Happily, No

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HAPPLY, NO:

Signature Page

This thesis has been approved for the department of English for Connor Kerns.

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Director

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Dedication

"Time let me hail and climb
Golden in the heydays of his eyes...."

For Marybeth Kelly,
who taught me how to climb and write about those golden sights.
Preface

Writing a piece of drama involves marrying the technical to the creative. The former demands the experience of having sat in the theatre, acted, directed actors, interpreted a script, and written. Combining these well with creativity is a feat few have done greatly.

Shakespeare did. My own work was first conceived to be one of scholarship based on studying the Bard and his predecessor, Marlowe. I wrote an Elizabethan five-act comedy in the blank verse and prose language of the Elizabethan Renaissance, emulating Shakespeare in style, tone and mentality.

Asked to rewrite the play in modern language, with more stage directions and perhaps character modification, I translated it while at the same time condensing the characters and simplifying the plot. But the final result may be better viewed if its evolutionary phase is also presented, giving the reader an idea of the process involved.

The "madman" Lucio's blank verse soliloquies are unchanged from the original. So a comparison of dialogue in iambic pentameter between characters is in order here. In Act IV, Scene 1 Piroliss the young lover is wooing Suzanne; the country girl's love elevates her ability in language to the level of poetry:

Piroliss: Thou art my best.
Suzanne: And am I also fair?
Piroliss: Most fair.
Suzanne: Fair enough. And am I who you'd drone your life to?
Piroliss: The bee is not like us....

Lady Grey is, unlike Suzanne, highly educated, and she quibbles when she slips out of poetry and into prose in the second act, as she and her servant girl look at Duke Turn's sonnet:

Lady Grey: Indeed, that's sooth. Reading, I know not whether to laugh or eep for its compositor. But I descend.

This pun on "descend" also reveals something about the nature of Lady Grey's thinking: it is vertical, and she is very aware of her position on the upper end of the social ladder.

Some of the characters missing from the second draft were singers who, in classic comic tradition, were on hand to sing at the weddings at play's end:

Baritone: Come then, elf, for we must prepare voice and song.
Nasanna: What shall we practice, friends?
Alto: ....Let's haste, for I long to seal these
good lives in sweetness.
Nasanna:  Go before; I'll follow.

In terms of characters who underwent changes but remained in
the second draft, the Duke is more formal in his courtly speeches
and more irritated with Murcry, but the "seems" motif is still
present:

Duke:  Methought these clam'rous hounds signalled Hecate
        And her black morning; yet the day yellow
        Doth come minutely stronger, gaining greatness
        With quiet sun-shroud.  Where's our Malory?

Brisborne:  ...My lord, I think he's bathing.
        Duke:  What, bathing?
Brisborne:  Ay, my lord, and trying to wake.
        Murcry:  He needeth bath and sleep, true sleep.
        Duke:  No more.
        Well, this seems unusual.

But the overall spirit of the original is mostly here,
translated and compacted. The three couples still symbolize the
three kinds of love: physical love (Marianna and Copurno);
intellectual love (Lady Grey and Duke Turn); and spiritual love
(Suzanne and Piroliss). And because love is in the play, the reader
may yet find some learning and delight from it.
HAPPLY, NO

Cast

DUKE TURN, Duke of Corrigan
LORD MALORY, the DUKE's senior advisor
LORD EASTERMAN, MALORY's cousin, military advisor to the DUKE
PIROLISS, the DUKE's lost son
LUCIO, a madman
MURCRY, the clown and messenger to the DUKE
PETER JOHN, the young rebel leader
LADY GREY, LUCIO's mother
NASANNA EVE, an elf
SUZANNE, in love with PIROLISS
MARIANA, LADY GREY's serving girl

Setting: Corrigan, a ducal city in Rhildahl.

Act I, Scene 1

(Enter DUKE TURN with his advisors, LORD MALORY and LORD EASTERMAN)

    DUKE

Lords, I'm too weary to argue this subject with you. It has been twenty one years, Malory. My Duchess and my son. (Bitterly) My only son. You both know this well, and yet you ask why I have suddenly turned my desires to finding a wife. Do you know how lonely I've been without them?

    MALORY

My Duke, the tragedy at sea your family suffered always remains with Easterman and me; that is why only with great care have we touched the subject of your new intentions to love.

    EASTERMAN

Malory and I want to be direct, Duke Turn. With this desire to find a wife now, well--the truth is that sad memories might hinder your attempt at love. It seems strange--

    DUKE

Don't call it strange, Easterman. No more strange than fighting a battle, or than ordering shore leave to tested troops would be to you. It is reasonable. (As EASTERMAN objects) Don't argue with me. Now, I'm going to call my servant; I ordered a list to help me search for prospects, lords, despite your advice, which, and with thanks, I have taken to heart. Murcry! Murcry, I say!
EASTERMAN
My Duke, no one questions your reason. But time--

MALORY
Why does it have to be today that you find a wife? Is love like a sudden whim that has just this morning come upon you?

DUKE
Love is sudden, Malory. Happily sudden.

MALORY
And inconvenient, I must say. Remember, the civil unrest among the peasantry demands attention. There are issues stirring among the populace you need to taste.

DUKE
What, you want me to give up the single piece of happiness in my middling age because some farmers are discontent? Let them hunger a little. I'll woo when I desire. Mucry!

EASTERMAN
(Aside to MALORY)—He doesn't realize that Peter John's rebels numbers keep swelling. I'm afraid they might attempt something.—(To the DUKE) My Duke, I think you ought to consider the military reports I've made about the rebels.

DUKE
I have done so. But I ask you, both of you, to consider this: that Time has marked for all things a place beneath the black, rosy, or blue in this world. In the heavens are havened every purpose in life, every smallest small intent: the pebbly beach, the pointed forest and the heightless mountains all nurture nature. (Indicating his hand) This hand and Time's can both clutch and release, make divisions and unions. And it happens Time and I have marked today as a day for love.

MALORY
It seems true as gospel that lovers keep no clock, Easterman.

DUKE
Lovers know night as night, noon as noon and together enfold a universe of weary hours in their raptured arms. (Pause) Where is that villain? He is indeed a snail. (Enter MURCRY who hushes MALORY and EASTERNMAN so he can sneak up behind the DUKE) Mucry!

MURCRY
Here, my master. (The DUKE whirls, startled) You called?

DUKE
You fool. Where'd you come from?

MURCRY

Why, the— the north, master.

DUKE

What?

MURCRY

You asked, master, wither I came and so, master, I right answer your direction: I came from neither the west, to where the sun sinks, nor from the east, from whence the sun rises, nor from the south, where the whores live in a jolly community along the waterfront.

MALORY

You are an impudent fool, aren't you?

EASTERMAN

I think he'd prove fine in the front lines, eh Malory? Duke Turn, may I recruit your fool?

MURCRY

No, you may not.

EASTERMAN

What I'd give to see him in the barracks.

DUKE

Enough, gentlemen, I'd like to get to the point.

MALORY

(Aside to EASTERNAR) The fool loves to pun.

MURCRY

Point, sir? You said "get to" the point; we need travel no further than our genitals for that, master, for I think all of us here are men.

MALORY

(Giggling) This fool's humor grows more pointed the older he gets!

MURCRY

Lord Malory, isn't it better for a man to grow more pointed with age than to (indicates MALORY) continually decline?

EASTERMAN

The fool has scored!

MURCRY
(Aside) Many times.

MALORY
You are an honest fool, fool. I like you well.

MURCRY
How is your nagging wife, Easterman? It is weeks since I've seen her whining at you.

EASTERNMAN
(Subdued) She is ill. She is too sick to come out, so I'm attending to her at home. (Bravely) Well, it's all right; she makes life at the barracks like a sanctuary.

DUKE
That woman, Easterman, is a volcanic maw attached to feet, hair, stomach and two enormous breasts.

MURCRY
The Duke's a fool's comic!

DUKE
Let's get down to affairs. Have you made the list?

MURCRY
Did you say maid, master?

DUKE
Yes, made.

MURCRY
All maids.

DUKE
I cannot conceive you.

MURCRY
Scarce could my mother, and she had twice your size. I was a painful labor.

EASTERMAN
The knave is jesting out of tune.

MURCRY
But I would rather jest untuned, I think, than to reverb no original tone, Easterman. Your voice is nothing but a mate's nasal echo.

DUKE
Enough. Give me the list.
MURCRY

(Hesitating) Soon, sir.

DUKE

Now, boy.

MURCRY

My Duke, it is a very poor list, a short list (unrolls a lengthy paper), a dry list, an offensive...

DUKE

Give it over, snail. (Takes the list, begins reading from the top) What? Who is this Miss Belle Crow?

MURCRY

A sticky lady, my master, I assure you; her sweat is very much like glue.

DUKE

What are these checks here, these exclamation points here, these stars here?

MURCRY

(Impishly) My personal notation. Perhaps you should look farther down the list; the upper names are not of your...class, my Duke.

DUKE

Ah, yes. Nasanna Eve? Who's this? I've never met her in higher circles.

She's an elf.

MALORY

An elf, in the city?

EASTERMAN

That's strange. I've never seen an elf but have read much literary on them.

DUKE

Don't elves shun cities?

MALORY

Yes, Duke, they spurn city sides for the airy freshness of the woods. Some, I've heard, live below the ground in dwarvish caverns. But most are forest-dwellers, never seen among the cities men build.

EASTERMAN
And they have pointed ears.

I'd like to meet this girl.

She's too young for you, master. I just happened to meet her today--

How young?

A hundred years, by my guess.

How long do these folk live, then?

Six hundred years, often. That makes her not more than ten.

I must meet her. Something strange entwines my soul when I think of this elf.

My lord, the fool is right: this elf is too young, and she belongs to a different race.

It will make for discontent, my lord. History doesn't favor mulattos who are half one thing, half another.

Well, since you all scorn my fleeting fascination, that fascination grows. I say she must be won. I'm not so old that I cannot enjoy her vigor. Quick, Murcry, seek her out and tell her my interest. I'll give you a sonnet to deliver her when you return.

My master, I beg you to look at the rest of the...bottom part of this list with closer eye; look for a woman whose age better matches yours. Here, here is Lady Grey....

A fine woman, yes. But now I am enraptured with this elf; go seek her out, tell her my favor and my wish to deliver her a poem of love.
MURCRY
Time’s gone still. But its toll will bong again. I’ll go, I’ll go—with iron speed. (Exit MURCRY)

DUKE
Lords, I am happy, for the moment.

MALORY
Duke, your mind has always been keen and steady; don’t let this proud passion shake your stealthy vision. There are rebels camped outside the city with weapons sharp and real.

EASTERMAN
We have lived through many threats of war, friends. But civil war is now among us. We need to muster our strength, not chase fantastic creatures.

DUKE
(A bit pompously) I think this Peter John and his rebels are less of a problem than you think, lords. (Enter MURCRY)

MURCRY
Back, I’m back, and out of breath. Let me sit down and collect my wits.

DUKE
Well, fool?

MURCRY
(Sighs) Alas, my Duke, she doesn’t love you. She thinks men are ugly, and she said she dislikes your nose, to which I responded in your defense that it is a rather...sizeable nose for a man, but not too large. Then she criticized your clothes, which she says are gaudy, to which I replied for your sweet sake that they’re not so artless, but she remarked they were tailored in the poorest taste. Especially she professed dislike for these silly cloth balls about your sleeves. But mostly, as she confessed at length, she dislikes the way you treat your most loyal subjects. She chides you to love them better and then she might consider your love.

DUKE
Indeed.

MALORY
Elaborate, good fool, on this lengthy discourse.

EASTERMAN
No, let’s not invite his babble. My Duke, I feel bound to--
MURCRY
(Chortling) Lord Easterman compares himself to Prometheus! Sure the only fire he ever discovered was on his wife's breath.

EASTERMAN
(With increasing anger) Duke, if you should happen to get weary of this little man let me know, and I'll work some discipline into his veins and some sweat out of his muscles. He'll prove a miraculous soldier when I've trained him, so much so he'll forget how to use his tongue but never lack in action. He'll dig mud, train with shield and sword in the main yard, clean the sewers, scrub the barracks...stand the watch at the top of the stairs and when it's dark and he's alone there (moves into MURCRY) and there's nothing but pitch for light and smell for seeing he'll start depending on what he knows instead of incessantly babbling like a stupid hennyard cock! (MURCRY hides behind MALORY'S considerable girth.)

MALORY
Picturesque. "Rise" to it, fool.

DUKE
That's enough. Come, snail, I'll write a sonnet for you to deliver to my love.

MURCRY
I told you she won't love you!

DUKE
If I believed all you told me, fool, I'd be foolish indeed. Come. (Exit DUKE and MURCRY)

EASTERMAN
Idiotic knave!

MALORY
Calm down. Cousin, you let insignificant things throw you into a rage. Don't; play the stoic, Easterman: it so much better becomes a man.

My wife is waiting.

MALORY
What about our Duke? He isn't himself, and this love venture in the midst of rebellion is ridiculous. His grace is under pressure, sternly avoiding the smaller things which will turn large in time. Come with me; we'll make a plan and seek some solace for our ventures.
EASTERMAN

No, while you're at the bottle I'll see my wife and then get a report from my seargent.

MALORY

Brother, something must be done.

EASTERMAN

Yes. I know. I fear we are almost at war. (Exeunt)
Scene 2: The same.

(Enter SUZANNE and NASANNA with travelling gear)

SUZANNE
This is the place, Nasanna, where Piroliss appointed our meeting. How the city may have changed him these two years I'll soon know.

NASANNA
Two years, good Suzanne: you are very faithful.

SUZANNE
And he did love me when we were young, loved me as his best friend. We spent our never-parted childhood together; the fields saw us running with wind in our hair, or the grass-garmented earth felt us when we slept outside underneath the stars. And the hollyhocks shaded us from the morning sun. We'd wake up and eat berries before it got too warm. (Pause) We were the closest of friends, Nasanna: what better thing to base love on? He seemed to know my soul, and I his. We were seldom apart. As innocent children we slept and waked and sported together. He was my soulmate, my closest friend.

NASANNA
The city may have changed him.

SUZANNE
Good elf, men aren't like you, shunning city sides for the forests. The city isn't that different from the country. Or if it is, it won't stain Piroliss, not him!

NASANNA
But girl, now it's likely he eats rich food fit for the eye, not the belly. Now he probably drinks humorous good city wines and meets with society ladies--

SUZANNE
Nasanna! Don't torture me; there's no need to make me any more jealous than I already am. Besides, what do you know about humans anyway.

NASANNA
Collect yourself; here come some strangers. (Enter PIROLISS and LUCIO)

SUZANNE
Oh, it's him, it's him! I think. Yes!

PIROLISS
(Embracing SUZANNE modestly) My good friend Suzanne. Your sunny face hasn’t lost any of its brightness. (LUCIO wanders off in one of his contemplative moods, staring hard into space)

SUZANNE

It has been too long, my dear friend.

NASANNA

(Since SUZANNE is too preoccupied to introduce her) Nasanna Eve, a Wood Elf from the Elven Forest.

PIROLISS

(Captivated) An elf. You are well met, very well met.

SUZANNE

She is my...good friend, Piroliss. It has been lonely at home since you left.

PIROLISS

I must tell you both all about the city. But first...Lucio? This is my dear friend, Suzanne, whom I told you of, and this is her elven companion.

LUCIO

(Vaguely) Well. Well met.

PIROLISS

Let’s go over here a little. My friend has these moods occasionally: fate has doomed his soul to such fits of madness.

NASANNA

He looks ill.

SUZANNE

Yes, very distracted.

PIROLISS

I have seen him in darker tones. This looks fairly mild. A friend of Corrigan’s Duke Turn introduced me to this same Lucio, because we both share a love for love and love philosophizing about it.

NASANNA

He seems--

LUCIO

(He soliloquizes, as if alone on the stage)

O, grave, most still, so soft and somber e’en;
Like death woe rolls around a fun’ral cart
Upon the heath, beyond his moat. How calm,
Ah clouds, thou look'st below thy wispy realm
To men, and weed, and all the tiny rats
Who, running, widen the course and muddled track:
This earth, this ground. Arena, limed with sod,
Audience this event yet again,
A last and parting land—a final
Soothing prayer for the Living, fearful
Of ends. And mean dirt, assure the breathers
The fun'ral's not for them, and graves are tombs
For worms and not their souls. Put it gently.
Inter their bones with rev'rance. Ay, I know:
But Living men can feel; do it softly
For them. Softly. There.

PIROLISS
(Embarassed) Lucio, won't you be merry?

LUCIO
Not til after noon, my friend. These are your visitors?

PIROLISS
Yes, as I told you: Suzanne, and Nasanna the elf.

LUCIO
An elf! And in the city. I would speak with you—Oh, damn, here
comes my mother. (Enter LADY GREY and her serving girl, MARIANA,
who flirts with PIROLISS continually while SUZANNE gazes admiringly
at him, unaware of her rival. PIROLISS, however, studies LADY GREY)

LADY GREY
Good day to you all. (Takes LUCIO aside) Are you acting strangely,
son? Those poor people look completely distracted.

LUCIO
I'm behaving; they probably are shocked to see a middle-aged woman
so finely dressed.

LADY GREY
You haven't been behaving.

LUCIO
(Firmly) Yes, Mother, I have. Please, I can't be a child forever.
(Pause) Where are you going?

LADY GREY
We've just been to the tailor's and are going home now. Remember,
dinner will be on the table exactly at eight.

LUCIO
When hasn't it been? (Less harshly) I will come later. Good bye.

LADY GREY

Good bye. (To the others) Good day. Come, Mariana. (Pause) Mariana.

MARIANA

Yes, madam. (Exit LADY GREY and MARIANA)

LUCIO

The grey lady checking on her darker son. Oh, that it were spring.

PIROLISS

Your mother dresses so finely, and she is elegant....

NASANNA

(Sensing danger) Where will we stay, Piroliss? We'd like to put away our things.

PIROLISS

Of course, of course. To Thalia's, then.

LUCIO

I must take my leave of you.

PIROLISS

Meet us at Thalia's tavern, Lucio.

LUCIO

What time?

PIROLISS

Nine.

LUCIO

I will. Ladies, I beg you to watch him, for he is prone to love; it makes him lie. Look to him. (Exit LUCIO)

SUZANNE

He's strange!

PIROLISS

But very witty, I assure you.

SUZANNE

He often plucks at his chin, but he doesn't have a beard.

NASANNA

And his breath smells fearful.
SUZANNE
His boots don’t match, he’s pale, and his speech is very strange at times.

NASANNA
Besides, only a madman would speak in blank verse.

PIROLISS
I met this good Lucio last year, and together we’ve enjoyed the rapturous mood of learning together while pondering the poets on stone library steps or late hurrying through darkened alleys home: A whole year of talking through tankards and gulping the world’s philosophies. But most, I’ve discovered love here.

SUZANNE
(Longingly) What is love, Piroliss?

PIROLISS
(Surprised) Well, it’s...I...don’t think you’d understand.

NASANNA
(Aside) Can’t she see? She looks, but her looks are blind. (To PIROLISS)—Why don’t we start for the inn, whatever it’s called.

PIROLISS
Thalia’s is the name, Nasanna. (NASANNA catches PIROLISS looking at her feline body in admiration) Follow me. (NASANNA scowls)

SUZANNE
(Obliviously) I’ll follow you....(Exeunt)

Scene 3: Another part of the street, before LADY GREY’s apartment.

(Enter the DUKE and MURCRY)

DUKE
This is Lady Grey’s house!

MURCRY
I know, but here is where the elf is staying; she is an old friend of Lady Grey’s once-living husband.

DUKE
You’re certain?

MURCRY
(Pause) Yes.

**DUKE**

Here's the sonnet; give it to her, and tell her I...send my regards. I'll wait for you in my chamber.

**MURCry**

Yes, master.

**DUKE**

Do it quickly; I'm anxious to know her mind.

**MURCry**

Yes, master.

**DUKE**

Good.

**MURCry**

Yes. Master. (Exit DUKE. MURCry looks suspiciously at the house) Her mad son may be inside. If the Duke knew my real venture here he'd break my neck. (Withdraws another piece of paper) I masterfully reworked his poem, and it will stand for the other, addressed to a woman more suitable to my love-blind master's needs. Here, Lady Grey, read the Duke's surrogate voice of love. (Pause) Lady Grey seems a better suit than an unmortal elven girl. I thank Jupiter my mother taught me to write poetical. This verse is beastly! (He fastens his sonnet to the door; it falls. He picks out some ear wax and tries again. The letter holds. He turns quickly away) There's sticky mischief!

**LUCIO**

(From within) I won't stay out all night, Mother.

**MURCry**

Gods! The undotted die! (Exit MURCry)

**LADY GREY**

(Within) Do you have your cap and cloak?

**LUCIO**

(Enter LUCIO) Damn! Enough, already.

**LADY GREY**

(Within) I'll keep a lantern bright.

**LUCIO**

Good bye, good bye, good bye. (To himself) To Thalia's for the rumor of the tavern. I'll speak deeply with this elf. Farewell,
Mother: If you wait up you’ll wait late tonight, I promise you.
(Enter PIROLISS)

PIROLISS

My dear friend.

LUCIO

Why aren’t you at the tavern? It’s almost nine o’clock.

PIROLISS

(Covering) I came to get you, Lucio. How is your mother?

LUCIO

Learnedly abominable.

PIROLISS

Would you, that is, could you call her forth to me.

LUCIO

Never. Why, what’s in your foolish head, youth?

PIROLISS

Love, what else? I’ve transcended that momentary lust I had for the elf, and now I’m in love another way.

LUCIO

(Laughing incredulously) With my mother! Oh, fate save weird mankind! She is more than twice your age! She’s a nag with wrinkles, and she has wind for an hour or more after every meal—

PIROLISS

I love her mind. She has something about her....

LUCIO

You are madder than I to think love comes from the mind.

PIROLISS

We’ve had that argument twenty times already. Let’s not repeat it now. If you won’t assist me, I’ll call for her myself.

LUCIO

Do. I’ll watch.

PIROLISS

Despite our friendship, sir, I bid you not to interfere. (PIROLISS approaches a window) Dear Lady!

LUCIO
(Aside) Here's an intrigue: that's Mariana's room. The moon is down—he may not notice his mistake. Should I tell him?

PIROLISS

Dearest Lady!

LUCIO

(Aside) But of course, how could Piroliss be so foolish as to mistake my mother for a servant girl?

PIROLISS

Dearest Lady! (MARIANA appears and opens the window; PIROLISS doesn't realize who she is in the darkness) I am your gallant, madam, come to woo you for my wife. A thousand sighs compose my soul, all breathed for you.

LUCIO

(Aside) He deserves his doom.

MARIANA

Who are you, sir, so rudely appearing at my window...hm, window, professing love?

PIROLISS

Your lover. (The front door opens; PIROLISS hurriedly says as he exits with LUCIO:) I'll return again tonight! I promise! (The men exit as LADY GREY enters from the front door. MARIANA quickly closes her window before she is seen. LADY GRAY looks toward the window sound, shrugs, and closes the door. MARIANA re-opens her window)

MARIANA

It was Piroliss, handsome Piroliss! (Pause) Could he have made a mistake? Does he know what I'm made of? He's too noble for me, for my mind is plain. But he did call me a lady! Now I'll never get anything done tonight. (She squirms happily) Maybe he'll come back again. What a man! (She retreats)

Act II

Scene 1: The street

(Enter LORD MALORY and the DUKE separately)

MALORY
Good Duke Turn, a word with you. Now, now my lord, give away your solemn looks to younger fools. (The DUKE glares at him) Sorry. My lord, you have and will find me true, loyal and brief. So I ask you, cousin, to listen to my advice a moment.

Briefly.

DUKE

MALORY

Yes. It doesn't become a Duke of your... stature to court a young girl, especially an elf. She is a green forest child with no grey clouds to earn experience. Don't be a second Tithonus. Don't lie, unable to move, and decrepit look on an elven Aurora whose flirting dawn ever remains rose-fingered and young.

(Distracted) Where's that fool!

Fool, sir?

DUKE

MALORY

That turtle Murcry: I sent him off years ago.

(Aside)--Totally distracted with love. I better get a plan to labor with his madness.--My lord, adieu.

DUKE

Yes, yes, adieu.

MALORY

(Aside)--It's Friday, and my class is out. A bottle is welcome, and then with or without Easterman I must recover my head and think out a plan. It's time to convince ourselves this threat might become real. But first...(Exit MALORY)

DUKE

I think that all the world's in love but not a single one with a one who loves that one. If this world weren't round, its spinning path might not ravel such lunatic knots. I smell trouble. (Enter LUCIO) Hello, young Grey. What, are you still pregnant with sadness?

Not so much, not so much.

LUCIO

Have you seen my servant?

DUKE
LUCIO
Which one, the snail? No, Duke. I have been "carousing" at Thalia's and he isn't there. (LUCIO's mind drifts off)

DUKE
I'll keep seeking him out, and when I find him, beat him soundly. This humor doesn't tickle me, delaying, as it is, a lover's sennet. Good evening. (Exit DUKE)

LUCIO
(Soliloquizing) What thoughts, adrift, took course through babe-like minds
When first we who are old indented air
And left our mothers' wombs? In tearful language
We clarioned to space, and light. Freedom
Pressed soft against bonding our mothers' breast;
As lulled trav'lers, we dozed up-down
To skin-warm stomach breath, that rose and fell
Below us. Peach flesh of our mother,
O, Mother, milk and tender her kisses.
This ecstasy is us when wind high shrieks,
When waves tall roar against the cragged edge
And seagulls herald storms; we hear; we know
That tongue, those howling words which rage tameless.
One thought when knight or nun, when maid or clown
Climbs out and to his mother's side: this thought:
Now, freedom! liberty, air—I scream it!
A guild of nature bellers out man's foremost,
Unheeded-innocent thought: I am free.
The wave, and the wind, and the gull—they
Remind us of it. (Pause) My mind has stopped its cramped
And seasick teeming. Back to Thalia's fray,
To wine and smoke and the din ere day. (Exit Lucio)

Scene 3—Another part of the street
(Enter the DUKE, LORD EASTERMAN)

DUKE
Malory will meet us at the council chamber?

EASTERMAN
I haven't seen Malory, my Duke.

DUKE
No? Well, I'll send a servant after him. In half of half a day troubles blast into my ears. There's no rest for a Duke. Peter John threatens to attack in the morning you say?
EASTERNMAN

In the least eloquent of words.

DUKE

No doubt. It must be ten of the clock. And where's Murcry! I'll give him some lingering punishment.

EASTERNMAN

I could devise some suggestions for that.

DUKE

Yes, I'm sure you could. We'll have to call a general muster before daybreak. (Pause) The more that time and motion make their changes, the less I notice the difference between things. I wonder if Nasanna is safe tonight.

EASTERNMAN

Duke, I've never seen you so thoughtlessly affected as you are with this young-old elven girl.

DUKE

Oh, Easterman, until you call a girl nightly and forget your friends, you haven't loved. Until your brain wanders from calm study to picture a shaping girl, you haven't loved. Foolish Time can't keep a lover cold in winter, or confine his lust only to the spring; until your heart becomes a wounded knot, you haven't loved. Not winter, nor man unwinds confusions of love; only Time can. It is strange, though, that love's vigor 'turns to me in my age.

EASTERNMAN

I've felt those symptoms too, but many years since.

DUKE

Indeed. Well, come: with council ink we'll whet our styles. Time has grown too discontent and unruly to ignore any longer. Does Peter John's letter have any terms noted?

None realistic but blood.

DUKE

Well. To council. (Exeunt)

Scene 4--The street outside LADY GREY's apartment.

(Enter MARIANA from the house with a candle. She discovers the sonnet MURCRY left "stuck" to the door)
MARIANA

Madam! Madam, Madam!

LADY GREY

(Within) What, silly girl, what?

MARIANA

There’s a letter here, Lady Grey. It’s stuck to your door. (Enter LADY GREY from the house)

LADY GREY

(Removing the letter) What...ugh. A sonnet! (Reading it over)

Oh, how vulgar and foolish!

MARIANA

Read it, lady. Though it’s nothing, read it. Sonnets are about love.

LADY GREY

Sit with me, then. Hold the candle up. This will feed our laughter. (Reading)

"Dear girl"--That’s a foolish old try at flattery.
"Dear girl, I know not why, not why, not why
My heart hath lost its home and lives with thee.
Without thee, nymph, I die, I die, I die
In broken station made of misery."--Oh, Mariana, let me stop.

MARIANA

No, no, read on, lady.

LADY GREY

His meter is too exact. Reading it I don’t know whether to laugh or weep for its composer.

"Thy pointed ears"--What does that mean?--"with thorns their own shall ban
And blight my soul if that they listen not
To words of love from poor a noble man
To thou, of other kin so fair begot."--What does he mean?

MARIANA

Finish, finish.

LADY GREY

"To thee, like as a wimp’ring bark, I float
In peril: if thou break’st my mast with howl
Of despising, my sail will snap; my boat
Shall flounder; wrack I’ll wreck, on reefs afoul.
Do spurn me not sweet, gentle elven maid:
My homeless heart, my faring soul, dear Lady Grey, my body shade." Oh gods.

MARIANA
I like it.

LADY GREY
Well, his meter is flawlessly flawed; there isn't an uniambed syllable. What happened to the final line? He couldn't fix it in ten. I have an admirer who Englishes for his Beatrice without once missing a beat, except that last line with my name....

MARIANA
Who could it be? There's no signature.

LADY GREY
Probably a fool's. It is spice to my loneliness, though. (Forlorn) A cheer to my wintry days. (Pause) It's cold, cold down to my very bones. (LADY GREY exits to the house)

MARIANA
I'll be right in, madam. (To herself) Unlike her, gods, I don't care about my lover's mind, his blurry soul or his chivalry. To who should I pray? I'm not like the scholar who loves the brain, or a nun who loves the soul. I guarded my chastity for sixteen years for my husband; and now he's just a lump in our bed. That is, when he's here. Send me a lover, heavens, while the old man is away. I'll adore his face and beard if he'll hold me in his arms. Heavens, who do I pray to? Is it wise to dare hope for Piroliss?

LADY GREY
(Within) Mariana, I want my bath now.

MARIANA
Does winter bind up naughty Cupid? If not, let me find a lover. (Exit MARIANA)
ACT III
  Scene 1: The Council Chamber

(Enter DUKE TURN and LORD EASTERMAN)

EASTERMAN
We aren't the only kingdom to have the peasants rise against us.

DUKE
I don't think the rebel lists are long; the figures rumor multiplies. Some of my men report they have no generals and, of course, no fighting experience. I'm told they are unruly youths—light, ungoverned boys who have never tasted battle, tested death and made with blade that grim-charging toast.

EASTERMAN
My scouts agree. My men will rout them, Duke. Let me take care of Peter John's fools alone.

DUKE
No. Let's be judicious with our troops. At the very least, how many are there?

EASTERMAN
Two thousand or so, but disorganized--

DUKE
(Astonished) Two thousand! That is twice our army's size! No matter what Peter John's skill, he has too many soldiers. No, from our civil ranks we'll match the numbers, or else pawns may check both knight and king and after topple bishop, take castle and plant their darker banner here.

EASTERMAN
Who'll raise the militia from a general muster?

DUKE
Malory. I wish he were here. My mind's a blur.

EASTERMAN
You seem preoccupied.

DUKE
It is that unimprisonable elf that haunts my every thought. I've been obsessively reading about these elves. They never war, Easterman. Never. If they did, they'd march either to victory or to death, because any captured elves would die behind bars before timey ransom came to free them. They know what freedom is and can't survive without it. Yet despite my pride and my desire, on your
cousin Malory and your advice I've also reflected, and in changing mood I've restored some piece of reason. A dried mind often forgets its dew-drawn beginning. Lady Grey indeed seems a better suit to my age and function. But the specter of this unseen creature won't release my mind.

EASTERMAN

Lady Grey is a good choice.

DUKE

I wouldn't wed her, though, unless courtship cultivated love between us.

EASTERMAN

Age with age, man with woman, justice with mercy. How can you fail when everything seems so correct?

DUKE

"Seems," to put it poorly, is not "is," cousin. I do admire her scholarly mind, though. She studies so carefully from her widow-shuttered library.

EASTERMAN

Yes, many times I've passed late at night by that window and noticed a candle burning alone in this city.

DUKE

Yet, I'm worried. Lady Grey is too old to bear me a son. Nasanna is young enough. So, which do I choose? Right, dreamy happiness for me and a half-elf throne, or appropriate half-joy and no political guarantee for Corrigan?

EASTERMAN

Heirs can be chosen, Duke.

DUKE

Of course, but why not from my loins? (Grief-stricken) My son, my lost son! There was a time, Easterman, I could block these thoughts. (Pause) I feel old today.

EASTERMAN

(Groping for something to say) Where's that Malory?

DUKE

Drowning himself somewhere, no doubt. (Awkward laughter) Time has done us wrong; our order is all a paradox: youth has hot degrees only older and tried feelings can wisely direct. We lack youth in age, age in our youth.
Easterman

My wife was young once.

Duke

(Sympathetically) Easter, Easter. Well, Malory's not coming. The muster is your task until you can find the sponge and fix the responsibility to him.

Easterman

I'll find him. The only question is which tavern.

Duke

I must plan chiding war before Morning, with her colored strokes, newly clads earth's canvas with moistened lines, those contour lines that oppose us if we meet them unprepared. Position your troops. Let's meet again in the courtyard at dawn and compare strategies. (Pause) So, to homework. Remember the old saying well, Easterman: "The child we'll save for pining and for play;/ As men let's sleep and musky rise at day." (Exeunt)

Scene 2: Thalia's tavern

(Enter Murcry, Suzanne, Nasanna and Lucio, all a little bit tipsy)

Lucio

You are a plain-speaking man, Murcry.

Murcry

Sir, I try to be, and I try to forget all my duties when I can, and seem full of mirth. And you, sir, are no vicious madcap as I thought, no strange madcap, but a lively madcap. I absolutely like you.

Suzanne

The innkeeper said we could stay down here as long as we like?

Lucio

He did, the gentlemanly rogue, after I barbed him with a bribe.

Suzanne

I wonder where Piroliss is.

Murcry

I pray you, and me, dear, dear friend Lucio, and dearer yet being but dear but recently, I pray you, I say, so I say so you can hear, don't try to appear melancholy again, because before the night's up, we'll tickle your humor again.
SUZANNE

Nasanna, let's sing some more. You have a magical voice.

NASANNA

We should have sung together in the country. It would have spent many of those tedious hours of waiting.

MURCRY

Country-bred! Let's songs sing, or rather, as the verb-subject tells us, sing songs that breed nothing from city bread but only songs bedded from the farm life!

LUCIO

His plainness breaks down. Where's another wine bottle? (LUCIO looks and finds one, fills the glasses)

(Takes NASANNA aside) Elf, do you know this song? (MURCRY proceeds to sing a little to her)

LUCIO

(To SUZANNE) I'll wager the elf has heard any song he chooses; she knows them all.

SUZANNE

Yes, but...(NASANNA bursts into laughter)

You don't know that one?

MURCRY

NASANNA

Of course not! (Laughing) I don't even think I understood half of it.

LUCIO

I have a song we all might know. "Don Din Die"--who doesn't know that one, eh? Excellent! Let's sing it. Mucry, you take the tenor.

MURCRY

(In falsetto) "Take away life's bitter tasting."

You are perfect.

LUCIO

SUZANNE

I'll sing the lower, Nasanna.

NASANNA
Good.

LUCIO

We're prepared? Then, madrigal troupe, I'll begin. (They sing "Don Din Die")

Don, din die. Don, din die. Don, din die. Let the blackness lose its swell:
Take away life's bitter tasting
For the happy lover's hour
Silenced mourning's solemn bell,
And its wasting,
And its bower,
With its wasting, rueing knell.

Don, din die. Don, din die. Don, din die.
What so free and warmly bold
E'er would leave its happy hold?
E'er would seek to coldly lie
Beneath a bell toll's don din die?—
With its wasting, bitter cry
The fun'ral bell,
And its bower
With its wasting rueing knell.

Don, din die. Don, din die. Don, din die.
Gloom in joyuous lightness quell;
Gentle maid the spring is hasting,
And our youth too soon shall wour
Under age's tolling bell;
And its wasting,
And its bower,
With its wasting, rueing knell.
Let don, din die.

Well done!

NASANNA

I haven't sung that since....

SUZANNE

LUCIO

What a bawd you are, Murcry! That was perfect, everyone!

NASANNA

I didn't hear wrong notes or anything.

MURCRY

(Takes SUZANNE aside) Suzanne, do you know "Deli Dance?"
SUZANNE

Yes! Oh, but it's kind of...naughty.

MURCRY

So?

SUZANNE

Okay! (They sing "Dell Dance")

Was it spring, little lass,
   Do doe dee doe,
Wi' warm sun and green tickling grass,
   Do doe dee doe,
Was it spring, little lass, wi' green tickling grass
I'd take you and--
   Do doe dee doe.

But it's not, little ass,
   Do doe dee doe,
No hot sun and brown pricking grass,
   Do doe dee doe,
Was it spring, little ass, wi' brown pricking grass
I'd hit you and--
   Do doe dee doe.

LUCIO

(The next four speeches overlap) My guts--literally--will burst!

NASANNA

Good sport!

SUZANNE

I'm completely worn out now. What a song!

MURCRY

Where's the bottle, friends?

LUCIO

(LUCIO takes NASANNA aside) Nasanna, why is your face always sad?

NASANNA

Because I'm an elf, and elven faces look sad; but our souls are
   happy, sir.

Young, and old; happy, and sad.

NASANNA
And I've learned in my years that men cannot love what's long: can't love elves, or years--only briefest, barest things that are like them. The blind world perceives happiness when it sits in a drugged fancy, in bliss' tamper-tempered fog.

LUCIO

And sadness?

NASANNA

When sadness creeps to the world, it winds from the dark toward light, ever trying to escape gloom's jail; it squints through the vapor of happiness and past life's wearying smiles, seeking what lies beneath. It tries to discover; it is the world's revealing mood.

LUCIO

It is strange to see you laugh but at the same moment look so sad.

NASANNA

Elves are old, and we are young. We live six hundred years. First, our days are filled with happy, innocent youth; we laugh in those days. But we live youth for so much longer than you, until in a hundred years our faces are continual frowns. Age and youth are together for us, together until we're old with the time that spans enough years to measure many generations of men.

LUCIO

Six hundred years.

NASANNA

Most of our time we live as both old-and-young, as I am now. We sing to make a smile. We've grown tired, and lips forget how to grin. Our songs laugh because our faces can't.

LUCIO

But you don't seem happy deep inside.

NASANNA

I am. Elven tones appear happy, blind and magically mad. If you ever hear us in the oaks, the sounds of our songs will make you believe that. To my thoughts, happiness lives too much inside, sir. It should be let out. For our weary lives, only song releases and expresses. You can't imagine how wonderful brief mortality is because it is yours. The gods cast a spell so that we who think must long for what we don't possess: mankind's gift is the shortness of his life, sir.

LUCIO
Though I won't live for six hundred years, I still have happy things to do.

NASANNA

Yes. If I tell you, favor me by remembering these words from an elven song, Lucio.

LUCIO

Teach me; I'll remember.

NASANNA

"And happy men are blind and mad; Bliss-blind with joy But oh, so opium glad."

LUCIO

Yes, I comprehend. Yes, and I'll remember.

NASANNA

It may help you see.

MURCRY

There was another bottle here somewhere!

SUZANNE

You've had enough, Murcry.

MURCRY

No! More, more!

LUCIO

(Approaches the couple) No, friend.

MURCRY

No?

LUCIO

Quite.

MURCRY

All right. I wish my belly were as empty as my brain, then I could drink another two hours or so longer.

SUZANNE

(Aside to LUCIO as MURCRY entertains NASANNA with song fragments and capers) Sir, can I ask you a favor?

LUCIO

Ask.
SUZANNE
My accent when I speak sounds like the country. And, you must realize...I'm in love with a man. And I want to sound more educated.

LUCIO
A man? In love with a man? Him, who, who, who could it be?

SUZANNE
Well...Piroliss, sir.

LUCIO
(Teasingly) I hadn't noticed.

SUZANNE
(Unaware of his sarcasm) Well, I am. Will you instruct me a little?

LUCIO
Yes of course. Let's go into this quieter room, here. Murcry, behave. (Exit LUCIO and SUZANNE)

MURCRY
Hey, hey-o, hey! What's going on there?

NASANNA
(Typically worried about SUZANNE) Oh dear. (Enter MALORY)

MURCRY
I feel light. (Seeing MALORY) Devils, the aristocracy's here!

MALORY
Well, God help us, if it isn't the snail. And you must be the elf! Good evening, good evening, young lady. I saw a light still burning; it lured me in, for tomorrow I must be grim. You've found the elf, villain. (MALORY sits) So, did you deliver the note?

NASANNA
(Turning puzzled to MURCRY) Note?

MURCRY
(Desperately) Note?

MALORY
It's the curse of our noble blood that we have to say again what we've already said. The Duke of this fair city of Corrigan, elf, loves you. Thus after it chanced he saw you once, the last I heard, he seeks to marry you and get other dukes.
What! Murcry....

I...I...ay yay yay. Good elf, sweet, kind girl, understand my situation....I and Malory, and indeed so too did Easterman, and you would have, well, maybe not you, but most people, elves included, would have helped us advise him not to fall in love with you. But, his match struck, the wax heated, I had to seal or douse the enterprise. So...I delivered his love poem to someone else.

You garlic-breath leek!

Leak, leak! I think I'm going to wet my pants. Doesn't this inn have relief?

Stay for your doom, snail. Didn't you know that knaves make better with time, acquiring a sweet fermenting with lingering age? In them urine is like wine.

I wish dukes were elves. He is a good man?

Exceeding good, but that goes past the point, dear girl. Which is, you must not be misled.

You would prove heavy.

As heavy as a bladder.

Leak, leak!

Stay, fool. Good maid, the Duke's humor of love for you will fade like sleep roused by the sun. Don't worry: his human affections won't last long. Say, Murc, who has the poem, then?

You misunderstand my reactions.
My dear girl, the Duke is nearsighted...what, my own watery eyes seem to put tears in yours.

MURCRY
Don’t cry, elf. He’s a silly man--

NASANNA
(Deeply moved) I’ve never once been loved, and now I cannot love the one who loves me. That’s the cruelty of fiction: one reads the pages but doesn’t know them sensibly. I long to be a man.

MURCRY
Oh, no, and you won’t: (Walking around like a fop) We have too many men who walk like you.

MALORY
Be quiet and keep fermenting. (MURCRY moans and holds his lower abdomen. PIROLISS enters)

PIROLISS
Murcry. (Seeing MALORY) Good evening, lord.

MALORY
Lord Malory. (Extends hand)

PIROLISS
Piroliss.

MALORY
A drink?

PIROLISS
(Heartily) I’d not deny one, sir.

NASANNA
(Taking PIROLISS aside before he can drink his wine) Where have you been, Piroliss? (With heat) Suzanne came all this way to visit you and nearly every hour you disappear!

PIROLISS
I’m sorry; I’m distracted, Nasanna.

MALORY
(Wryly) Must be in love.

MURCRY
He is, and with the wrong lady!
What?—well, nothing's new in the world.

Where is Suzanne?

PIROLISS

With another man, fool. Where your eyes have been I can't say, but she constantly watches you and with little cause, if you ask me or even if you don't. By my calculations, you're not fit to lie with that sweet country wench!

Oh, be quiet, leak!

MURCRY

Where is Suzanne?

NASANNA

She craves Lucio's company for proper reasons--

MALORY

The madman's here? What a motley group! Bring Lucio forth, I want to ask his philosophic advice about stopping a battle. (MALORY drinks deeply)

PIROLISS

(Aside)—This knot of love worsens. I love Lucio's mother, and Lucio loves Suzanne? and Suzanne loves me? I'm sure this coil only lets out slack for more unhappy knots to be tied. Suzanne, fond little Suzanne, loves me? (Pause) Well, we always have gotten along well....

MALORY

(Walks over to PIROLISS while NASANNA calms MURCRY) Brooding about love, youth?

Do you know Suzanne?

PIROLISS

No, but I know the case well.

MALORY

She likes me?

PIROLISS

A hint; try further.

MALORY

I cannot love her. (With only part conviction) She's...she's too young.
Sir, don't love for the sake of age or its lack. Love isn't so easily found and approved. I married a woman, my very same age, for her looks. But she has bittered so much that my eyes pretend to see something else when I look at her. My cousin, Lord Easterman, also married wrong; now his big-breasted wife is nothing but a mated nag.

Your advice is true, for I've studied love. But I don't love Suzanne; I think I love Lady Grey, Lucio's mother.

(Flabbergasted) Old Lady Grey! Oh God save us all. (Enter Lucio and Suzanne; Lucio comes over to Malory and Piroliss; Suzanne timidly whispers with Nasanna as Murcry watches the women through bleary eyes)

Hello, Piroliss. And Lord Malory, good evening to you. (With a touch of sarcasm) So good to see you out of the court and in the tavern.

Yes, well. (Aside)--Dear God.

(With a hint of jealousy) Well, Lucio, how is Suzanne?

Fine. We were...talking.

(Advising Suzanne quietly at the other side of the room) Don't smile so much! Frown, and your scorn might create a fascination in him.

The city's strange. What world are we in that women have to do the wooing?

I think you should kick him in the--

Be quiet, Murcry. Here he comes. (Piroliss walks thoughtfully over toward Suzanne while Malory and Lucio confer)

I taught her a speech.
Ah?

MALORY

Watch the work.

LUCIO

PIROLISS

Suzanne, why are you frowning? I'm sorry I've been in and out, but something is disturbing me. I apologize.

SUZANNE

(Collects herself, starts her speech) Good sir...

MALORY

Watch, watch!

LUCIO

I will.

MALORY

SUZANNE

Good sir...

MALORY

A "good" start.

SUZANNE

Good sir. Often the mornings dew have broke. And often--it is often, isn't it?--I have often--I often have said to you that a funeral pyre of my hart have you made of my dear!--Hmm.--No more! I burn. The pine branches are dry. I weep. (Exit SUZANNE in great confusion, NASANNA following)

MALORY

Oh, damn. She changed it to work her own fall, Adam.

LUCIO

And it ended hard.

MALORY

PIROLISS

(Turning to the men in confusion) What was that?

MURCRY

Ha! More than you could understand, Peer-o-lissp!

MALORY

Leak, leak!

MURCRY

(Reminded, MURCRY readies to leave) I go!
(Outside) Muster, war, ho!

Who's that? (Enter EASTERMAN)

(Blocked) I don't go. Hello, Lord Easterman.

(Very loudly) Murcry, you villain!

(Calmly) Shut your cavernous mouth, Easterman. It's almost three in the morning.

Malory! So I found you at last.

How different different people measure success.

(Excited) Lucio, do you love Suzanne?

No, friend. She loves you.

She loves me!

(Writing on the muster list) Lucio, Malory, Murcry. (Muttering) This must be the last tavern I've searched in all Corrigan! (Indicating PIROLISS) And who is he?

(Ignoring EASTERMAN) Where'd they take her, Murcry?

I won't tell.

You rascal!

Let's not have any--
Rascal? You're the one who wears his virtue in his breeches!
(PIROLISS scowls at MUCRCRY)

LUCIO

(To EASTERMAN) His name is Piroliss, sir. (Enter NASANNA)

EASTERMAN

(Indicating NASANNA) So she's the sought after elf.

Good elf, where is she?

PIROLISS

Why?

NASANNA

I have amends to make.

You are not too fickle for that?

NASANNA

Why, no. At the least, I hope not. Do I seem so to you?

NASANNA

(Laughing) It is called being undirected, sir. And yes, you do seem so.

I do not know what I want.

NASANNA

That is certain.

MALORY

(Aside) Nor does the Duke. Love is a sickness...

Does she love me?

NASANNA

Deeply, as only a friend can love, as only a soul can love its mate.

PIROLISS

I have forgot all my childhood mirth, have buried it in study and worldly maturity.

NASANNA
I hope you've learned to be less fickle, though I imagine you look pale enough, lover. She's in the third neighbor apartment. (Pause) You should go to her, sir.

PIROLISS
I will! For I am coming to remember what time bid me forget.

EASTERNMAN
Now wait (Exit Piroliss) just a minute. This muster requires....Where'd he go?

MURCRY
Out the door, echo. Where's the wine? All this talk of love has made me light. (He drinks)

(To MURCRY) You fool! This extra addition will demand more fermenting; the more you fill, the longer the date.

MALORY
Malory! Attend: we have to find a hundred men by daybreak.

Find, we? Soon, soon.

EASTERNMAN
Lucio, arm yourself. The rebels have surrounded the city with fires and hungry glances.

LUCIO
Lord Easterman, the station which my family keeps withholds me from your militia. And these rebels, as you call them, are just a lackluster group of feeble farmers' sons, taxed out of their dinners. I hope you fare only as well as the gods bid, and that isn't well. You'll have no help from me.

EASTERNMAN
Foh. (Turns to MURCRY in is frustration) Murcry, stop drinking that wine; the Duke will need your legs.

MALORY
And, fool, your bare back to whip. (MALORY dozes)

MURCRY
(Aside)--All this love-talk has made me...wide awake. I'm too frustrated to stay around these men. I need a wench.--Ado, friends; I cannot stay any longer. I have extended this visit all I can. Ado!
EASTERMAN
Stop, knave! (Exit MURCRY) Murcry! Malory, wake up!

MALORY
God, the nightmare’s not moved; it’s still here as I fight between sleep and waking, between drunken sufferance and its mildewed corruption.

LUCIO
Well, Lord Malory, at least Piroliss doesn’t love the wrong woman now.

MALORY
Yes, but the Duke does. It isn’t helping my headache a bit. (MALORY dozes)

EASTERMAN
What a disaster this is! (NASANNA prepares to go)

LUCIO
Nasanna, will you tarry in our world of men? You have taught me something, and I could learn more. (In a strange tone) My vision’s changed.

NASANNA
No, dark. Like the ghost, morning summons me away. But I’ll stay at least long enough to discover Suzanne’s fortune. And prophesy yours. But for now, good night.

LUCIO
Farewell, sweetest friend. (NASANNA leaves. LUCIO slips into one of his ‘moods’ but with a lesser gravity)

EASTERMAN
Wait, lady! Gone. (Pause) Malory! Madmen and drunkards weigh the balance here. (Shaking MALORY) Malory, wake up!

MALORY
Easterman, you’re a cow. Oh, my head is thick with tongue.

EASTERMAN
We could have used that Piroliss youth; I’m going after him.

MALORY
No, no. He has a good excuse. Now let me see....God, it’s hard to think from inside a bottle. (Rising) Well, let’s just go, Easterman. I have some business to handle with these damn farm lads. Then we’ll straighten the muster. Good bye, Lucio. Lucio. Well, it’s ended with us. Come on, cousin.
EASTERMAN
This is strange. (Exit MALORY and EASTERMAN)

LUCIO
(Soliloquizing) And thus they madly go. When see them next?
For time breeds unfamiliarity
In us.
When older, shall youth stay with me? as book,
As shell, a seed? or best, as part of this
Corporal frame and its subtler yet
Removed center? There's other matter
For youth than winning grim experience.
Yet often, as the fickle bird, we dash
To risk ourselves and flirt the times seeking
Our suppers. But the salmon knows his home;
His venture down unto the ocean he
With instinct 'calls. A hid sublimity
Revives his youth and guides him forth to spawn
And to die. And thus messages this fish
To us ever to keep our childhood
Retained within as an inner casing
Of stream lines; our purposed paths once swum
Have designed us. Old men, young men, and all
Have journeyed alike an early, common way.
So is it, then, our twilight fronting dark
Inhibits us with needless fear. Forget
Not this when thou'rt old. Now sleep, and to wake. (Exit)
ACT IV
Scene 1: In front of LADY GREY's house.

(Enter MURCRY)

MURCRY
Oh leak, leak, leak! (Exit MURCRY. MARIANA appears at her window)

MARIANA
My husband's gone again. How can a little wife sleep? Wife? Hm. I'm not a wife, because marriage is a man and woman, two people. There's no husband here, and so, no wife. (Pause) Now, to the next thing, heavens. Where's my lover? (Enter MURCRY)

MURCRY
I'll never drink to fill so full again. Pissing is so convenient for a man. You simply stand behind a bush, not having to have to squat down...Ha! I see a lady abreast! It is Lady Grey's hot maid or I am most diseased. I'll woo her nobly, post haste.—Lady!

MARIANA
A spirit, a skeleton, aagh!

MURCRY
Quiet, soft, soft. It is I, Sir Murcry and your love. I have sought you for years and have travailed great distances to claim you.

MARIANA
Well, sir. Do you commonly frighten widows in the dead night? Has the world gone mad that you come as a courtier at three thirty in the morning?

MURCRY
I come when I can. Oh my love, though, and although, as I may say and, indeed, will often say, oh the moon is down and shadows clothe us, but still I can see enough to say I like you well. Your virtuous body has transcended me so that my tongue scarcely works.

MARIANA
Your tongue has been used too much for things besides saying words of love to a maiden, er, widow.

MURCRY
By the way, I heard you had a husband.

MARIANA
(Stymied for a moment) Well, yes. But not any more.
MURCRY
He's dead?

MARIANA
Pretty much.

MURCRY
I won't even be liable for adultery this time! Oh joy!

MARIANA
What a cruel thing to say to a widow! (Aside)—I like his brow, and his smile. But his arms appear as weak and stringy as twine. He doesn't look at all like Piroliss: he is weaker, paler, bawdier, foolisher and stupider. But I like him enough.—Good sir, what did you say your name was?

MURCRY
Lady, my name was and is Sir Murgery: lover, knight, sonneteer, lover, poet, warrior, lover, writer, lover, lover, lover.

MARIANA
Would you return to see me again?

MURCRY
Of course. Lovers never wake. No: lovers never sleep. And neither nor either or will I.

MARIANA
Come back in half half an hour, and I'll meet you down below. I desire to see you better. Will you come?

MURCRY
Yes! Yes, dear lady, yes! (MARIANA withdraws) Oh, the mystery of the greyer sex! Half of half an hour to keep my...body small enough to walk in the hiding night; this is hard. I have to find another place to leak first, and then to woo, woo, woo. (Exit MURCRY. Enter SUZANNE and PIROLISS)

PIROLISS
I don't care about your accent. It's an unimportant external—

SUZANNE
You didn't like my speech? (Pouting) "Good sir...."

PIROLISS
Let's be ourselves.
Don’t treat me like an infant, then. (Pause) Why do you pense so much tonight, Piroliss? Love doesn’t think. And now you’re chafing your palms again: love doesn’t feel just with these “unimportant externals.” Do you have to chafe and think when you court me? Then you don’t love. (Enter MURCRY)

MURCRY

PIROLISS
I still have something to settle with you, sharp-tongued rat!

MURCRY
Rat? Ha, country bump on a city log, let’s match swords. (Seeing neither he nor PIROLISS has a weapon) Well, I have two pieces of celery....

PIROLISS
(Breaks down and laughs heartily) Good enough, sir. You pick your “blade”.

MURCRY
(Draws out the celery stalks, both which are quite limp) Hm. This one. Here.

SUZANNE
Men! They’re such gamesters! You’re not serious, are you?

PIROLISS
How many passes?

MURCRY
Until we pass out! (They fight) You’re green, knave! (Enter MARIANA)

PIROLISS
Better green than as limp as you!

MURCRY
Limp! (They fight)

PIROLISS
No. And no again, rascal. Who taught you to fight?

MURCRY
A carrot did. Once more!

MARIANA
Hold on, enough! That's enough proof: which of you gentlemen loves the lady?

PIROLISS

(Aside)—She speaks with Lady Grey's voice—

MURCRY

I, maid, am Sir Murcry, the fast lover.

(To PIROLISS) And you sir?

MARIANA

And you...do not love me?

PIROLISS

(Embarassed, trying to appear innocent) I, no.

SUZANNE

(Perking up) Who is this girl, Piroliss?

MARIANA

(Cheerfully resigned) I thought not. (To MURCRY) But you, sir knight, you woo because you do love me?

MURCRY

Immensely. I have not travailed these many vast distances—(MARIANA kisses him. MURCRY returns her kiss vigorously)

MARIANA

You fight well, noble lord. Your arms are strong enough. I'll love you now. (She kisses him again) I love you better up close.

PIROLISS

(Happier by the moment) The knot loosens.

SUZANNE

Piroliss!

PIROLISS

Never mind, I'll explain later. Clown, rascal, fool! I'll stand by you on your wedding day, and in a decade I'll still beg to wish you well. Sweet girl, er, lady, let me kiss your hand. (Sarcastically) I marvel at your change of voice.

MARIANA
(Demurely) Thank you, sir.

MURCRY

We'll be friends from now on, lord.

PIROLISS

Yes. Ah, Sir.

MARIANA

(To MURCRY) I like you, sir. And I expect to know you better.

MURCRY

Ado friends. We'll see you...later. Come, lady.

MARIANA

I will. Thanks, sweet heavens. (Exit MURCRY and MARIANA)

PIROLISS

What a love match!

SUZANNE

Well, it appears I've mistaken about people's love lately. (Almost tearfully) I'm so slow to see things.

PIROLISS

Oh Suzanne, I'm the one who failed. I've been from here and to there trying to learn love, not knowing it was right before me. I've been slower than you. Will you love me? Isn't the measure here, inside my heart full topped with love?

SUZANNE

Speeches, speeches. Speeches aren't good, even when they're practiced and done well. How often are you going to feel in this humor, sir? Does it happen, then drift, waxing and waning like the faithless moon? Or does it have only a seasonal harvest and after lies fallow? If you love, you must love all of a person, always, and firstmost as a friend.

PIROLISS

Suzanne, you are closer to me than anyone else. You are my best friend. When I compare you to others I've known, there's no doubt that throughout my youth you were my closest, most trusted friend.

SUZANNE

And am I also fair, compared to those society ladies in this city?

PIROLISS

Most fair. To me, you have become more beautiful than anyone else.
Fair enough. Will you be the drone to a queen?

Don't compare us to the bees, Suzanne. They are not like us. You are not a queen unless I am a king, and I am not so unless you are beside me. We have finally met on the ladder of love; let's climb up together now to the place where our souls will be one.

I was silly.

With cause. Only in the past hour have I realized...so much.

But loving you has been difficult. For a time I went blind. But in that dark, caught up in the tempest tranquility which havoc in quiet, I learned patience. Waiting on that porch in the country...you know, Piroliss, waiting waits forever long unless one has hope to preserve oneself.

Wait no more. Oh, your tongue and lip-breath are like liquid sugar. (They kiss)

Love happens quickly, though we slow expect it.

It seems to happen most slowly when we seek it out.

Are we dreaming, love?

Perhaps. But I don't think so. (They kiss again)

I can hardly wait to seal our love, Piroliss.

I feel the same. (A quick kiss) Let's find the Duke and at morningtime bind ourselves with proper ceremony.

Yes. "Good sir." Now tell me about this lady you wooed...(Exeunt)
Scene 2: A clearing near the rebel camp.

(Enter MALORY and EASTERNMAN)

EASTERNMAN
They'll never listen to you. They're peasants! They hate the nobility, Malory!

MALORY
What a presentiment of failure. Apply it to yourself, not to me. Too many wars could be avoided with a little chatter.

EASTERNMAN
You're drunk, man. If you think--

MALORY
(Icily) I am not drunk. I know how much I've had, how much I can have, what it does to my brain and my tongue, what it does to others who listen to me. Now if you're not going to help, leave. Your pride is vulgar.

EASTERNMAN
(Getting angry) More, Malory. Go on, tell me more.

MALORY
The rest is little. Arms have made you proud, and like the god in the myths you should be bound.

EASTERNMAN
Again with the "bound."

MALORY
Yes, bound.

EASTERNMAN
We'll temper mettle here, drunkard, if words can work deeds. Yes now, bastard, or else by this honorable hand I'll call you a coward.

MALORY
That's it. (They draw)

EASTERNMAN
We'll see how sober your training is. (They play) Are you dead earnest?

MALORY
Are you? (They play)

EASTERNMAN
Why do you look like that?

Me? Why you? (They play)

Will you stop?

Will you?

Not first.

Me neither. (They play) Wait a minute.

Both of us lose if one should die in this fight.

Let's wait and call the other friend for now. The Duke would be unhappy with us.

The city needs both our talents.

Let's settle this some other time, some other way. (They put up their swords) Tell the Duke I'll be there as soon as I've conferred with this rebel leader. The boy should be here by now. If I can't work peace, you'll have to work some war.

Well said. Keep safe, brother.

You too.

Thanks.

Farewell.

Farewell. (Exit EASTERMAN)
What a fool I've been. This tension is making us all mad. (MALORY sheathes his sword. Enter PETER JOHN, the rebel leader)

PETER

Lord Malory?

MALORY

Yes. (PETER looks carelessly around) And you?

PETER

Peter. Peter John, farmer.

MALORY

I won't betray you, Peter.

PETER

I don't care; I plan to win and live or lose and die.

MALORY

Very noble.

PETER

Don't use that word around a peasant, lord.

MALORY

Don't use "lord" around an aristocrat, either.

PETER

You have a quick wit.

MALORY

No quicker than yours, son. Can we bargain?

PETER

I don't see how.

MALORY

We're not fighting this morning.

PETER

No? (Indicates off toward his camp) Tell them that. They've had enough and see no other choice.

MALORY

There's always another choice besides bloodshed. You don't know the Duke as I do, Peter. He's a man of reason. But he doesn't look enough into the details of his kingdom sometimes. If he knew the circumstances you're facing, he would help you. We're not going to fight.
PETER
For months we've sent our pleas to him--

MALORY
No. You sent threats, not requests. You burned people's houses, stole weapons and acted like brigands. Yes, brigands: that's how our minds work, Peter. Try to see your actions from our side. They don't look very rational to us.

PETER
Rational!

MALORY
Fair, then. They don't look very fair. Of course, you don't know much about fairness because I suppose no one ever treats you that way. What is fair? It's not the same to a farmer's son as it is to a Duke, or the Duke's cousin. So tell me, Peter, what would be fair to you and your good friends here?

PETER
No taxes! Our land is taxed, our food is taxed, our own crops are taxed!

MALORY
The government must have some taxes, Peter. You know that. What if there were taxes only on the land?

PETER
Then those taxes would be as high as all the others before.

MALORY
If we talked it wouldn't have to be that way. Duke Turn told me a month ago that he didn't know what to do with all the extra money in Corrigan's coffers. That's a start: we're obviously raising too much revenue from you through the taxes. I think together you and I could convince him of that. We don't have to fight.

PETER
How will a peasant convince a duke? His respect for plainness--

MALORY
You are not plain. You are full of color and drive and life. Peter, you have a steadfast quality about you and a physical strength that lures people to you. Your birth has made you think you're plain. But you're not.

PETER
Class won't be forgotten long enough to impress a duke, Malory.
MALORY

With this duke it shall. I know him.

PETER

(Still suspicious) How do I trust you? Your word, I suppose.

MALORY

I will make you my kinsman. But no fighting.

You would make me noble?

PETER

MALORY

No one can make you so. I can make you royal, though. There's a difference. I suspect you are not plain. I haven't got a son; you will be my heir, if you accept my offer.

(Taken aback) Your son!

MALORY

No fighting, Peter. (Impassioned) We mustn't barter peace for war, trading valiant men for sorrowful wives and mothers. Wise men make agreements on better bargains.

Your son! And no fighting?

PETER

MALORY

Let it be a chant among both our classes, Peter.

No fighting.

MALORY

The rich man will not take from you. I promise.

PETER

I'll trust you. I'll send my rebels home—for now, if this falls as you promise.

MALORY

Thank you, God. I'll visit you again in three days, Peter. Where do you live?

PETER

On the hill. Just ask someone; everyone knows where everyone lives.

MALORY
You are a noble young man, old in youth.

PETER
I'll expect you. Keep word, and God be with you. (They shake hands warmly)

MALORY
And with you. (Exeunt separately)
Scene 3: The palace courtyard

(Enter the DUKE with a paper)

DUKE
Why has rebellion come upon Corrigan? No matter how I try to give the blame to the rebels alone, I can't pass over myself. Have I failed, not seen something? (Enter LADY GREY)

LADY GREY
Good morning, Duke Turn

DUKE
Lady Grey! This night's unsafe. Rebellion's sickness feasts this coming day. Go back home.

LADY GREY
What a careless city. I can protect myself since Corrigan cannot.

DUKE
I won't allow you to wander further on, lady. Your presence here is useless and shows little thought.

LADY GREY
I'm looking for my unbedded servant girl, Mariana, my comfort to long widowed years. She's gone. I don't know where, and I can't spend the hours during this thoughtless event all alone.

DUKE
I'll take you to a safe place and have my men find Mariana. Walk with me, along my side, lady.

(She breaks down) My son.

LADY GREY
Where?

DUKE
LADY GREY
Gone. Gone to madness. He haunts about on winter morns as these, searching to free himself. The poor wretch, lost in his own diamond-slated mind! Bid your men find him first, good Duke, for a mother.

DUKE
I had a child. A son. Lucio's fate we'll scan, I promise you.

LADY GREY
I'll go where you lead me, then.
DUKE
I like your mind, Lady Grey. (Pause) Does it receive its fill from day to day?

LADY GREY
I know your question asks more than it seems, and I wonder at it.

What do you mean?

DUKE
We share a common trait: loneliness.

LADY GREY
Some wounds take more than physicians to seal.

But also, you suggest we both love study.

DUKE
Are you going to differ with that opinion?

LADY GREY
Hmm—no. Except that even study can't wash fear completely away. And my son yet remains lost.

DUKE
I'll send a trusty servant from the palace. Let's in; it's cold.

LADY GREY
It's winter.

DUKE
That makes a pair. Walk in with me, lady. (Exeunt)

Scene 4: The same

(Enter MURCRY and MARIANA)

MARIANA
I love to walk afterwards.

MURCRY
I love to love after walking afterwards.

MARIANA
You aren't a lord, are you? I've seen you before: you're the Duke's messenger.

You're married, aren't you?  

MURCRY

He left me. (Enter EASTERN)

MARIANA

EASTERMAN

Gods!

MURCRY

MARIANA

Who's that?

MURCRY


EASTERMAN

Have you seen the Duke?

MURCRY

No.

EASTERMAN

I have to speak to you. Send your wench off.

MARIANA

Wench! Now listen to me--

MURCRY

Mariana, Mariana, dear. Please, go back to the room, and I'll come as soon as possible.

MARIANA

I'm sure you will. Well. (To EASTERN) But I'm not through with you, you cow! (Exit MARIANA)

MURCRY

What a woman.

EASTERMAN

Murcry, listen: Malory has just concluded a peace with the rebels; he met me on the way from the armory, and I must go back to my flank troops and spread the news or else they may foolishly attack!
Malory is also delayed by business, giving the townsmen the news. So, tell the duke that Malory’s made peace!

MURCRY
Peace, peace! How excellent. But Lord Easterman, the duke is very angry with me--

EASTERMAN
No prating, snail. Hah—that should be a proverb. Farewell! We'll meet the duke here in an hour! (Exit)

MURCRY
(Beat) An hour. An hour I could be in a warm bed. (Enter the DUKE behind MURCRY) And instead I have to wait for a most foolish duke--

DUKE
(Shouting in his ear) Good morning, snail!

MURCRY
Master, good master, noble master, I, I, I have news, good news--

DUKE
Shut your babbling mouth. I'll beat you well, you faithless rascal! I'll beat you straight!

MURCRY
(Running from him) Ho, only if you have a swifter gait.

DUKE
(Pursuing) Stop, slave! You villain, as slow as palsied snail!

MURCRY
(Eluding him again) Quick! My lord, I've news if you'll stop your rail!

My breath and temper shorten more.

DUKE
Hold sir. I'll tell you happy store.

I almost have your cape. (Lunges)

DUKE
Give pause to speak and 'scape!

MURCRY
(Grabs his cloak) I have you now.
One word allow!

No word.

Not one?

Not one.

No word.

No, none. (Beats him)

Hear me first, master, then beat me.

I'll listen to your groans. (Beats him)

Wait, wait! Lord Malory has concluded peace with the rebels.

(Stops) What, fool?

I'm not the fool, my master; the fool's outside the town, he having agreed to a peace with heavy-red Lord Malory. We'll fight some other day!

What excellent news! (Strikes him, sort of playfully) I'm glad to hear that. (Strikes him) My mood is merry! (Strikes him)

The worse for me when you're sad.

Snail, you are for the moment pardoned. Go tell Malory and Easterman we'll have a reward ceremony at eight of the clock. I'll go tell Lady Grey the happy news. Go!

Like wind. (Exit MURCRY)
DUKE
When war is finished, then we can rightly turn to love. But while the battle is in its rage, we've little time to ponder the lovers' hurt. Will the coming ages struggle the same as we, and turn their passions from joy only after deaths have paid the lease for calmer days? History is worthy of study. I wonder, will we mistake again and again? But as the poet said, that question, "Is measureless unmeasured; in grid/ Of strangely tangled time our answer's hid."
(Exit)

ACT V
Scene 1: The palace courtyard

(Enter PIROLISS and SUZANNE)

SUZANNE
It's day. I can hear the brave larks in the trees. Look at that plant; it won't be too long before it swells and creeps forth a flower in spring.

PIROLISS
We are special--Time's favorite theme, his best fiction.

SUZANNE
If we're a book, then let me read your thoughts. (She kisses him)

PIROLISS
They are the same as yours. (He kisses her) Holding you I know how it would seem to hold the wind.

SUZANNE
(Pause) Oh, love, listen: there's not a sound; what sweetness. (Pause of silence) Winter is calm today. I think it's fleeing from Spring. (Enter LUCIO)

LUCIO
(Excitedly) Pardon me, friends, my nerves are like glass, ready to shatter. But my mind--is as clear as unrippling water.

PIROLISS
My friend, are you well? Are you still drunk from last night? What?

LUCIO
No, no. My being all's in fragments, but my mind is calm. These prisms never focused on one thing alone among the others. This morning I see through a chink which the elf has mirror-like fixed.
I have had a glance at stability, finally grasping a bit of sense without black intrusions. (Pause) Oh my friends, I cannot tell you how dark a mind is. (Enter NASANNA)

Here’s the savior herself.

SUZANNE

Nasanna....

LUCIO

Good morning all. (To SUZANNE) Well?

NASANNA

We’re getting married in an hour before the duke!

SUZANNE

Oh, Suzanne!

NASANNA

Well, that’s news to me.

LUCIO

I’m sorry, Lucio. But I’ve scarcely had time—my good friend, will you be there?

PIROLISS

Of course. And pray loudest to God for your happiness. Sweet elf, there is so much inside I can’t put into words.

LUCIO

I’ve never seen you at a loss to speak sweet speeches.

PIROLISS

I’m changed.

LUCIO

You should say soon. I’m leaving after Suzanne has married to Piroliss.

NASANNA

You have reconciled my mind and heart, my youthful urges and my experienced reserves, and my strange mortality. Thank you: I don’t know what else to say.

NASANNA

Your new aspect and its joy would be thanks enough for anyone, Lucio. (Pause) Suzanne, we’d better go make you ready for your wedding, quick as it has come upon us.
SUZANNE
Yes. (To PIROLISS) I'll miss you.

NASANNA
The gods shield you, sir. (Exit NASANNA and SUZANNE)

LUCIO
Good bye, elf.--God be with you.

PIROLISS
My friend, will you assist me now on my most important day since birth?

Yes. I'll be perfect. (Exeunt)

LUCIO
Scene 2: The same
(Enter the DUKE and EASTERMAN)

DUKE
Lady Grey is still looking for her son.

EASTERMAN
My men haven't seen her or her maid, Mariana.

DUKE
I'm sure all is well now that the rebel's are quenched. I heard the hounds barking this dawn, and I feared it meant Hecate in her black mourning was coming, for such howls always precede the evil witch. But the day in yellow comes minutely stronger. A beautiful day. Where's Malory?

EASTERMAN
He should be here by now, Duke.

DUKE
Who's this youth who wants to get married after the reward is given?

EASTERMAN
A university youth from the country, Duke Turn, and a friend of mad Lucio. He asked me if you would perform it, and I took it on me to say yes, hoping you could.

DUKE
Of course, of course. (Enter MURCRY and MARIANA, unseen by the nobles) It's a fine daybreak for a wedding.

MARIANA
I have a word to say to that cow!

MURCRY
No, please, Mariana; he's an aristocrat in the military!

MARIANA
What of that?

MURCRY
There's nothing worse. And if he decides to punish you, and the duke relents, he would milk great pain from you, and me, besides.

MARIANA
I guess it's hard to be angry on such a day as this.

MURCRY
It is hard. (Addressing the DUKE) How about two weddings, my Duke. (MURCRY and MARIANA look at each other hungrily)

DUKE
My fool! And Lady Grey's wench? Your lady has been fearful about you, Mariana. (To MURCRY) Where's Malory?

MURCRY
When I met him, master, Lord Malory was bloated. He drank too much last night, and this boost in his pride has further inflated him to the point of sleeping. And, indeed, that's how I left him, as I met him: asleep. I implored him; he mumbled. I shook him; he belched. I ordered him; he rolled over and snored more loudly. I feared to do more lest his new exposed hind end might do me mischief.

DUKE
You villain! Call him forth at once.

MURCRY
He's coming, master, he's coming; don't worry. He's washing his face and putting on fresh clothes though in a sleepy daze.

EASTERMAN
He did have a difficult night. But brought on by himself, I'll add.

DUKE
Mariana, you have caused your lady much worry. Where have you been? (Embarassed silence) Ah, I see. Never mind, you're found out now. (Enter NASANNA and SUZANNE) Well, this looks more like a bride! And....

EASTERMAN
(Presenting her) The elf, my Duke. (NASANNA crosses to the Duke reverently, kneeling before him; he is captivated)

DUKE
Stand up, my girl. (NASANNA stands)

Are you the Duke?

NASANNA

I've heard about you.

DUKE

And loved me?
And loved you once. Are you...real? Or simply a part of my middle dreams?

NASANNA
Your kindness has given me hope.

DUKE
Dear girl, your beauty and mystery will ever enchant men, and if elves won’t love you, then come live with men; they’ll love you strongly if briefly. You have a home with us in my city.

NASANNA
Perhaps that is my bitterness: I don’t have a home that’s home to me. I have no parents, no brothers, no sisters. No certainty. No home.

DUKE
You have a home with the people of Corrigan.

NASANNA
Duke Turn, an elf cannot stay here; today I’m leaving the world of men. But my friends, all of you, I shall not forget. And when I’m desperate, I’ll remember these happy pages of my life.

DUKE
You are a special guest and shall sit among the court at these ceremonies. If Malory ever appears. Well, young girl, what is your name?

SUZANNE
Suzanne, my lord.

DUKE
A pretty name. And who are you marrying before us today?

SUZANNE
A wonderful man: my best friend, Piroliss.

(Gasping) Piroliss? Piroliss!

Yes.

SUZANNE
DUKE
How old is he? Quick!

SUZANNE
(A little confused) Why, he’s almost twenty.
Well answered! Is he fair?

Exceeding honest, yes.

No, is his hair fair?

(Puzzled) Well, not really.

That's no matter, Duke. For it is often the son more resembles someone else besides the licensed parents. (The DUKE is unable to formulate another question in his excitement)

Might you be his father?

There is a way to prove it. He has a mark from birth!

Where? (Excited) We have been continual friends since childhood; maybe I can verify his nobility.

It's on his ass! (General embarrassment) What do you know of it, maid?

(Stammering) No—nothing, lord. (General giggling)

Pardon me, Suzanne. But I am at the edge of being made the happiest man. My future and Corrigan's hang in the balance, riding on your Piroliss' ass! (Another general gasp, followed by some giggling) Where is he? (Enter LUCIO and LADY GREY)

Don't chide me any more, Mother. I was guiltless until now; judge me from this time forth.

My hair's turned white from worrying about you.

Let's end this pageant; I am well now.
You seem the same.

LADY GREY

Welcome, Lady Grey. Lucio, where’s your friend?

DUKE

Who? Which friend?

LUCIO

My son, my son! Piroliss!

DUKE

Piroliss is your son?

LUCIO

(Interjecting, to LUCIO) The Duke and Corrigan will be saved if there’s a mark on the ass of Piroliss!

MURCRY

(LADY GREY's presence) What? Silence, vulgar fool!

LADY GREY

(Embarassed in LADY GREY's presence) Yes, quiet Murcry! Your tongue is no snail. (Shouting) Where is he?

DUKE

Am I to understand from this commotion that Piroliss might be your lost son, Duke, if he has...this mark?

LUCIO

Apparently.

SUZANNE

It’s possible.

EASTERMAN

(Aside, directed to EASTERNMAN) Cow. (Enter PIROLISS, dressed for his wedding)

PIROLISS!

SUZANNE

My love!

DUKE

Take off your pants!
(Amazed) What?

PIROLISS

Take them off, take them off!

MARIANA

LADY GREY

Gods, the poor boy. Piroliss, the Duke believes you are his lost son, and if you have a mark from birth on your...hinder part, it proves--

PIROLISS

(Overjoyed) I do! Then you are my father?

DUKE

I think so, dear boy.

PIROLISS

I'm born new to happiness! (Piroliss embraces the Duke while the Duke tries to pull his pants down to check)

SUZANNE

(Turning modestly) Dear goodness.

MARIANA

(Cheering) Pull them off!

LADY GREY

Enough, enough, enough! (She pulls the Duke away) He's trustworthy.

DUKE

(Embracing Piroliss properly) My son!

SUZANNE

Happy day!

DUKE

But son, you can't marry this country wench now.

PIROLISS

Why not? My blood has nothing to do with my love.

LADY GREY

That's true.

DUKE

Very true. (Pause) Do you love her?
PIROLISS
More at this happy moment than ever.

DUKE
Well, we'll--I'll make an exception. Suzanne, my daughter, come here. (He embraces her) And now, everyone, let's make this day happier: Lady Grey, will you be my wife? Today, this morning?

LADY GREY
(Gracefully) Why say no to such promised happiness? Take my hand.

PIROLISS
(Aside to SUZANNE) To think I wanted to love her once.--I must learn to call you Mother. I will study it and feel it in my heart. Even as I become acquainted with my father.

MURCRY
This is bawdy happiness! Duke, let us marry too!

PIROLISS
I won't object, carrot, to that request. What do you say, Father?

DUKE
Well...this knave has been a snail and an ass, not good company for a wedding.

MARIANA
(Aside, indicating PIROLISS) I could have had him! (Looks at MURCRY) Oh, well.

LADY GREY
(Sweeps MARIANA aside) Mariana, you're already married!

MARIANA
He's not coming back. Ever.

LADY GREY
You are sure?

MARIANA
Yes. Oh, please, Lady, let's forget him.

LADY GREY
He was cruel.--You have my permission, Duke.

DUKE
Well, since low marries with high, let's all marry together despite our classes.
LADY GREY
Let's go in quickly, sir. We have much to discuss and plan.

DUKE
Yes. Quickly.

MURCry
We're wedding with the royals! What do you think, Mariana?

MARIANA
I think...I think I like you, Murcry. (Gooses MURCry)

PIROLISS
The knot has unravelled itself by man's hands and Time's both. What a happy morning, Suzanne!

SUZANNE
Yes, love. (Enter MALORY. No one notices him; they are too preoccupied)

MALORY
(Waves, no one sees) Well, bathhouses receive piss better than society accepts a peacemaker. Hm. The rebel treated me better. I should go back to the John.

DUKE
Malory, our Malory, good Malory, true Malory!

MALORY
You called, my Duke?

DUKE
Come here and hear a happy tale!

MALORY
Happier than mine? Happier than stopping war? What's happier than that?

DUKE
Love, three marriages, a lost son found, the lower and upper classes together!

MALORY
I think these nobles have gone mad.

LUCIO
Don't believe that; believe the opposite, Malory. Oh, Lord Malory, you are a hero in the heroic mold of this day: you too fought for harmony.
MALORY
Lucio, you look different. God, you even look a bit happy.

LUCIO
I am. I am.

DUKE
Malory, come here! We have--I have--the city has rewards for you. I name you our sole civil advisor, second only to me. Easterman will answer to you as general--be so advised, Easterman.

EASTERNAN
Gladly, my Duke. I welcome following my cousin’s advice. We’ve settled something between us which will make Corrigan a sanctuary.

MALORY
Thanks, Easterman. (Warmly) Thanks.

DUKE
More than this, I award your retiring years several acres in the quiet of the country.

MALORY
Again, my thanks. It was merely duty.

DUKE
Furthermore, I officially announce the marriages of these couples. Elf, you will see before you these three bindings. Meet Lady Grey.

NASANNA
Gods shield both of you.

DUKE
Let’s away and seal our fates!

LADY GREY
Well thought, Duke Turn. You have gained two sons today as well as a wife.

DUKE
I could scarce be happier. Come, away all!

PIROLISS
Lucio?

LUCIO
I’ll follow you; go on, go on. (Exit everyone except LUCIO and MALORY)
MALORY
What in God's name is happening here? Is Piroliss the Duke's lost son, and has the Duke said that he will wisely marry the lonely Lady Grey, and has Piroliss made up to Suzanne? And is the bawd Murcry snailing his life to the servant wench?

LUCIO
Rightly guessed, my noble lord.

MALORY
I see. Well, Lucio? You aren't so dark this morning.

LUCIO
No. I'm not dark. Spring's equinox comes each moment closer.

MALORY
People, people. That's the most fascinating thing I've found in this world.

LUCIO
People and their funerals, their births, their youth and their age: but what is there between?

MALORY
Everything mortal, Lucio. Everything mortal. (MALORY sits)

LUCIO
Yes, I think you are right.

MALORY
Don't just think it, son. Feel it too. Feel it. A long night with the John it's been. (MALORY dozes)

LUCIO
Beginnings and ends are the greater parts. Middles are just the means for carrying the first syllable to the curtain line. (Seeing MALORY) Middle aged advisor, sleep but briefly, for madness and dreams are eternal. Soon it is time to leave them for waking mortality. Strange how often it takes a fiction to help us see that our lives are mad dreams, vinding unfocused plots. (He looks upward) There's still something more to discover, isn't there? (Enter PIROLISS)

PIROLISS
Our hero's out?

LUCIO
Yes.
PIROLISS
Lucio, you are always happier than you seem. But, brooding again?

LUCIO
For the last time. But my friend, you'll miss your happiest moment! Let's haul Malory in with us.

PIROLISS
(They try, unsuccessfully, to lift MALORY) We're not lusty enough for it. Wake him up. (LUCIO slaps MALORY gently)

MALORY
Yes, of course, of course. Hello. The wedding, the wedding cake! (They help him stand) I feel absolutely...horrible.

LUCIO
Let's go in, hero.

PIROLISS
Bliss awaits us. (They help MALORY walk in)

MALORY
Speak for yourself, son. Being bloated isn't my conception of bliss.

LUCIO
You'll be fine. (They stop for a moment)

MALORY
(To PIROLISS) And you'll be married. Are you sure this is the right one? You change your mind so quickly.

PIROLISS
This is the right one.

MALORY
Fine. Let's go in to the bathhouse first. Hurry! (Exeunt)