buffone with the hilt.

“Stop! Stop!” Carlo Buffone cried.

“By God’s blood, you slave, you bandog, you!” Puntarvolo said.

A bandog is a ferocious dog.

A drawer arrived, carrying a candle and sealing wax.

“As you love God, stop the enraged knight, gentlemen!” Carlo Buffone said.

“By my knighthood, he who tries to rescue Carlo, dies,” Puntarvolo said.

He then ordered, “Drawer, leave.”

He did not want unnecessary witnesses.

The drawer exited.

“Murder! Murder! Murder!” Carlo Buffone yelled.

The drawer went to summon a constable.

“Aye, are you howling, you wolf?” Puntarvolo said to him.

He then said to the others, “Gentlemen, as you value your lives, allow no man to enter until my revenge is completely done.”

He then said, “Sirrah Buffone, lie down. Make no exclamations, but lie down.”

Carlo Buffone tried to leave, but Puntarvolo threatened him: “Down, you cur, or I will make thy blood flow on my rapier hilts!”

“Sweet knight, hold in thy fury, and, before God, I’ll honor thee more than the Turk does Mahomet,” Carlo Buffone begged.

“Down, I say!” Puntarvolo said.

Carlo Buffone lay on the table.

Knocking sounded on the door.

Puntarvolo called, “Who’s there?”

From outside the door, a constable yelled, “Here’s the constable! Open the doors!”

Carlo Buffone began, “Good Macilente —”

Puntarvolo interrupted and said:

“Open no door! If the Adelantado — Governor — of the Spanish Netherlands were here, he should not enter.

“Proceed.

“Help me with the light, gentlemen.”

He melted the wax as the knocking continued.

As he melted the wax, he said, “You knock in vain, sir officer.”

Carlo said to Macilente, “*Et tu, Brute*.”

These were Julius Caesar’s words to a man whom he thought was his friend — Brutus — but who helped assassinate him: “You, too, Brutus?”

Macilente was the man who had encouraged Carlo Buffone to irritate Puntarvolo. He had even promised to be Carlo’s second, aka assistant, in a fight. Now Macilente was helping Puntarvolo to punish Carlo.

Puntarvolo threatened, “Sirrah, close your lips, or I will drop the melted wax in thine eyes, by heaven.”

“Oh! Oh!” Carlo Buffone cried as the melted wax fell onto his mustache and beard and sealed his lips until he was unable to speak or cry, “Oh! Oh!”

The constable yelled outside the door, “Open the door, or I will break it open!”

Macilente called, “Nay, good constable, have patience a little, you shall come in very soon; we have almost done.”

Puntarvolo said to Carlo Buffone, “So, now, are you out of your humor, sir?”

He then said, “Make your escape, gentlemen.”

Puntarvolo, Macilente, and Sogliardo all drew their weapons and, leaving Carlo Buffone behind, exited. Fungoso hid under the table.

Fastidious Brisk began to exit, but he was behind the others.

The constable entered with some other police officers, and they stopped Fastidious Brisk.

“Lay hold upon this gallant, and pursue the rest,” the constable ordered.

“Lay hold on me, sir?” Fastidious Brisk said. “For what?”

“By the Virgin Mary, for your riot here, sir, with the rest of your companions,” the constable said.

“My riot!” Fastidious Brisk said. “As God’s my judge, take heed what you do.”

He then asked, “Carlo, did I offer any violence?”

Knowing that Carlo Buffone’s lips were sealed shut with wax, the constable said, “Oh, sir, you see he is not in a position to answer you, and that makes you so peremptory and obstinate.”

Fastidious Brisk was wasting time and trying to avoid arrest by asking Carlo Buffone a question.

"Peremptory and obstinate?" Fastidious Brisk said. "By God's life! I appeal to the drawers if I did him any hard measure."

George and the younger drawer entered the scene.

"They are all gone," George said. "There's none of them will be laid any hold on."

The constable said to Fastidious Brisk, "Well, sir, you are likely to be held responsible until the rest can be found out."

"By God's blood, I appeal to George here," Fastidious Brisk said.

"Tut, George was not here," the constable said.

He then said to the police officers about Fastidious Brisk, "Take him to the Counter, sirs."

The Counter was a jail.

The constable said to Carlo Buffone, "Come, sir, it is best that you get yourself medical treatment somewhere."

The Constable, police officers, Fastidious Brisk, and Carlo Buffone exited.

The two drawers remained behind.

George said, "Good Lord, that Master Carlo could not take heed, and knowing what a gentleman the knight is when he is angry!"

Carlo Buffone's excuse might be that he was drunk and that Macilente encouraged him to irritate Puntarvolo.

Puntarvolo is a gentleman, but he is a not-so-gentle man when he is angry.

"A pox on them," the drawer said. "They have left all the food on our hands! I wish that they were choked with it as far as I'm concerned!"

No one had paid the bill for the food.

Macilente returned and said, "What, are they gone, sirs?"

"Oh, here's Master Macilente," George said.

Noticing Fungoso under the table, Macilente said, "Sirrah George, do you see that concealment there? That napkin under the table?"

George looked under the table and said, "God's so, it's Signor Fungoso!"

Macilente said, "He's a good pawn for the reckoning — to make responsible for paying the bill. Be sure you keep him here, and don't let him go away until I come again, even if he offers to discharge and pay the entire bill. I'll return soon."

He exited.

George said to the other server, "Sirrah, we have a pawn for the reckoning."

"Who?" the drawer asked. "Macilente?"

"No, look under the table," George said.

Macilente and the two drawers had been talking quietly enough that Fungoso had not heard them.

Fungoso said to himself, "I hope that all is quiet now. If I can get away from this street, I don't care about anything else."

He looked out from under the table and asked, "Masters, please tell me, has the constable gone?"

In this usage, "masters" meant "my fine fellows."

"What!" George said, pretending to just become aware of Fungoso's presence. "Master Fungoso!"

"Wasn't it a good trick to hide under the table? Wasn't it good of me, sirs?" Fungoso asked.

"Yes, indeed," George said. "Have you been here all this while?"

“Oh, God, aye,” Fungoso said. “Good sirs, look and see if the coast is clear. I’d like to be going.”

“All’s clear, sir, except the reckoning, and that you must clear and pay before you go, I assure you,” George said.

“I pay?” Fungoso said. “By God’s light, I ate not a bit since I came into the house yet.”

“Why, you may eat when you please, sir,” the drawer said. “All the food that was ordered is all ready below in the kitchen.”

“Ordered?” Fungoso said. “Not by me, I hope?”

“By you, sir?” George said. “I don’t know that, but it was for you and your company, I am sure.”

“My company?” Fungoso said. “By God’s eyelid, I was an invited guest, so I was.”

“Indeed, we have nothing to do with that, sir,” the drawer said. “They’re all gone but you, and we must be paid, that’s the short and the long of it — that’s the way it is.”

Fungoso said, “Nay, if you will grow to extremities, my masters, then I wish this pot, cup, and all were in my belly, if I have a cross — a small coin — about me.”

Fungoso was in extremities: He was broke.

“What, and have such apparel?” George said.

“Apparel” means clothing, but “appareil” was a legal word for debt.

George continued, “Do not say so, signor, for that mightily discredits your clothes.”

“By Jesus, the tailor had all my money this morning, and yet I must be obliged to alter my suit, too,” Fungoso said.

He needed to update his suit of clothing once again to try to keep up with the latest fashion.

He continued, “Good sirs, let me go; it is Friday night, a fast day, and, in good truth, I have no stomach in the world to eat anything — I am not hungry.”

“That doesn’t matter, as long as you pay, sir,” the drawer said.

“Pay?” Fungoso said. “By God’s light, with what conscience can you ask me to pay what I never drank for?”

“Yes, sir, I did see you drink once,” George said.

“By this cup, which is silver, but you did not,” Fungoso said. “You do me infinite wrong. I looked in the pot once indeed, but I did not drink.”

Silver is less valuable than gold; lies are less valuable than the truth.

“Well, sir, if you can satisfy my master, it shall be all one to us,” the drawer said.

Someone called George from another room.

George replied, “By and by!”

The actors exited.

Cordatus said to Mitis, “Don’t lose yourself now, signor. Get ahold of yourself.”

In other words, pay attention. The exciting conclusion comes on apace.

**— 5.4 —**

Macilente and Deliro walked on stage. The new location was Deliro’s house.

Macilente said, “Tut, sir, you did bear too bad an opinion of me in our earlier quarrel, but I will now make my friendship to you most transparent, in spite of any dust of suspicion that may be raised to dim it; and henceforth, since I see it is so against your humor, I will never labor to persuade you that your wife is not chaste and not loyal to you.”

“Why, I thank you, signor,” Deliro said. “But what’s that you tell me may concern my peace so much?”

Macilente said:

“Indeed, sir, it is this:

“Your wife’s brother, Signor Fungoso, being at supper tonight at a tavern with a group of gallants, there happened some division and disagreement among them, and he is left in pawn for the reckoning.

‘Now, if ever you look for a time when you shall have a happy occasion to do your wife some gracious and acceptable service, take hold of this opportunity, and immediately go and redeem him by paying the tavern bill; for being her brother, and his credit so amply engaged as now it is, when she shall hear — as he cannot himself behave otherwise, but he must out of need and embarrassment report it — that you came and offered yourself so kindly, and with that respect of his reputation, by God’s blood, the benefit that you gave to her brother cannot but make her dote on you and fall madly in love with you because of your goodwill toward her brother.”

“Now, by heaven, Macilente, I acknowledge myself exceedingly indebted to you by this kind offer of your friendship, and I am sorry to remember that I was ever so rude as to neglect a friend of your worth,” Deliro said.

He called, “Bring me shoes and a cloak there!”

He said to Macilente, “I would be going to bed if you had not come. What tavern is it?”

“The Mitre, sir,” Macilente replied.

“Oh,” Deliro said.

He called, “Why, Fido, my shoes!”

He then said, “In good faith, it cannot but please my wife exceedingly.”

Fallace and Fido entered the room. Fido was carrying Deliro’s shoes and cloak.

Fallace said to her husband, “Come, I marvel what piece of nightwork — what sexual adventure — you have in hand now, that you call for your cloak and your shoes.”

She pointed to Macilente and asked, “Is this man your pander?”

“Oh, sweet wife, speak lower,” Deliro said. “I would not he should hear thee for a world —”

“Hang him, rascal!” Fallace said. “I cannot abide him for his treachery, with his wild bristly beard there. To where are you going now with him?”

“No ‘whither with him,’ dear wife,” Deliro said. “I go alone to a place from whence I will return instantly.”

He whispered to Macilente, “Good Macilente, don’t tell her where I am going and what I am doing by any means; it may come so much the more accepted the less it is expected. Invent some other answer. Don’t tell her the truth.”

He said out loud to his wife, Fallace, “I’ll come back immediately.”

Deliro and Fido exited.

Fallace called after her husband, “Nay, if I am not worthy to know where you are going, wait until I take knowledge of your coming back.”

“I hear you and understand you, Mistress Deliro,” Macilente said.

“So, sir, and what do you say?” Fallace asked.

“Indeed, lady, my intentions will not deserve this slight respect, when you shall know them,” Macilente said.

“Your intentions?” Fallace asked. “Why, what may your intentions be, for God’s sake?”

Macilente replied, “Truly, the time allows for no lengthy explanations, lady. Therefore know that this was merely a device of mine to remove your husband from here and bestow him securely, until, at a more convenient time, I might report to you a misfortune that has happened to Monsieur Brisk.”

Fallace looked worried.

Macilente continued:

“Nay, be comforted, sweet lady.

“This night, being at supper, a group of young gallants committed a riot, for the which only Monsieur Brisk was apprehended and carried to the Counter, where, if your husband and other creditors would just have knowledge of him, the poor gentleman would be ruined forever.”

The Counter was a city prison.

“I would feel terrible if that were to happen to him!” Fallace said.

“Now, therefore, if you can think upon any immediate means for his delivery from prison, do not forslow and delay it,” Macilente said. “A bribe to the officer who committed him will get him out of prison.”

“Oh, God, sir, he shall not lack for a bribe,” Fallace said. “Please, will you commend me to him — Fastidious Brisk — and say I’ll visit him soon?”

“No, lady, I shall do you better service in protracting your husband’s return, so that you may go with more safety,” Macilente said.

“In good truth, so you may,” Fallace said. “Farewell, good sir.”

Macilente exited.

Alone, Fallace said to herself, “Lord, how a woman may be mistaken in a man! I would have sworn upon all the testaments in the world that Macilente did not respect Master Brisk.”

She called, “Bring me my keys there, maid!”

She said to herself about Fastidious Brisk, “Alas, good gentleman! If all I have in this earthly world will pleasure him, it shall be at his service.”

Part of what she had in this earthly world was her body.

She exited.

Mitis said to Cordatus, “How Macilente sweats in this business, if you pay close attention to him!”

“Aye, you shall see the true picture of spite soon,” Cordatus said. “Here comes the pawn and his redeemer.”

## — 5.5 —

Deliro and Fungoso entered the scene. George the drawer followed them.

“Come, brother-in-law, don’t be discouraged because of this, man,” Deliro said. “What is bothering you?”

“No, truly, I am not discouraged,” Fungoso said. “But I assure you, brother-in-law, I have finished imitating any more gallants either in purse or apparel — spending and debt and clothing.

“But I shall act as shall become a gentleman for good carriage — honorable conduct and manners — and such.”

“You say well,” Deliro said.

He said to George, “This is all in the bill here, isn’t it?”

“Aye, sir,” George said.

“There’s your money,” Deliro said. “Count it.”

He then said to Fungoso, “And brother-in-law, I am glad I met with so good an occasion to show my love and respect to you.”

“I will endeavor to deserve it, in good truth, if I live,” Fungoso said.

“Is the amount of money correct?” Deliro asked George.

“Aye, sir, and I thank you,” George replied.

“Let me have a capon’s leg saved, now the reckoning is paid,” Fungoso said.

A capon is a castrated rooster.

“You shall, sir,” George said as he exited.

Macilente entered the scene and asked, “Where’s Signor Deliro?”

“Here I am, Macilente,” Deliro said.

Macilente whispered to him, “Listen, sir, have you dispatched this business?”

“Aye, by the Virgin Mary, I have,” Deliro said.

“Well, then, I can tell you the news,” Macilente said. “Brisk is in the Counter.”

“In the Counter?” Deliro asked.

“It is true, sir,” Macilente said. “He has been committed for the brawl here tonight. Now I would have you send your brother-in-law home before you, with the report of this your kindness done him to his sister, which will so pleasingly possess her, and out of his mouth, too, so that in the meantime you may slap your lawsuit on Brisk, and your wife — being in so happy a mood — cannot entertain it ill by any means.”

“That is very true,” Deliro said. “She cannot indeed, I think.”

“Think? Why, it’s past thought,” Macilente said. “You shall never have again the like opportunity, I assure you.”

“I will do it,” Deliro replied.

He then said to Fungoso, “Brother-in-law, I want you to go home before me — this gentleman and I have some private business — and tell my sweet wife I’ll come soon.”

“I will, brother-in-law,” Fungoso said.

Macilente said to Fungoso, “And signor, acquaint your sister with how liberally and out of his bounty your brother-in-law has treated you — do you see? He has made you a man of good reckoning (one who pays his bills); redeemed that which you never were possessed of (credit); gave you as gentlemanlike terms of repayment as might be; found no fault with your trying to keep up with the latest fashion but failing; nor has he found fault in you for anything.”

Fungoso had no credit at the Mitre Tavern, and probably little credit (so far) as a human being.

The terms of repayment were probably this: No repayment needed.

Deliro was a wealthy and generous man.

“Nay, I am out of those humors now,” Fungoso said.

“Well, if you are out of those humors, keep your distance, and don’t be made a shot-clog anymore,” Macilente said.

A shot-clog is a fool who is tolerated because he pays the tavern bill for all.

He then said to Deliro, “Come, signor, let’s make haste.”

The actors exited.

## — 5.6 —

Fastidious Brisk and Fallace talked together in the Counter prison.

“Oh, Master Fastidious, what a pity it is to see so sweet a man as you are, in so sour a place!” Fallace said.

She kissed him.

“As upon her lips, does she mean?” Cordatus asked.

What sour place? Her lips?

“Oh, this is to be imagined the Counter, perhaps?” Mitis said.

The Counter is another sour place.

“Indeed, fair lady, it is first the pleasure of the Fates, and next of the constable, to have it so,” Fastidious Brisk said, “but I am patient and indeed comforted and cheered the more in

your kind visitation."

A visitation is a social call.

"Nay, you shall be comforted in me more than this, if you please, sir," Fallace replied.

By "comforted in me," she meant "comforted by me," but readers may be forgiven if they thought she was making a sexual invitation.

She continued, "I sent you word by my brother, sir, that my husband wanted to arrest you this morning. I don't know whether you received it or not."

"No, believe it, sweet creature, your brother gave me no such information," Fastidious Brisk said.

"Oh, the Lord!" Fallace said.

"But has your husband any such purpose in his mind?" Fastidious Brisk asked. "Does he want to have me arrested?"

"Oh, God, Master Brisk, yes, and therefore be quickly discharged," Fallace said, "for if he would come with his actions upon you — Lord deliver you! — you will be in prison for one half-a-score years — ten years. He kept a poor man in Ludgate, once, for twelve years for sixteen shillings."

This seems unlikely, given what we have seen of Deliro's character, although debtors were kept in prison until either they paid their debt or their debt was forgiven.

"Where's your keeper?" Fallace said. "For God's love, call him, let him take a bribe and dispatch you. Lord, how my heart trembles! Here are no spies, are there?"

"No, sweet mistress," Fastidious Brisk said. "Why are you in this passion?"

Fallace answered:

"Oh, Christ, Master Fastidious, if you knew how I rebuked my husband today when he said he would arrest you, and how I railed at Macilente, the man who persuaded him to do it and who is the scholar there (and who, on my conscience, loves and respects you now), and what care I took to send you intelligence by my brother, and how I gave him four sovereigns — forty shillings — for his pains, and now, how I came running out here without a serving-man or serving-boy with me, as soon as I heard about it, you'd say I were in a passion indeed — your keeper, for God's sake!"

Respectable gentlewomen would never leave their homes without a chaperone.

A "keeper" could be 1) a jailor, or 2) a person who kept someone. E.g., a woman who kept a gigolo, or a man who kept a mistress.

Fallace continued:

"Oh, Master Brisk, as it is in John Lyly's *Euphues His England*:

"'*Hard is the choice, when one is compelled either by silence to die with grief, or by speaking to live with shame*.'"

She had chosen to speak out in defense of Fastidious Brisk.

He replied, "Fair lady, I understand you, and may this kiss assure you that, where adversity has, as it were, contracted, prosperity shall not —"

In other words: … where bad fortune has brought us together, good fortune shall not [separate us].

Deliro and Macilente entered the scene.

Fastidious Brisk said, "By God's light, your husband!"

"Oh, me!" Fallace said.

"Aye!" Deliro said. "Is it thus?"

"Why, how now, Signor Deliro? Has the wolf seen you? Ha? Has a Gorgon's head made marble out of you?" Macilente asked.

A superstition stated that when a wolf saw a man before the man saw the wolf, the man would be stricken dumb. (If I were to turn around and see a wolf looking at me, I would lose my power of speech — and maybe some body contents.)

In mythology, the sight of a Gorgon's head would turn a man to stone.

"May some planet strike me dead!" Deliro said.

Macilente said:

"Why, look, sir, I told you that you might have suspected this long before, had you pleased, and you might have saved this labor of astonishment now, and strong emotion, and such extremities as this frail lump of flesh is subject to.

"Nay, why don't you dote on Fallace now and make excuses for her behavior, signor? I think you should say it were some enchantment, *deceptio visus* — an illusion, or so, ha? If you could persuade yourself it were a dream now, it would be excellent.

"Indeed, try what you can do, signor. It may be possible that your imagination will be brought to it in time; there's nothing impossible."

"Sweet husband!" Fallace said.

"Sweet husband"? Fallace was out of her humor.

"Get out, lascivious strumpet!" Deliro said.

"Lascivious strumpet"? Deliro was out of his humor.

He exited.

Macilente said to Fallace:

"What! Did you see how ill that stale vein became him before, of 'sweet wife' and 'dear heart'? And are you fallen just into the same now, with 'sweet husband'?

"Away, follow him!

"Go, and keep your state — keep your dignity!

"What! Remember that you are a woman: Turn impudent. Don't give him the head, although you give him the horns.

"Away! Follow him!"

Giving her husband the head meant giving him his freedom.

Giving her husband the horns meant making him a cuckold.

Macilente was sarcastically advising Fallace not to admit she was wrong.

He continued:

"And yet I think you should take your leave of the *enfants-perdus* here, your forlorn hope."

*Enfants-perdus* [lost children] and "forlorn hope" are French and English military terms for a sentinel(s) who is (are) in a position where he (they) will probably not survive a battle. Here it applies to Fastidious Brisk, whose financial position is past hope.

Fallace exited.

Macilente then asked:

"How are you now, Monsieur Brisk? What! Friday at night? And in affliction, too?"

Religious people went meatless on Friday, and Fastidious Brisk had gone supperless at the Mitre. Also, religious people sorrowed as they repented their sins, and Fastidious Brisk was sorrowing in prison.

Macilente was sarcastically asking Fastidious Brisk if he had become religious.

He continued:

"And yet your *pulpamenta*? Your delicate morsels?"

*Pulpamenta* means finely seasoned meat. Fastidious Brisk's delicate morsel was Fallace, Deliro's wife. So maybe Fastidious Brisk was not becoming religious since he may still have his delicate morsel.

Macilente continued:

“I perceive that the erotic love of ladies and gentlewomen pursues you wheresoever you go, monsieur.”

Fastidious Brisk replied, “Now, in good faith, and as I am a gentleman, there could not have come a thing in this world to have distracted and distressed me more than the wrinkled — spoiled — fortunes of this poor dame.”

Macilente replied:

“Oh, yes, sir, I can tell you a thing that will distract and distress you much better, believe it.

“Signor Deliro has entered three actions against you, three actions, monsieur. By the Virgin Mary, one of them — I’ll put you in comfort — is only three thousand marks, and the other two some five thousand pounds together. Trifles, trifles.”

This was poor comfort. These debts were much more than Fastidious Brisk could pay.

“Oh, God, I am ruined!” Fastidious Brisk said.

Macilente replied:

“Nay, not altogether so, sir. The knight — Puntarvolo — must have his hundred pounds repaid; that’ll help add to your debt, too. And then six-score pounds for a diamond, you know where.”

Fastidious Brisk may have pawned the diamond. Or he may have bought a diamond on credit so he could lie and say that it was a gift from a female admirer.

Macilente continued:

“These are things that will weigh, monsieur; they will weigh.”

They will weigh him down with debt and sorrow.

“Oh, Jesus!” Fastidious Brisk said.

Macilente said:

“What! Do you sigh?

“This is what it is to kiss the hand of a countess, to have her coach sent for you, to hang poniards — small daggers — in ladies’ garters as favors, to wear bracelets of their hair, and for every one of these great favors to give some slight jewel of five hundred crowns or so.”

Fastidious Brisk paid for small feminine favors with great gifts.

Macilente continued:

“Why, it is nothing!

“Now, monsieur, you see the plague that treads upon the heels of your foppery.

“Well, go your ways in. Remove yourself to the two-penny ward quickly to save charges, and there set up your rest to spend Sir Puntar’s hundred pounds for him.”

At this point, all the money that Fastidious Brisk had was the hundred pounds he had gotten from Puntarvolo — one hundred pounds that was supposed to be returned to him because Puntarvolo’s dog had died and so Puntarvolo would not set out on his journey.

Macilente was advising Fastidious Brisk to spend the one hundred pounds on himself to make his stay in prison somewhat comfortable. Since he was likely to be there a long time, he ought to conserve money by going to the two-penny ward rather than a more expensive ward.

Macilente then said, “Away, good Pomander, go away!”

A pomander is literally a scent container. Figuratively, it is a perfumed courtier: Fastidious Brisk.

Fastidious Brisk exited.

An actor portraying Queen Elizabeth I entered the scene and walked across the stage.

Suddenly, against expectation and all the steel of Macilente’s malice, the very wonder of her presence struck Macilente to the earth, dumb and astonished. From there he rose.

Recovering his heart, Macilente expressed his passion – his strong emotion:

“Blessed, divine, unblemished, sacred, pure,

“Glorious, immortal, and indeed immense —
“Oh, that I had a world of attributes
“To lend or add to this high majesty!
“Never until now did [any] object greet mine [my] eyes
“With any light [enlightening] content, but in her graces
“All my malicious powers have lost their stings.
“Envy has fled my soul at sight of her,
“And she hath [has] chased all black thoughts from my bosom,
“Like as [Just as] the sun doth [does] darkness from the world.”

Queen Elizabeth I was sometimes compared to Astraea, the goddess of justice who exited from the Earth because of the worsening behavior of human beings who engaged in such vices as malicious envy.

The sight of Queen Elizabeth had driven Macilente’s malicious envy out of his mind.

Macilente next spoke of his former humor — his malicious envy — and compared it to a stream of sewage flowing into the Thames, which then diluted and drowned it:

“My stream of humor is run out of me;
“And as our city’s torrent, bent to infect
“The hallowed bowels of the silver Thames,
“Is checked by [the] strength and clearness of the river
“Until it has spent itself even at the shore,
“So in the ample and unmeasured flood
“Of her perfections are my [former malignant] passions drowned,
“And I have now a spirit as sweet and clear
“As the most rarefied and subtle air;
“With which, and with a heart as pure as fire,
“Yet humble as the earth, do I implore —”

He knelt: This was a prelude to his prayer:

“O heaven, that she, whose figure hath [has] effected
“This change in me may never suffer change
“In her admired and happy [fortunate] government!
“May still [always] this island be called Fortunate,
“And rugged Treason tremble at the sound
“When Fame [Reputation] shall speak it with an emphasis!
“Let foreign Policy [that is, the Policy of hostile countries, not England] be dull as lead,
“And pale Invasion come with half a heart
“When he but [just] looks upon her blessed soil;
“The throat of War be stopped within her land,
“And turtle-footed [turtledove-footed — that is, elegant and graceful] Peace dance fairy rings
“About her court, where never may there come
“Suspect [Suspicion] or danger, but all trust and safety.
“Let Flattery be dumb, and Envy blind
“In her dread presence; [may] Death himself admire her,
“And may her virtues make him to forget
“The use of his inevitable hand.
“Fly from her, Age. Sleep, Time, before her throne!
“Our strongest wall falls down when she is gone.”

The actor playing Queen Elizabeth exited.

The trumpets sounded, and the actor playing Macilente, no longer performing a role in the play within a play that had just finished, joined his friends: Mitis and Cordatus.

The actor who had played Macilente asked Mitis and Cordatus, “How are you now, sirs?” How did you like the play? Hasn’t it been tedious?”

“Nay, we have finished censuring now,” Cordatus said. “There will be no more critical commentary from us.”

“Yes, indeed,” Mitis said.

“Why?” the actor who had played Macilente asked.

Cordatus answered:

“By the Virgin Mary, because we’ll imitate your actors, and be out of our critical humors.

“Besides, here are those” — he pointed to the audience, including you, dear readers — “round about you, of more ability in censure than we, whose judgments can give it a more satisfying allowance of approval and applause; we’ll refer you to them.”

The actor who had played Macilente replied:

“Aye? Is it even so?”

He then said to you, the audience:

“Well, gentlemen [and gentlewomen], I should have gone in and returned to you as I was, Asper the playwright, at the first.

“But because the costume-change would have been somewhat long, and we are loath to draw your patience any farther, we’ll entreat you to imagine it.

“And now, so that you may see I will be out of humor for the sake of good company, I long only for your kind approbation, and, indeed, I am not at all as peremptory and obstinate as I was in the beginning of the play.

“By the Virgin Mary, I will not do as Plautus in his *Amphitryo*, for all this: *Summi Iovis causa, plaudite*. I will not beg a plaudit for God’s sake.”

The Latin meant: For the sake of great Jove, applaud.

Jove is Jupiter, Roman king of the gods.

The actor who had played Macilente continued:

“But if you, out of the bounty of your good liking, will bestow it, why, you may in time make lean Macilente as fat as Sir John Falstaff.”

In Ben Jonson’s society, lean people were thought to be envious and fat people were thought to be jovial.

The actors exited.

***

*Non ego ventosae plebis suffragia venor.*

The Latin, which is from Horace’s *Epistles* I.19.37, means:

“I am not hunting the votes of a fickle public.”

## NOTES

### — 1.1 —

“*Invidus suspirat, gemit, incutitque dentes,*

“*Sudat frigidus, intuens quod odit*.”

(1.1.34-35)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 1.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 278

Jonson scholar G.A. Wilkes translated the Latin:

> *The envious man sighs, groans, gnashes his teeth,*
>
> *Breaks into a cold sweat, contemplating what he hates.*

Wilkes also wrote that "*gemit* should be *fremit*" and that the epigram was by Caelius Firmianus Symposius.

Source of Above: Ben Jonson, *The Complete Plays of Ben Jonson*. Edited by G. A. Wilkes. Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1981-1982. Volume 1. P. 297.

**— 2.2 —**

*I do intend, this year of jubilee, to travel* […]

(2.2.276)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 1.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 310.

**JUBILEE DEFINITION**

> ***Francis announces new global jubilee, the Holy Year of Mercy***
>
> *Symbolically calling on the entire global Roman Catholic church to take up his papacy's central message of compassion and pardon, Pope Francis on Friday announced that he is convoking a jubilee year to be called the Holy Year of Mercy.*
>
> *[…]*
>
> *A jubilee year is a special year called by the church to receive blessing and pardon from God and remission of sins. The Catholic church has called jubilee years every 25 or 50 years since the year 1300 and has also called special jubilee years from time to time, known as extraordinary jubilee years.*
>
> *The last jubilee year was held in 2000 during the papacy of Pope John Paul II and was known as "the Great Jubilee." The last extraordinary jubilee year was held in 1983 to*

*celebrate 1,950 years since the death and resurrection of Jesus.*

*[Joshua J. McElwee is NCR Vatican correspondent. His email address is jmcelwee@ncronline.org. Follow him on Twitter: @joshjmac.]*

*Source of Above: Joshua J. McElwee, "Francis announces new global jubilee, the Holy Year of Mercy." National Catholic Reporter. 13 March 2015*

*https://www.ncronline.org/news/vatican/francis-announces-new-global-jubilee-holy-year-mercy*

**PLENARY INDULGENCE DEFINITION**

"What is a plenary indulgence?"

*VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Francis said he will grant a plenary indulgence to the faithful who watch or listen to his extraordinary blessing "urbi et orbi" (to the city and the world) at 6 p.m. Rome time March 27.*

*Special indulgences have also been granted to those suffering from COVID-19, their caregivers, friends and family and those who help them with their prayers.*

*But what is this ancient practice of offering indulgences through prayer and penance and what is needed to receive them?*

*An indulgence is not a quick ticket to heaven, as St. John Paul II once said; rather, it is an aid for the real conversion that leads to eternal happiness.*

*[…]*

*An indulgence, then, is the result of the abundance of God's mercy, which he offers to humanity through Jesus Christ and through the church, he said.*

*But this gift cannot be received automatically or simply by fulfilling a few exterior requirements nor can it be approached with a superficial attitude, St. John Paul said.*

*The reception of an indulgence depends on "our turning away from sin and our conversion to God," he said.*

*That is why there are several conditions for receiving an indulgence:*

*— A spirit detached from sin.*

*— Sacramental confession as soon as possible.*

*— Eucharistic communion as soon as possible.*

*— Prayer for the Holy Father's intentions.*

*— Being united spiritually through the media to the pope's special prayer and blessing on March 27.*

*[…]*

*The faithful can claim the indulgence for themselves or offer it on behalf of someone who has died.*

Source of Above: Carol Glatz, “What is a Plenary Indulgence?” Catholic News Service • Posted March 27, 2020

https://catholicphilly.com/2020/03/news/world-news/what-is-a-plenary-indulgence/

**— 1.3 —**

*‘St Swithin’s, the fifteenth day, variable weather, for the most*

*part, rain’ – good – ‘for the most part, rain’. Why, it should rain forty days*

*after now, more or less. It was a rule held afore I was able to hold a plough,*

*and yet here are two days, no rain.*

(1.3.30-33)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 1.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 288.

The below information comes from the article “St. Swithin’s Day” by the Editors of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*:

> *Swithin’s Day, also called St. Swithun’s Day, (**July 15**), a day on which, according to folklore, the weather for a subsequent period is dictated. In popular belief, if it rains on St. Swithin’s Day, it will rain for 40 days, but if it is fair, 40 days of fair weather will follow.*

Source of Above: Editors of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, “St. Swithin’s Day.” Britannica.com. Accessed 13Ddecember 2021

St. Swithin’s Day | weather folklore | Britannica

https://www.britannica.com/topic/Saint-Swithins-Day

The passage seems to indicate that the date of the play is July 15, but the letter by Fungoso in 3.2 indicates that the date is before Lent. See note on 3.2 below.

Possibly, Sordido means “Why, it should rain forty days after now [now = this date in the almanac], more or less.”

Much of *Every Man in His Humor* seems to take place in a day (assuming Fungoso’s tailor works very, very quickly and travel takes place very, very quickly) or, more likely, a few days, but the Sordido subplot seems to take place over weeks or months — long enough for a crop to grow.

**— 2.2 —**

*Faith, here be some slight favours of hers, sir, that do speak it,*

*she is: as this scarf, sir, or this ribbon in mine ear, or so.*

(2.2.241-242)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 1.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 309.

One definition of "ribbon" in the *Oxford English Dictionary* is this:

> *Anything that forms a narrow strip or that is suggestive of a ribbon; = riband n. 3a; spec. a strip of land, esp. a path or road.*

However, the first date for this usage is 1656.

Here is some information from Caroline Oraderio's article titled "Watch an audiologist vacuum a 'huge ribbon of skin' from someone's ear."

Oraderio, Caroline. "Watch an audiologist vacuum a 'huge ribbon of skin' from someone's ear."

- *A new video from an audiologist shows a "huge ribbon of skin" getting suctioned out of someone's ear.*
- *Later in the video, it's placed next to a ruler and measures 5 centimeters long.*
- *The audiologist who posted the video wrote that this type of skin shedding is uncommon, but not unheard of.*

Source of Above: Oraderio, Caroline. "Watch an audiologist vacuum a 'huge ribbon of skin' from someone's ear." Insider.com. 24 January 2018

https://www.insider.com/audiologist-removes-ribbon-of-skin-earwax-2018-1

This is the YouTube video:

**HUGE RIBBON OF SKIN AND EAR WAX REMOVED**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mpukw2Q_Ft4&t=11s

**— 2.3 —**

*Perfumèd gloves and delicate chains of amber*

*To keep the air in awe of her sweet nostrils.*

(2.3.93-94)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 1.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 316.

Here is some information about amber:

> *There are three things called "amber" associated with perfumery.*
>
> *The first is ambergris. It's produced in whale stomachs, possibly to protect them from hard sharp objects (squid beaks, for instance), hence the nickname "whale vomit", although "whale pearl" might be just as accurate. Fresh ambergris is a byproduct of the whaling industry, but considered unsuitable for use in perfume; the good stuff spends years in the ocean before finally washing up on shore. I haven't smelled the real thing, but the synthetics have a distinctive fresh-woody character with some resemblance to clary sage; the real thing is said to be smoother, more complex, and somewhat animalic.*
>
> *The second is mineral amber. This is fossilized tree sap. It's translucent and kind of an orange brown color, like honey; it is, I suspect, what the color "amber" refers to. Actually, this isn't used in perfumery at all; mineral amber has no smell unless it's heated (by burning, or working with power tools) and the smell is supposedly an unpleasant resinous or "burning plastic" smell. According to some sources on the internet, it's possible to extract an oil from the resin, but the smell is similar to when it burns.*
>
> *The third is perfume amber, which is often confused with mineral amber. Perfume amber isn't any kind of fossilized sap; it's a solid perfume, typically composed of labdanum, benzoin, and beeswax, with any number of other ingredients as the maker desires (patchouli, frankincense, and vanilla being probably the most common). The scent is heavy, resinous, and sweet, but not particularly like ambergris. It's also possible to extract an amber oil from the solid, or to construct an amber oil by using extracts of the resin ingredients.*
>
> *So when a scent says it has "amber" notes in it, which of these three do they mean? Unfortunately, there's no way to tell. Ambergris has a kind of legendary status, being known as a precious material that makes any perfume better but is too rare and expensive to use in modern commercial formulation … a kind of unattainable exotic luxury from the past. The word "amber" has an evocative, mysterious quality that makes it sound desirable even to people who don't know what it is. No perfume marketer would hesitate an instant to claim that something has "amber" or "ambergris" notes; their real stock in trade is genuine 100% Grade A bullshit, and they'll say anything, anything, to sell a bottle of juice. But since ambergris has its own word, I generally assume that when a perfume says it has amber in it, they mean the solid perfume kind … and I think most perfumes with "amber" in the name have the characteristic smell of perfume amber.*

Last edited: Jun 1, 2008

Source of Above: “What Does Amber Smell Like?” Base Notes. 22 February 2008.

https://basenotes.com/threads/what-does-amber-smell-like.206386/

**— 2.3. —**

*If thou wilt eat of the spirit of gold, and drink dissolved pearl*

*in wine, ’tis for thee.*

(2.3. 297-298)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 1.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 324.

Here is some information about Cleopatra drinking a pearl dissolved in wine:

> *Among the most colorful tales in the pearl world is that of a legendary banquet, where Cleopatra bet Marc Antony that she could host the most expensive dinner in history. According to author and noted pearl expert Fred Ward, in his book, Pearls, the queen hoped to impress Antony and the Roman Empire he represented with the extent of Egypt’s wealth. In her clever attempt to do so, she crushed one large pearl from a pair of earrings and dissolved it in a goblet of wine (or vinegar), before gulping it down.*
>
> *“Astonished, Antony declined his dinner—the matching pearl—and admitted she had won,” Ward writes.*
>
> *The famous story of Cleopatra’s pearls is told by Pliny the Elder in his Natural History. Pliny, often called the world’s first gemologist, estimated the two pearls’ worth at 60 million sestertii, or roughly $28.5 million in today’s dollars.*
>
> *Cleopatra was often seen as the epitome of Luxuria, a medieval vice pictured as a bejewelled naked women, the embodiment of extravagant lust. It was her association with pearls which was the real reason for her early notoriety as Luxuria.*
>
> *As Pliny related,*
>
> *“The first place and the topmost rank among all things of price is held by pearls … Their whole value lies in their brilliance, size, roundness, smoothness and weight … There have been two pearls that were the largest in the whole of history; both were owned by Cleopatra … they had come down to her through the hands of the kings of the East.”*

Source of Above: “The real story about Cleopatra’s banquet and that pearl. Grants Jewelry. 9 June 2016 < https://www.grantsjewelry.com/the-real-story-about-cleopatras-banquet-and-that-

pearl/ >.

**— 3.1 —**

The sample Latin mottos come from the site *Welcome to Armorial Gold: The World's Largest Provider of Heraldic Art*:

https://www.heraldryclipart.com

**— 3.2 —**

*Desiring you first to send me your blessing, which is more worth to*

*me than gold or silver, I desire you likewise to be advertised that this Shrovetide,*

(3.2.22-23)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 1.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 347.

The following information is from the Wikipedia article titled "Ash Wednesday":

> *Ash Wednesday is exactly 46 days before Easter Sunday, a moveable feast based on the cycles of the moon. The earliest date Ash Wednesday can occur is 4 February (which is only possible during a common year with Easter on 22 March), which happened in 1598, 1693, 1761 and 1818 and will next occur in 2285.[113] The latest date Ash Wednesday can occur is 10 March (when Easter Day falls on 25 April) which occurred in 1666, 1734, 1886 and 1943 and will next occur in 2038.*

Source: "Ash Wednesday." Wikipedia. Accessed 21 November 2021

< https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ash_Wednesday#Dates >.

**— 3.3 —**

*'Sheart, all her jests are of*

*the stamp March was fifteen years ago.*

(3.3.119-120)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 1.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 357.

Possibly, Macilente is merely saying that Saviolina's jokes are old, but *Every Man Out of His Humor* was first performed in 1599, and in March 1894 Sir Francis Throckmorton was under arrest for high treason against Queen Elizabeth I and England, and also in March 1894 Balthasar Gérard was plotting to assassinate William of Orange. So possibly Macilente was also saying that Saviolinia's jokes came from a time when jokes ought not to be made.

The information below comes the Wikipedia article on "Throckmorton Plot":

> *The 1583* ***Throckmorton Plot*** *was one of a series of attempts by English Roman Catholics to depose Elizabeth I of England and replace her with Mary, Queen of Scots, then held under house arrest in England.[1]*
>
> *The plot is named after the key conspirator, Sir Francis Throckmorton, cousin of Bess Throckmorton, lady in waiting to Queen Elizabeth. Francis was arrested in November 1583 and executed in July 1584.*

Source of Above: "Bond of Association." Wikipedia. Accessed 11 December 2021.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bond_of_Association

Source of Below: "Catholics and Queen Elizabeth."

> *In 1584 William of Orange, the leader of the Dutch Protestants was murdered by a Catholic. Parliament responded by passing the* ***Bond of Association****. This stated that if Elizabeth was murdered, Parliament would make sure that the murderers were punished along with anyone who had benefitted from Elizabeth's death.*
>
> …
>
> 1583 — The Throckmorton Plot
>
> *A young Catholic man, Francis Throckmorton, organised a plan for a French army to invade England and replace Elizabeth with Mary, Queen of Scots, paid for by the Pope and King Philip II of Spain.*

Source of Above: Catholics and Queen Elizabeth." GCSE OCR B. Accessed 11 December 2021.

https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/z324mnb/revision/2

The information below comes the Wikipedia article on "Throckmorton Plot":

> *The document obliged all signatories to execute any person that:*
>
> • *attempted to usurp the throne*
>
> • *successfully usurped the throne*
>
> • *made an attempt on Elizabeth's life*
>
> • *successfully assassinated Elizabeth*
>
> *In the last case, the document also made it obligatory for the signatories to hunt down the killer.*

Source of Above: "Bond of Association." Wikipedia. Accessed 11 December 2021.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Throckmorton_Plot

**— 5.3 —**

"*O, servetur ad imum, qualis ab incepto processerit, et sibi constet*."

(5.3123)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 1.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 403.

This is C. Smart's translation:

> *such as it set out at the beginning, and be consistent with itself.*

The Latin is from Horace, *Ars Poetica* 126-127.

Source of translation: Horace. *The Works of Horace*. C. Smart. Theodore Alois Buckley. New York. Harper & Brothers. 1863.

http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0065%3Acard%3D125

# Appendix A: About the Author

It was a dark and stormy night. Suddenly a cry rang out, and on a hot summer night in 1954, Josephine, wife of Carl Bruce, gave birth to a boy — me. Unfortunately, this young married couple allowed Reuben Saturday, Josephine's brother, to name their first-born. Reuben, aka "The Joker," decided that Bruce was a nice name, so he decided to name me Bruce Bruce. I have gone by my middle name — David — ever since.

Being named Bruce David Bruce hasn't been all bad. Bank tellers remember me very quickly, so I don't often have to show an ID. It can be fun in charades, also. When I was a counselor as a teenager at Camp Echoing Hills in Warsaw, Ohio, a fellow counselor gave the signs for "sounds like" and "two words," then she pointed to a bruise on her leg twice. Bruise Bruise? Oh yeah, Bruce Bruce is the answer!

Uncle Reuben, by the way, gave me a haircut when I was in kindergarten. He cut my hair short and shaved a small bald spot on the back of my head. My mother wouldn't let me go to school until the bald spot grew out again.

Of all my brothers and sisters (six in all), I am the only transplant to Athens, Ohio. I was born in Newark, Ohio, and have lived all around Southeastern Ohio. However, I moved to Athens to go to Ohio University and have never left.

At Ohio U, I never could make up my mind whether to major in English or Philosophy, so I got a bachelor's degree with a double major in both areas, then I added a Master of Arts degree in English and a Master of Arts degree in Philosophy. Yes, I have my MAMA degree.

Currently, and for a long time to come (I eat fruits and veggies), I am spending my retirement writing books such as *Nadia Comaneci: Perfect 10*, *The Funniest People in Dance*, *Homer's* Iliad: *A Retelling in Prose*, and *William Shakespeare's* Othello: *A Retelling in Prose.*

By the way, my sister Brenda Kennedy writes romances such as *A New Beginning* and *Shattered Dreams*.

# Appendix B: Some Books by David Bruce

**Retellings of a Classic Work of Literature**

Arden of Faversham*: A Retelling*

*Ben Jonson's* The Alchemist: *A Retelling*

*Ben Jonson's* The Arraignment, or Poetaster: *A Retelling*

*Ben Jonson's* Bartholomew Fair: *A Retelling*

*Ben Jonson's* The Case is Altered: *A Retelling*

*Ben Jonson's* Catiline's Conspiracy: *A Retelling*

*Ben Jonson's* The Devil is an Ass: *A Retelling*

*Ben Jonson's* Epicene: *A Retelling*

*Ben Jonson's* Every Man in His Humor: *A Retelling*

*Ben Jonson's* Every Man Out of His Humor: *A Retelling*

*Ben Jonson's* The Fountain of Self-Love, or Cynthia's Revels: *A Retelling*

*Ben Jonson's* The Magnetic Lady, or Humors Reconciled: *A Retelling*

*Ben Jonson's* The New Inn, or The Light Heart: *A Retelling*

*Ben Jonson's* Sejanus' Fall: *A Retelling*

*Ben Jonson's* The Staple of News: *A Retelling*

*Ben Jonson's* A Tale of a Tub: *A Retelling*

*Ben Jonson's* Volpone, or the Fox: *A Retelling*

*Christopher Marlowe's Complete Plays: Retellings*

*Christopher Marlowe's* Dido, Queen of Carthage: *A Retelling*

*Christopher Marlowe's* Doctor Faustus: *Retellings of the 1604 A-Text and of the 1616 B-Text*

*Christopher Marlowe's* Edward II: *A Retelling*

*Christopher Marlowe's* The Massacre at Paris: *A Retelling*

*Christopher Marlowe's* The Rich Jew of Malta: *A Retelling*

*Christopher Marlowe's* Tamburlaine, Parts 1 and 2: *Retellings*

*Dante's* Divine Comedy: *A Retelling in Prose*

*Dante's* Inferno: *A Retelling in Prose*

*Dante's* Purgatory: *A Retelling in Prose*

*Dante's* Paradise: *A Retelling in Prose*

The Famous Victories of Henry V: *A Retelling*

*From the* Iliad *to the* Odyssey*: A Retelling in Prose of Quintus of Smyrna's* Posthomerica

*George Chapman, Ben Jonson, and John Marston's* Eastward Ho! *A Retelling*

*George Peele's* The Arraignment of Paris: *A Retelling*

*George Peele's* The Battle of Alcazar: *A Retelling*

*George Peele's* David and Bathsheba, and the Tragedy of Absalom: *A Retelling*

*George Peele's* Edward I: *A Retelling*

*George Peele's* The Old Wives' Tale: *A Retelling*

George-a-Greene: *A Retelling*

The History of King Leir: *A Retelling*

*Homer's* Iliad: *A Retelling in Prose*

*Homer's* Odyssey: *A Retelling in Prose*

*J.W. Gent.'s* The Valiant Scot: *A Retelling*

*Jason and the Argonauts: A Retelling in Prose of Apollonius of Rhodes'* Argonautica

*John Ford: Eight Plays Translated into Modern English*

*John Ford's* The Broken Heart: *A Retelling*

*John Ford's* The Fancies, Chaste and Noble: *A Retelling*

*John Ford's* The Lady's Trial: *A Retelling*

*John Ford's* The Lover's Melancholy: *A Retelling*

*John Ford's* Love's Sacrifice: *A Retelling*

*John Ford's* Perkin Warbeck: *A Retelling*

*John Ford's* The Queen: *A Retelling*

*John Ford's* 'Tis Pity She's a Whore: *A Retelling*

*John Lyly's* Campaspe: *A Retelling*

*John Lyly's* Endymion, The Man in the Moon: *A Retelling*

*John Lyly's* Galatea: *A Retelling*

*John Lyly's* Love's Metamorphosis: *A Retelling*

*John Lyly's* Midas: *A Retelling*

*John Lyly's* Mother Bombie: *A Retelling*

*John Lyly's* Sappho and Phao: *A Retelling*

*John Lyly's* The Woman in the Moon: *A Retelling*

*John Webster's* The White Devil: *A Retelling*

King Edward III: *A Retelling*

Mankind: *A Medieval Morality Play* (A Retelling)

*Margaret Cavendish's* The Unnatural Tragedy: *A Retelling*

The Merry Devil of Edmonton: *A Retelling*

The Summoning of Everyman: *A Medieval Morality Play* (A Retelling)

*Robert Greene's* Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay: *A Retelling*

The Taming of a Shrew: *A Retelling*

*Tarlton's Jests: A Retelling*

*Thomas Middleton's* A Chaste Maid in Cheapside: *A Retelling*

*Thomas Middleton's* Women Beware Women: *A Retelling*

*Thomas Middleton and Thomas Dekker's* The Roaring Girl: *A Retelling*

*Thomas Middleton and William Rowley's* The Changeling: *A Retelling*

*The Trojan War and Its Aftermath: Four Ancient Epic Poems*

*Virgil's* Aeneid: *A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's 5 Late Romances: Retellings in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's 10 Histories: Retellings in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's 11 Tragedies: Retellings in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's 12 Comedies: Retellings in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's 38 Plays: Retellings in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's* 1 Henry IV, aka Henry IV, Part 1: *A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's* 2 Henry IV, aka Henry IV, Part 2: *A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's* 1 Henry VI, aka Henry VI, Part 1: *A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's* 2 Henry VI, aka Henry VI, Part 2: *A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's* 3 Henry VI, aka Henry VI, Part 3: *A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's* All's Well that Ends Well: *A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's* Antony and Cleopatra: *A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's* As You Like It: *A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's* The Comedy of Errors: *A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's* Coriolanus: *A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's* Cymbeline: *A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's* Hamlet: *A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's* Henry V: *A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's* Henry VIII: *A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's* Julius Caesar: *A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's* King John: *A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's* King Lear: *A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's* Love's Labor's Lost: *A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's* Macbeth: *A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's* Measure for Measure: *A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's* The Merchant of Venice: *A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's* The Merry Wives of Windsor: *A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's* A Midsummer Night's Dream: *A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's* Much Ado About Nothing: *A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's* Othello: *A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's* Pericles, Prince of Tyre: *A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's* Richard II: *A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's* Richard III: *A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's* Romeo and Juliet: *A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's* The Taming of the Shrew: *A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's* The Tempest: *A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's* Timon of Athens: *A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's* Titus Andronicus: *A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's* Troilus and Cressida: *A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's* Twelfth Night: *A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's* The Two Gentlemen of Verona: *A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's* The Two Noble Kinsmen: *A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's* The Winter's Tale: *A Retelling in Prose*