

VOLPONE
or THE FOX

By Ben Jonson

Dramatis Personae

VOLPONE, a Magnifico
MOSCA, his Parasite
VOLTORE, an Advocate
CORBACCIO, an old Gentleman
CORVINO, a Merchant
BONARIO, son to Corbaccio
SIR POLITICK Would-Be, a Knight
PEREGRINE, a Gentleman Traveller
NANO, a Dwarf
CASTRONE, an Eunuch
ANDROGYNO, an Hermaphrodite

GREGE (or Mob):

Commandadori, Officers of Justice
Mercatori, three Merchants
Avocatori, four Magistrates
Notario, the Register

LADY POLITICK Would-Be, Sir Politick's Wife
CELIA, Corvino's Wife

Servitori, Servants, two Waiting-women, etc.

Scene: Venice

The Argument

V olpone, childless, rich, feigns sick, despairs,
O ffers his state to hopes of several heirs,
L ies languishing: his parasite receives
P resents of all, assures, deludes; then weaves
O ther cross plots, which ope themselves, are told.
N ew tricks for safety are sought; they thrive; when bold,
E ach tempts the other again, and all are sold.

Prologue

Now, luck yet send us, and a little wit

Will serve to make our play hit;
(According to the palates of the season)
Here is rhyme, not empty of reason.
This we were bid to credit from our poet,
Whose true scope, if you would know it,
In all his poems still hath been this measure,
To mix profit with your pleasure;
And not as some, whose throats their envy failing,
Cry hoarsely, All he writes is railing:
And when his plays come forth, think they can flout them,
With saying, he was a year about them.
To this there needs no lie, but this his creature,
Which was two months since no feature;
And though he dares give them five lives to mend it,
'Tis known, five weeks fully penn'd it,
From his own hand, without a co-adjutor,
Novice, journey-man, or tutor.
Yet thus much I can give you as a token
Of his play's worth, no eggs are broken,
Nor quaking custards with fierce teeth affrighted,
Wherewith your rout are so delighted;
Nor hailes he in a gull old ends reciting,
To stop gaps in his loose writing;
With such a deal of monstrous and forced action,
As might make Bethlem a faction:
Nor made he his play for jests stolen from each table,
But makes jests to fit his fable;
And so presents quick comedy refined,
As best critics have designed;
The laws of time, place, persons he observeth,
From no needful rule he swerveth.
All gall and copperas from his ink he draineth,
Only a little salt remaineth,
Wherewith he'll rub your cheeks, till red with laughter,
They shall look fresh a week after.

Act 1

Scene 1: A Room in Volpone's House

Enter VOLPONE and MOSCA

Volpone Good morning to the day; and next, my gold! -
Open the shrine, that I may see my saint.

MOSCA withdraws the curtain, and discovers piles of gold, plate, jewels,
etc.

Hail the world's soul, and mine! more glad than is
The teeming earth to see the long'd-for sun
Peep through the horns of the celestial Ram,
Am I, to view thy splendour darkening his;
That lying here, amongst my other hoards,
Shew'st like a flame by night, or like the day
Struck out of chaos, when all darkness fled
Unto the centre. O thou son of Sol,
But brighter than thy father, let me kiss,
With adoration, thee, and every relic
Of sacred treasure in this blessed room.
Well did wise poets, by thy glorious name,
Title that age which they would have the best;
Thou being the best of things, and far transcending
All style of joy, in children, parents, friends,
Or any other waking dream on earth:
Thy looks when they to Venus did ascribe,
They should have given her twenty thousand Cupids;
Such are thy beauties and our loves! Dear saint,
Riches, the dumb god, that giv'st all men tongues,
Thou canst do nought, and yet mak'st men do all things;
The price of souls, even hell, with thee to boot,
Is made worth heaven. Thou art virtue, fame,
Honour, and all things else. Who can get thee,
He shall be noble valiant, honest, wise -

Mosca And what he will, sir. Riches are in fortune
A greater good than wisdom is in nature.

Volpone True, my beloved Mosca. Yet I glory
More in the cunning purchase of my wealth,
Than in the glad possession, since I gain
No common way; I use no trade, no venture;
I wound no earth with plough-shares, fat no beasts,
To feed the shambles; have no mills for iron,
Oil, corn, or men, to grind them into powder:
I blow no subtle glass, expose no ships
To threat'nings of the furrow-faced sea;
I turn no monies in the public bank,
Nor usure private.

Mosca No, sir, nor devour
Soft prodigals. You shall have some will swallow
A melting heir as glibly as your Dutch
Will pills of butter, and ne'er purge for it;
Tear forth the fathers of poor families
Out of their beds, and coffin them alive
In some kind clasping prison, where their bones
May be forth-coming, when the flesh is rotten:
But your sweet nature doth abhor these courses;

You lothe the widow's or the orphan's tears
Should wash your pavements, or their piteous cries
Ring in your roofs, and beat the air for vengeance.

Volpone Right, Mosca; I do lothe it.

Mosca And besides, sir,
You are not like the thresher that doth stand
With a huge flail, watching a heap of corn,
And, hungry, dares not taste the smallest grain,
But feeds on mallows, and such bitter herbs;
Nor like the merchant, who hath fill'd his vaults
With Romagnia, and rich Candian wines,
Yet drinks the lees of Lombard's vinegar:
You will lie not in straw, whilst moths and worms
Feed on your sumptuous hangings and soft beds;
You know the use of riches, and dare give now
From that bright heap, to me, your poor observer,
Or to your dwarf, or your hermaphrodite,
Your eunuch, or what other household trifle
Your pleasure allows maintenance -

Volpone Hold thee, Mosca,

Gives him money

Take of my hand; thou strik'st on truth in all,
And they are envious term thee parasite.
Call forth my dwarf, my eunuch, and my fool,
And let them make me sport.

Exit MOSCA

What should I do
But cocker up my genius, and live free
To all delights my fortune calls me to?
I have no wife, no parent, child, ally,
To give my substance to; but whom I make
Must be my heir: and this makes men observe me:
To give my substance to; but whom I make
Women and men of every sex and age,
That bring me presents, send me plate, coin, jewels,
With hope that when I die (which they expect
Each greedy minute) it shall then return
Ten-fold upon them; whilst some, covetous
Above the rest, seek to engross me whole,
And counter-work the one unto the other,
Contend in gifts, as they would seem in love:
All which I suffer, playing with their hopes,
And am content to coin them into profit,

And look upon their kindness, and take more,
And look on that; still bearing them in hand,
Letting the cherry knock against their lips,
And draw it by their mouths, and back again. -
How now!

Re-enter MOSCA with NANO, ANDROGYNO, and CASTRONE

Nano Now, room for fresh gamesters, who do will you to know,
They do bring you neither play nor university show;
And therefore do entreat you, that whatsoever they rehearse,
May not fare a whit the worse, for the false pace of the verse.
If you wonder at this, you will wonder more ere we pass,
For know, here is inclosed the soul of Pythagoras,
That juggler divine, as hereafter shall follow;
Which soul, fast and loose, sir, came first from Apollo,
And was breath'd into Aethalides, Mercurius his son,
Where it had the gift to remember all that ever was done.
From thence it fled forth, and made quick transmigration
To goldly-lock'd Euphorbus, who was killed in good fashion,
At the siege of old Troy, by the cuckold of Sparta.
Hermotimus was next (I find it in my charta)
To whom it did pass, where no sooner it was missing
But with one Pyrrhus of Delos it learn'd to go a fishing;
And thence did it enter the sophist of Greece.
From Pythagore, she went into a beautiful piece,
Hight Aspasia, the meretrix; and the next toss of her
Was again of a whore, she became a philosopher,
Crates the cynick, as it self doth relate it:
Since kings, knights, and beggars, knaves, lords, and fools gat it,
Besides ox and ass, camel, mule, goat, and brock,
In all which it hath spoke, as in the cobbler's cock.
But I come not here to discourse of that matter,
Or his one, two, or three, or his great oath, BY QUATER!
His musics, his trigon, his golden thigh,
Or his telling how elements shift, but I
Would ask, how of late thou hast suffered translation,
And shifted thy coat in these days of reformation.

Androgyno Like one of the reformed, a fool, as you see,
Counting all old doctrine heresie.

Nano But not on thine own forbid meats hast thou ventured?

Androgyno On fish, when first a Carthusian I enter'd.

Nano Why, then thy dogmatical silence hath left thee?

Androgyno Of that an obstreperous lawyer bereft me.

Nano O wonderful change, when sir lawyer forsook thee!
For Pythagore's sake, what body then took thee?

Androgyno A good dull mule.

Nano And how! by that means
Thou wert brought to allow of the eating of beans?

Androgyno Yes.

Nano But from the mule into whom didst thou pass?

Androgyno Into a very strange beast, by some writers call'd an ass;
By others, a precise, pure, illuminate brother,
Of those devour flesh, and sometimes one another;
And will drop you forth a libel, or a sanctified lie,
Betwixt every spoonful of a nativity-pie.

Nano Now quit thee, for heaven, of that profane nation,
And gently report thy next transmigration.

Androgyno To the same that I am.

Nano A creature of delight,
And, what is more than a fool, an hermaphrodite!
Now, prithee, sweet soul, in all thy variation,
Which body would'st thou choose, to keep up thy station?

Androgyno Troth, this I am in: even here would I tarry.

Nano 'Cause here the delight of each sex thou canst vary?

Androgyno Alas, those pleasures be stale and forsaken;
No, 'tis your fool wherewith I am so taken,
The only one creature that I can call blessed;
For all other forms I have proved most distressed.

Nano Spoke true, as thou wert in Pythagoras still.
This learned opinion we celebrate will,
Fellow eunuch, as behoves us, with all our wit and art,
To dignify that whereof ourselves are so great and special a part.

Volpone Now, very pretty! Mosca, this
Was thy invention?

Mosca If it please my patron,
Not else.

Volpone It doth, good Mosca.

Mosca Then it was, sir.

NANO and CASTRONE sing

Fools, they are the only nation
Worth men's envy or admiration:
Free from care or sorrow-taking,
Selves and others merry making:
All they speak or do is sterling.
Your fool he is your great man's darling,
And your ladies' sport and pleasure;
Tongue and bauble are his treasure.
E'en his face begetteth laughter,
And he speaks truth free from slaughter;
He's the grace of every feast,
And sometimes the chiefest guest;
Hath his trencher and his stool,
When wit waits upon the fool.
O, who would not be
He, he, he?

Knocking without

Volpone Who's that? Away!

Exeunt NANO and CASTRONE

Look, Mosca. Fool, begone!

Exit ANDROGYNO

Mosca 'Tis signior Voltore, the advocate;
I know him by his knock.

Volpone Fetch me my gown,
My furs and night-caps; say, my couch is changing,
And let him entertain himself awhile
Without i' the gallery.

Exit MOSCA

Now, now, my clients
Begin their visitation! Vulture, kite,
Raven, and gorcrow, all my birds of prey,
That think me turning carcase, now they come;
I am not for them yet -

Re-enter MOSCA, with the gown, etc.

Now now! the news?

Mosca A piece of plate, sir.

Volpone Of what bigness?

Mosca Huge,
Massy, and antique, with your name inscribed,
And arms engraven.

Volpone Good! and not a fox
Stretch'd on the earth, with fine delusive sleights,
Mocking a gaping crow? ha, Mosca!

Mosca Sharp, sir.

Volpone Give me my furs.

Puts on his sick dress

Why dost thou laugh so, man?

Mosca I cannot choose, sir, when I apprehend
What thoughts he has without now, as he walks:
That this might be the last gift he should give;
That this would fetch you; if you died today,
And gave him all, what he should be tomorrow;
What large return would come of all his ventures;
How he should worship'd be, and revered;
Ride with his furs, and foot-cloths; waited on
By herds of fools, and clients; have clear way
Made for his mule, as letter'd as himself;
Be call'd the great and learned advocate:
And then concludes, there's nought impossible.

Volpone Yes, to be learned, Mosca.

Mosca O, no: rich
Implies it. Hood an ass with reverend purple,
So you can hide his two ambitious ears,
And he shall pass for a cathedral doctor.

Volpone My caps, my caps, good Mosca. Fetch him in.

Mosca Stay, sir; your ointment for your eyes.

Volpone That's true,
Dispatch, dispatch: I long to have possession
Of my new present.

Mosca That, and thousands more,
I hope to see you lord of.

Volpone Thanks, kind Mosca.

Mosca And that, when I am lost in blended dust,
And hundred such as I am, in succession -

Volpone Nay, that were too much, Mosca.

Mosca You shall live,
Still, to delude these harpies.

Volpone Loving Mosca!
'Tis well: my pillow now, and let him enter.

Exit MOSCA

Now, my feign'd cough, my phthisic, and my gout,
My apoplexy, palsy, and catarrhs,
Help, with your forced functions, this my posture,
Wherein, this three year, I have milk'd their hopes.
He comes; I hear him - Uh! [coughing] uh! uh! uh! O -

Re-enter MOSCA, introducing VOLTORE, with a piece of Plate

Mosca You still are what you were, sir. Only you,
Of all the rest, are he commands his love,
And you do wisely to preserve it thus,
With early visitation, and kind notes
Of your good meaning to him, which, I know,
Cannot but come most grateful! Patron! sir!
Here's signior Voltore is come -

Volpone [faintly] What say you?

Mosca Sir, signior Voltore is come this morning
To visit you.

Volpone I thank him.

Mosca And hath brought
A piece of antique plate, bought of St. Mark,
With which he here presents you.

Volpone He is welcome.
Pray him to come more often.

Mosca Yes.

Voltore What says he?

Mosca He thanks you, and desires you see him often.

Volpone Mosca.

Mosca My patron!

Volpone Bring him near, where is he?
I long to feel his hand.

Mosca The plate is here, sir.

Voltore How fare you, sir?

Volpone I thank you, signior Voltore;
Where is the plate? mine eyes are bad.

Voltore [Putting it into his hands] I'm sorry,
To see you still thus weak.

Mosca [Aside] That he's not weaker.

Volpone You are too munificent.

Voltore No, sir; would to heaven,
I could as well give health to you, as that plate!

Volpone You give, sir, what you can: I thank you. Your love
Hath taste in this, and shall not be unanswer'd:
I pray you see me often.

Voltore Yes, I shall, sir.

Volpone Be not far from me.

Mosca Do you observe that, sir?

Volpone Hearken unto me still; it will concern you.

Mosca You are a happy man, sir; know your good.

Volpone I cannot now last long -

Mosca You are his heir, sir.

Voltore Am I?

Volpone I feel me going; Uh! uh! uh! uh!
I'm sailing to my port, Uh! uh! uh! uh!
And I am glad I am so near my haven.

Mosca Alas, kind gentleman! Well, we must all go -

Voltore But, Mosca -

Mosca Age will conquer.

Voltore 'Pray thee, hear me:
Am I inscribed his heir for certain?

Mosca Are you!
I do beseech you, sir, you will vouchsafe
To write me in your family. All my hopes
Depend upon your worship: I am lost;
Except the rising sun do shine on me.

Voltore It shall both shine, and warm thee, Mosca.

Mosca Sir,
I am a man, that hath not done your love
All the worst offices: here I wear your keys,
See all your coffers and your caskets lock'd,
Reep the poor inventory of your jewels,
Your plate and monies; am your steward, sir,
Husband your goods here.

Voltore But am I sole heir?

Mosca Without a partner, sir; confirm'd this morning:
The wax is warm yet, and the ink scarce dry
Upon the parchment.

Voltore Happy, happy, me!
By what good chance, sweet Mosca?

Mosca Your desert, sir;
I know no second cause.

Voltore Thy modesty
Is not to know it; well, we shall requite it.

Mosca He ever liked your course, sir; that first took him.
I oft have heard him say, how he admired
Men of your large profession, that could speak
To every cause, and things mere contraries,
Till they were hoarse again, yet all be law;
That, with most quick agility, could turn,
And [re-]return; [could] make knots, and undo them;
Give forked counsel; take provoking gold
On either hand, and put it up: these men,
He knew, would thrive with their humility.
And, for his part, he thought he should be blest
To have his heir of such a suffering spirit,
So wise, so grave, of so perplex'd a tongue,
And loud withal, that would not wag, nor scarce
Lie still, without a fee; when every word
Your worship but lets fall, is a chequin!

Knocking without

Who's that? one knocks; I would not have you seen, sir.
And yet - pretend you came, and went in haste:
I'll fashion an excuse and, gentle sir,
When you do come to swim in golden lard,
Up to the arms in honey, that your chin
Is borne up stiff, with fatness of the flood,
Think on your vassal; but remember me:
I have not been your worst of clients.

Voltore Mosca! -

Mosca When will you have your inventory brought, sir?
Or see a copy of the will? - Anon! -
I'll bring them to you, sir. Away, be gone,
Put business in your face.

Exit VOLTORE

Volpone [Springing up] Excellent Mosca!
Come hither, let me kiss thee.

Mosca Keep you still, sir.
Here is Corbaccio.

Volpone Set the plate away:
The vulture's gone, and the old raven's come!

Mosca Betake you to your silence, and your sleep.
Stand there and multiply.

Putting the plate to the rest

Now, shall we see
A wretch who is indeed more impotent
Than this can feign to be; yet hopes to hop
Over his grave -

Enter CORBACCIO

Signior Corbaccio!
You're very welcome, sir.

Corbaccio How does your patron?

Mosca Troth, as he did, sir; no amends.

Corbaccio What! mends he?

Mosca No, sir: he's rather worse.

Corbaccio That's well. Where is he?

Mosca Upon his couch, sir, newly fall'n asleep.

Corbaccio Does he sleep well?

Mosca No wink, sir, all this night.
Nor yesterday; but slumbers.

Corbaccio Good! he should take
Some counsel of physicians: I have brought him
An opiate here, from mine own doctor.

Mosca He will not hear of drugs.

Corbaccio Why? I myself
Stood by while it was made, saw all the ingredients:
And know, it cannot but most gently work:
My life for his, 'tis but to make him sleep.

Volpone [Aside] Ay, his last sleep, if he would take it.

Mosca Sir,
He has no faith in physic.

Corbaccio Say you, say you?

Mosca He has no faith in physic: he does think
Most of your doctors are the greater danger,
And worse disease, to escape. I often have
Heard him protest, that your physician
Should never be his heir.

Corbaccio Not I his heir?

Mosca Not your physician, sir.

Corbaccio O, no, no, no,
I do not mean it.

Mosca No, sir, nor their fees
He cannot brook: he says, they flay a man,
Before they kill him.

Corbaccio Right, I do conceive you.

Mosca And then they do it by experiment;
For which the law not only doth absolve them,
But gives them great reward: and he is loth
To hire his death, so.

Corbaccio It is true, they kill
With as much license as a judge.

Mosca Nay, more;
For he but kills, sir, where the law condemns,
And these can kill him too.

Corbaccio Ay, or me;
Or any man. How does his apoplex?
Is that strong on him still?

Mosca Most violent.
His speech is broken, and his eyes are set,
His face drawn longer than 'twas wont -

Corbaccio How! how!
Stronger than he was wont?

Mosca No, sir: his face
Drawn longer than 'twas wont.

Corbaccio O, good!

Mosca His mouth
Is ever gaping, and his eyelids hang.

Corbaccio Good.

Mosca A freezing numbness stiffens all his joints,
And makes the colour of his flesh like lead.

Corbaccio 'Tis good.

Mosca His pulse beats slow, and dull.

Corbaccio Good symptoms still.

Mosca And from his brain -

Corbaccio I conceive you; good.

Mosca Flows a cold sweat, with a continual rheum,
Forth the resolved corners of his eyes.

Corbaccio Is't possible? Yet I am better, ha!
How does he, with the swimming of his head?

Mosca O, sir, 'tis past the scotomy; he now
Hath lost his feeling, and hath left to snort:
You hardly can perceive him, that he breathes.

Corbaccio Excellent, excellent! sure I shall outlast him
This makes me young again, a score of years.

Mosca I was a coming for you, sir.

Corbaccio Has he made his will?
What has he given me?

Mosca No, sir.

Corbaccio Nothing! ha?

Mosca He has not made his will, sir.

Corbaccio Oh, oh, oh!
What then did Voltore, the lawyer, here?

Mosca He smelt a carcass, sir, when he but heard
My master was about his testament;
As I did urge him to it for your good -

Corbaccio He came unto him, did he? I thought so.

Mosca Yes, and presented him this piece of plate.

Corbaccio To be his heir?

Mosca I do not know, sir.

Corbaccio True:
I know it too.

Mosca [Aside] By your own scale, sir.

Corbaccio Well,
I shall prevent him, yet. See, Mosca, look,
Here, I have brought a bag of bright chequines,
Will quite weigh down his plate.

Mosca [Taking the bag] Yea, marry, sir.
This is true physic, this your sacred medicine;
No talk of opiates, to this great elixir!

Corbaccio 'Tis aurum palpabile, if not potabile.

Mosca It shall be minister'd to him, in his bowl.

Corbaccio Ay, do, do, do.

Mosca Most blessed cordial!
This will recover him.

Corbaccio Yes, do, do, do.

Mosca I think it were not best, sir.

Corbaccio What?

Mosca To recover him.

Corbaccio O, no, no, no; by no means.

Mosca Why, sir, this
Will work some strange effect, if he but feel it.

Corbaccio 'Tis true, therefore forbear; I'll take my venture:
Give me it again.

Mosca At no hand; pardon me:
You shall not do yourself that wrong, sir. I
Will so advise you, you shall have it all.

Corbaccio How?

Mosca All, sir; 'tis your right, your own: no man
Can claim a part: 'tis yours, without a rival,
Decreed by destiny.

Corbaccio How, how, good Mosca?

Mosca I'll tell you, sir. This fit he shall recover.

Corbaccio I do conceive you.

Mosca And, on first advantage
Of his gain'd sense, will I re-importune him
Unto the making of his testament:
And shew him this. [Pointing to the money.]

Corbaccio Good, good.

Mosca 'Tis better yet,
If you will hear, sir.

Corbaccio Yes, with all my heart.

Mosca Now, would I counsel you, make home with speed:
There, frame a will; whereto you shall inscribe
My master your sole heir.

Corbaccio And disinherit
My son!

Mosca O, sir, the better: for that colour
Shall make it much more taking.

Corbaccio O, but colour?

Mosca This will, sir, you shall send it unto me.
Now, when I come to inforce, as I will do,
Your cares, your watchings, and your many prayers,
Your more than many gifts, your this day's present,
And last, produce your will; where, without thought,
Or least regard, unto your proper issue,
A son so brave, and highly meriting,
The stream of your diverted love hath thrown you
Upon my master, and made him your heir:
He cannot be so stupid, or stone-dead,
But out of conscience, and mere gratitude -

Corbaccio He must pronounce me his?

Mosca 'Tis true.

Corbaccio This plot
Did I think on before.

Mosca I do believe it.

Corbaccio Do you not believe it?

Mosca Yes, sir.

Corbaccio Mine own project.

Mosca Which, when he hath done, sir -

Corbaccio Publish'd me his heir?

Mosca And you so certain to survive him -

Corbaccio Ay.

Mosca Being so lusty a man -

Corbaccio 'Tis true.

Mosca Yes, sir -

Corbaccio I thought on that too. See, how he should be
The very organ to express my thoughts!

Mosca You have not only done yourself a good -

Corbaccio But multiplied it on my son.

Mosca 'Tis right, sir.

Corbaccio Still, my invention.

Mosca 'Las, sir! heaven knows,
It hath been all my study, all my care,
(I e'en grow grey withal,) how to work things -

Corbaccio I do conceive, sweet Mosca.

Mosca You are he,
For whom I labour here.

Corbaccio Ay, do, do, do:
I'll straight about it. [Going.]

Mosca Rook go with you, raven!

Corbaccio I know thee honest.

Mosca [Aside] You do lie, sir!

Corbaccio And -

Mosca Your knowledge is no better than your ears, sir.

Corbaccio I do not doubt, to be a father to thee.

Mosca Nor I to gull my brother of his blessing.

Corbaccio I may have my youth restored to me, why not?

Mosca Your worship is a precious ass!

Corbaccio What say'st thou?

Mosca I do desire your worship to make haste, sir.

Corbaccio 'Tis done, 'tis done; I go.

Exit

Volpone [Leaping from his couch] O, I shall burst!
Let out my sides, let out my sides -

Mosca Contain
Your flux of laughter, sir: you know this hope
Is such a bait, it covers any hook.

Volpone O, but thy working, and thy placing it!
I cannot hold; good rascal, let me kiss thee:
I never knew thee in so rare a humour.

Mosca Alas, sir, I but do as I am taught;
Follow your grave instructions; give them words;
Pour oil into their ears, and send them hence.

Volpone 'Tis true, 'tis true. What a rare punishment
Is avarice to itself!

Mosca Ay, with our help, sir.

Volpone So many cares, so many maladies,
So many fears attending on old age,
Yea, death so often call'd on, as no wish
Can be more frequent with them, their limbs faint,
Their senses dull, their seeing, hearing, going,
All dead before them; yea, their very teeth,
Their instruments of eating, failing them:
Yet this is reckon'd life! nay, here was one,
Is now gone home, that wishes to live longer!
Feels not his gout, nor palsy; feigns himself
Younger by scores of years, flatters his age
With confident belying it, hopes he may,
With charms, like Aeson, have his youth restored:
And with these thoughts so battens, as if fate
Would be as easily cheated on, as he,
And all turns air!

Knocking within

Who's that there, now? a third!

Mosca Close, to your couch again; I hear his voice:
It is Corvino, our spruce merchant.

Volpone [Lies down as before] Dead.

Mosca Another bout, sir, with your eyes. [Anointing them]
Who's there?

Enter CORVINO

Signior Corvino! come most wish'd for! O,
How happy were you, if you knew it, now!

Corvino Why? what? wherein?

Mosca The tardy hour is come, sir.

Corvino He is not dead?

Mosca Not dead, sir, but as good;
He knows no man.

Corvino How shall I do then?

Mosca Why, sir?

Corvino I have brought him here a pearl.

Mosca Perhaps he has
So much remembrance left, as to know you, sir:
He still calls on you; nothing but your name
Is in his mouth. Is your pearl orient, sir?

Corvino Venice was never owner of the like.

Volpone [Faintly] Signior Corvino!

Mosca Hark.

Volpone Signior Corvino!

Mosca He calls you; step and give it to him. - He's here, sir,
And he has brought you a rich pearl.

Corvino How do you, sir?
Tell him, it doubles the twelfth carat.

Mosca Sir,
He cannot understand, his hearing's gone;
And yet it comforts him to see you -

Corvino Say,
I have a diamond for him, too.

Mosca Best shew it, sir;
Put it into his hand; 'tis only there
He apprehends: he has his feeling, yet.
See how he grasps it!

Corvino 'Las, good gentleman!
How pitiful the sight is!

Mosca Tut! forget, sir.
The weeping of an heir should still be laughter
Under a visor.

Corvino Why, am I his heir?

Mosca Sir, I am sworn, I may not shew the will
Till he be dead; but here has been Corbaccio,
Here has been Voltore, here were others too,
I cannot number 'em, they were so many;
All gaping here for legacies: but I,
Taking the vantage of his naming you,
Signior Corvino, Signior Corvino, took
Paper, and pen, and ink, and there I asked him,
Whom he would have his heir? Corvino. Who
Should be executor? Corvino. And,
To any question he was silent to,
I still interpreted the nods he made,
Through weakness, for consent: and sent home th' others
Nothing bequeath'd them, but to cry and curse.

Corvino O, my dear Mosca!

They embrace

Does he not perceive us?

Mosca No more than a blind harper. He knows no man,
No face of friend, nor name of any servant,
Who 'twas that fed him last, or gave him drink:
Not those he hath begotten, or brought up,
Can he remember.

Corvino Has he children?

Mosca Bastards,
Some dozen, or more, that he begot on beggars,
Gypsies, and Jews, and black-moors, when he was drunk.
Knew you not that, sir? 'tis the common fable.
The dwarf, the fool, the eunuch, are all his;
He's the true father of his family.
In all, save me: - but he has given them nothing.

Corvino That's well, that's well! Art sure he does not hear us?

Mosca Sure, sir! why, look you, credit your own sense.

Shouts in VOLPONE'S ear

The pox approach, and add to your diseases,
If it would send you hence the sooner, sir,
For your incontinence, it hath deserv'd it
Thoroughly, and thoroughly, and the plague to boot! -
You may come near, sir. - Would you would once close
Those filthy eyes of yours, that flow with slime,
Like two frog-pits; and those same hanging cheeks,

Cover'd with hide instead of skin - Nay, help, sir -
That look like frozen dish-clouts set on end!

Corvino [Aloud] Or like an old smoked wall, on which the rain
Ran down in streaks!

Mosca Excellent, sir! speak out:
You may be louder yet; a culverin
Discharged in his ear would hardly bore it.

Corvino His nose is like a common sewer, still running.

Mosca 'Tis good! And what his mouth?

Corvino A very draught.

Mosca O, stop it up -

Corvino By no means.

Mosca 'Pray you, let me:
Faith I could stifle him rarely with a pillow,
As well as any woman that should keep him.

Corvino Do as you will; but I'll begone.

Mosca Be so:
It is your presence makes him last so long.

Corvino I pray you, use no violence.

Mosca No, sir! why?
Why should you be thus scrupulous, pray you, sir?

Corvino Nay, at your discretion.

Mosca Well, good sir, begone.

Corvino I will not trouble him now, to take my pearl.

Mosca Puh! nor your diamond. What a needless care
Is this afflicts you? Is not all here yours?
Am not I here, whom you have made your creature?
That owe my being to you?

Corvino Grateful Mosca!
Thou art my friend, my fellow, my companion,
My partner, and shalt share in all my fortunes.

Mosca Excepting one.

Corvino What's that?

Mosca Your gallant wife, sir, -

Exit CORVINO

Now is he gone: we had no other means
To shoot him hence, but this.

Volpone My divine Mosca!
Thou hast today outgone thyself.

Knocking within

Who's there?
I will be troubled with no more. Prepare
Me music, dances, banquets, all delights;
The Turk is not more sensual in his pleasures,
Than will Volpone.

Exit MOSCA

Let me see; a pearl!
A diamond! plate! chequines! Good morning's purchase!
Why, this is better than rob churches, yet;
Or fat, by eating, once a month, a man -

Re-enter MOSCA

Who is't?

Mosca The beauteous lady Would-be, sir,
Wife to the English knight, sir Politick Would-be,
(This is the style, sir, is directed me,)
Hath sent to know how you have slept tonight,
And if you would be visited?

Volpone Not now:
Some three hours hence -

Mosca I told the squire so much.

Volpone When I am high with mirth and wine; then, then:
'Fore heaven, I wonder at the desperate valour
Of the bold English, that they dare let loose
Their wives to all encounters!

Mosca Sir, this knight
Had not his name for nothing, he is politick,
And knows, howe'er his wife affect strange airs,

She hath not yet the face to be dishonest:
But had she signior Corvino's wife's face -

Volpone Has she so rare a face?

Mosca O, sir, the wonder,
The blazing star of Italy! a wench
Of the first year! a beauty ripe as harvest!
Whose skin is whiter than a swan all over,
Than silver, snow, or lilies! a soft lip,
Would tempt you to eternity of kissing!
And flesh that melteth in the touch to blood!
Bright as your gold, and lovely as your gold!

Volpone Why had not I known this before?

Mosca Alas, sir,
Myself but yesterday discover'd it.

Volpone How might I see her?

Mosca O, not possible;
She's kept as warily as is your gold;
Never does come abroad, never takes air,
But at a window. All her looks are sweet,
As the first grapes or cherries, and are watch'd
As near as they are.

Volpone I must see her.

Mosca Sir,
There is a guard of spies ten thick upon her,
All his whole household; each of which is set
Upon his fellow, and have all their charge,
When he goes out, when he comes in, examined.

Volpone I will go see her, though but at her window.

Mosca In some disguise, then.

Volpone That is true; I must
Maintain mine own shape still the same: we'll think.

Exeunt

Act 2

Scene1: St. Mark's Plaoe; a retired corner before Corvino's House

Enter SIR POLITICK WOULD-BE, and PEREGRINE

Sir Politick Sir, to a wise man, all the world's his soil:
It is not Italy, nor France, nor Europe,
That must bound me, if my fates call me forth.
Yet, I protest, it is no salt desire
Of seeing countries, shifting a religion,
Nor any disaffection to the state
Where I was bred, and unto which I owe
My dearest plots, hath brought me out; much less,
That idle, antique, stale, gray-headed project
Of knowing men's minds and manners, with Ulysses!
But a peculiar humour of my wife's
Laid for this height of Venice, to observe,
To quote, to learn the language, and so forth -
I hope you travel, sir, with license?

Peregrine Yes.

Sir Politick I dare the safelier converse - How long, sir,
Since you left England?

Peregrine Seven weeks.

Sir Politick So lately!
You have not been with my lord ambassador?

Peregrine Not yet, sir.

Sir Politick Pray you, what news, sir, vents our climate?
I heard last night a most strange thing reported
By some of my lord's followers, and I long
To hear how 'twill be seconded.

Peregrine What was't, sir?

Sir Politick Marry, sir, of a raven that should build
In a ship royal of the king's.

Peregrine This fellow,
[Aside] Does he gull me, trow? or is gull'd? Your name, sir.

Sir Politick My name is Politick Would-be.

Peregrine [Aside] O, that speaks him. -
A knight, sir?

Sir Politick A poor knight, sir.

Peregrine Your lady

Lies here in Venice, for intelligence
Of tires, and fashions, and behaviour,
Among the courtezans? the fine lady Would-be?

Sir Politick Yes, sir; the spider and the bee, ofttimes,
Suck from one flower.

Peregrine Good sir Politick,
I cry you mercy; I have heard much of you:
'Tis true, sir, of your raven.

Sir Politick On your knowledge?

Peregrine Yes, and your lion's whelping in the Tower.

Sir Politick Another whelp!

Peregrine Another, sir.

Sir Politick Now heaven!
What prodigies be these? The fires at Berwick!
And the new star! these things concurring, strange,
And full of omen! Saw you those meteors?

Peregrine I did, sir.

Sir Politick Fearful! Pray you, sir, confirm me,
Were there three porpoises seen above the bridge,
As they give out?

Peregrine Six, and a sturgeon, sir.

Sir Politick I am astonish'd.

Peregrine Nay, sir, be not so;
I'll tell you a greater prodigy than these.

Sir Politick What should these things portend?

Peregrine The very day
(Let me be sure) that I put forth from London,
There was a whale discover'd in the river,
As high as Woolwich, that had waited there,
Few know how many months, for the subversion
Of the Stode fleet.

Sir Politick Is't possible? believe it,
'Twas either sent from Spain, or the archdukes:
Spinola's whale, upon my life, my credit!
Will they not leave these projects? Worthy sir,

Some other news.

Peregrine Faith, Stone the fool is dead,
And they do lack a tavern fool extremely.

Sir Politick Is Mass Stone dead?

Peregrine He's dead, sir; why, I hope
You thought him not immortal? - [Aside] O, this knight,
Were he well known, would be a precious thing
To fit our English stage: he that should write
But such a fellow, should be thought to feign
Extremely, if not maliciously.

Sir Politick Stone dead!

Peregrine Dead. - Lord! how deeply, sir, you apprehend it?
He was no kinsman to you?

Sir Politick That I know of.
Well! the same fellow was an unknown fool.

Peregrine And yet you knew him, it seems?

Sir Politick I did so. Sir,
I knew him one of the most dangerous heads
Living within the state, and so I held him.

Peregrine Indeed, sir?

Sir Politick While he lived, in action.
He has received weekly intelligence,
Upon my knowledge, out of the Low Countries,
For all parts of the world, in cabbages;
And those dispensed again to ambassadors,
In oranges, musk-melons, apricocks,
Lemons, pome-citrons, and such-like; sometimes
In Colchester oysters, and your Selsey cockles.

Peregrine You make me wonder.

Sir Politick Sir, upon my knowledge.
Nay, I've observed him, at your public ordinary
Take his advertisement from a traveller.
A conceal'd statesman, in a trencher of meat;
And instantly, before the meal was done,
Convey an answer in a tooth-pick.

Peregrine Strange!
How could this be, sir?

Sir Politick Why, the meat was cut
So like his character, and so laid, as he
Must easily read the cipher.

Peregrine I have heard,
He could not read, sir.

Sir Politick So 'twas given out,
In policy, by those that did employ him:
But he could read, and had your languages,
And to't, as sound a noddle -

Peregrine I have heard, sir,
That your baboons were spies, and that they were
A kind of subtle nation near to China.

Sir Politick Ay, ay, your Mamaluchi. Faith, they had
Their hand in a French plot or two; but they
Were so extremely given to women, as
They made discovery of all: yet I
Had my advices here, on Wednesday last.
From one of their own coat, they were return'd,
Made their relations, as the fashion is,
And now stand fair for fresh employment.

Peregrine [Aside] 'Heart!
This sir Pol will be ignorant of nothing.
It seems, sir, you know all.

Sir Politick Not all, sir, but
I have some general notions. I do love
To note and to observe: though I live out,
Free from the active torrent, yet I'd mark
The currents and the passages of things,
For mine own private use; and know the ebbs
And flows of state.

Peregrine Believe it, sir, I hold
Myself in no small tie unto my fortunes,
For casting me thus luckily upon you,
Whose knowledge, if your bounty equal it,
May do me great assistance, in instruction
For my behaviour, and my bearing, which
Is yet so rude and raw.

Sir Politick Why, came you forth
Empty of rules for travel?

Peregrine Faith, I had
Some common ones, from out that vulgar grammar,

Which he that cried Italian to me, taught me.

Sir Politick Why this it is that spoils all our brave bloods,
Trusting our hopeful gentry unto pedants,
Fellows of outside, and mere bark. You seem
To be a gentleman, of ingenuous race: -
I not profess it, but my fate hath been
To be, where I have been consulted with,
In this high kind, touching some great men's sons,
Persons of blood and honour. -

Enter MOSCA and NANO disguised, followed by persons with materials for erecting a Stage

Peregrine Who be these, sir?

Mosca Under that window, there 't must be. The same.

Sir Politick Fellows, to mount a bank. Did your instructor
In the dear tongues, never discourse to you
Of the Italian mountebanks?

Peregrine Yes, sir.

Sir Politick Why,
Here you shall see one.

Peregrine They are quacksalvers;
Fellows, that live by venting oils and rugs.

Sir Politick Was that the character he gave you of them?

Peregrine As I remember.

Sir Politick Pity his ignorance.
They are the only knowing men of Europe!
Great general scholars, excellent physicians,
Most admired statesmen, profest favourites,
And cabinet counsellors to the greatest princes;
The only languaged men of all the world!

Peregrine And, I have heard, they are most lewd impostors;
Made all of terms and shreds; no less beliers
Of great men's favours, than their own vile med'cines;
Which they will utter upon monstrous oaths:
Selling that drug for two-pence, ere they part,
Which they have valued at twelve crowns before.

Sir Politick Sir, calumnies are answer'd best with silence.
Yourself shall judge. - Who is it mounts, my friends?

Mosca Scoto of Mantua, sir.

Sir Politick Is't he? Nay, then
I'll proudly promise, sir, you shall behold
Another man than has been phant'sied to you.
I wonder yet, that he should mount his bank,
Here in this nook, that has been wont t'appear
In face of the Piazza! - Here he comes.

Enter VOLPONE, disguised as a mountebank Doctor, and followed by a crowd of people

Volpone [to NANO] Mount, zany.

Mob Follow, follow, follow, follow!

Sir Politick See how the people follow him! he's a man
May write ten thousand crowns in bank here. Note,

VOLPONE mounts the Stage

Mark but his gesture: - I do use to observe
The state he keeps in getting up.

Peregrine 'Tis worth it, sir.

Volpone Most noble gentlemen, and my worthy patrons! It may seem strange,
that I, your Scoto Mantuano, who was ever wont to fix my bank in face of
the public Piazza, near the shelter of the Portico: to the Procuratia,
should now, after eight months' absence from this illustrious city of
Venice, humbly retire myself into an obscure nook of the Piazza.

Sir Politick Did not I now object the same?

Peregrine Peace, sir.

Volpone Let me tell you: I am not, as your Lombard proverb saith, cold on
my feet; or content to part with my commodities at a cheaper rate, than I
accustomed: look not for it. Nor that the calumnious reports of that
impudent detractor, and shame to our profession, (Alessandro Buttone, I
mean,) who gave out, in public, I was condemned a sforzato to the galleys,
for poisoning the cardinal Bembo's -- cook, hath at all attached, much less
dejected me. No, no, worthy gentlemen; to tell you true, I cannot endure to
see the rabble of these ground ciarlitani, that spread their cloaks on the
pavement, as if they meant to do feats of activity, and then come in
lamely, with their mouldy tales out of Boccacio, like stale Tabarine, the
fabulist: some of them discoursing their travels, and of their tedious
captivity in the Turks' gallies, when, indeed, were the truth known, they
were the Christians' gallies, where very temperately they eat bread, and
drunk water, as a wholesome penance, enjoined them by their confessors, for

base pilferies.

Sir Politick Note but his bearing, and contempt of these.

Volpone These turdy-facy-nasty-paty-lousy-fartical rogues, with one poor groat's-worth of unprepared antimony, finely wrapt up in several scartoccios, are able, very well, to kill their twenty a week, and play; yet, these meagre, starved spirits, who have half stopt the organs of their minds with earthy oppilations, want not their favourers among your shrivell'd sallad-eating artizans, who are overjoyed that they may have their half-pe'rth of physic; though it purge them into another world, it makes no matter.

Sir Politick Excellent! have you heard better language, sir?

Volpone Well, let them go. And, gentlemen, honourable gentlemen, know, that for this time, our bank, being thus removed from the clamours of the canaglia, shall be the scene of pleasure and delight; for I have nothing to sell, little or nothing to sell.

Sir Politick I told you, sir, his end.

Peregrine You did so, sir.

Volpone I protest, I, and my six servants, are not able to make of this precious liquor, so fast as it is fetch'd away from my lodging by gentlemen of your city; strangers of the Terra-firma; worshipful merchants; ay, and senators too: who, ever since my arrival, have detained me to their uses, by their splendidous liberalities. And worthily; for, what avails your rich man to have his magazines stuff with moscadelli, or of the purest grape, when his physicians prescribe him, on pain of death, to drink nothing but water cocted with aniseeds? O, health! health! the blessing of the rich! the riches of the poor! who can buy thee at too dear a rate, since there is no enjoying this world without thee? Be not then so sparing of your purses, honourable gentlemen, as to abridge the natural course of life -

Peregrine You see his end.

Sir Politick Ay, is't not good?

Volpone For, when a humid flux, or catarrh, by the mu tability of air, falls from your head into an arm or shoulder, or any other part; take you a ducket, or your chequin of gold, and apply to the place affected: see what good effect it can work. No, no, 'tis this blessed unguento, this rare extraction, that hath only power to disperse all malignant humours, that proceed either of hot, cold, moist, or windy causes -

Peregrine I would he had put in dry too.

Sir Politick 'Pray you, observe.

Volpone To fortify the most indigest and crude stomach, ay, were it of one that, through extreme weakness, vomited blood, applying only a warm napkin to the place, after the unction and fricace; - for the vertigine in the head, putting but a drop into your nostrils, likewise behind the ears; a most sovereign and approved remedy: the mal caduco, cramps, convulsions, paralyties, epilepsies, tremor-cordia, retired nerves, ill vapours of the spleen, stopping of the liver, the stone, the strangury, hernia ventosa, iliaca passio; stops a dysenteria immediately; easeth the torsion of the small guts; and cures melancholia hypondriaca, being taken and applied according to my printed receipt. [Pointing fo his bill and his vial] For, this is the physician, this the medicine; this counsels, this cures; this gives the direction, this works the effect; and, in sum, both together may be termed an abstract of the theorick and practick in the Aesculapian art. 'Twill cost you eight crowns. And, - Zan Fritada, prithee sing a verse extempore in honour of it.

Sir Politick How do you like him, sir?

Peregrine Most strangely, I!

Sir Politick Is not his language rare?

Peregrine But alchemy,
I never heard the like; or Broughton's books.

NANO sings

Had old Hippocrates, or Galen,
That to their books put med'cines all in,
But known this secret, they had never
(Of which they will be guilty ever)
Been murderers of so much paper,
Or wasted many a hurtless taper;
No Indian drug had e'er been famed,
Tobacco, sassafras not named;
Ne yet, of guacum one small stick, sir,
Nor Raymund Lully's great elixir.
Ne had been known the Danish Gonswart,
Or Paracelsus, with his long sword.

Peregrine All this, yet, will not do; eight crowns is high.

Volpone No more. - Gentlemen, if I had but time to discourse to you the miraculous effects of this my oil, surnamed Oglio del Scoto; with the countless catalogue of those I have cured of the aforesaid, and many more diseases; the patents and privileges of all the princes and commonwealths of Christendom; or but the depositions of those that appeared on my part, before the signiory of the Sanita and most learned College of Physicians; where I was authorised, upon notice taken of the admirable virtues of my medicaments, and mine own excellency in matter of rare and unknown secrets,

not only to disperse them publicly in this famous city, but in all the territories, that happily joy under the government of the most pious and magnificent states of Italy. But may some other gallant fellow say "O, there be divers that make professions to have as good, and as experimented receipts as yours:" indeed, very many have assayed, like apes, in imitation of that, which is really and essentially in me, to make of this oil; bestowed great cost in furnaces, stills, alembecks, continual fires, and preparation of the ingredients, (as indeed there goes to it six hundred several simples, besides some quantity of human fat, for the conglutination, which we buy of the anatomists,) but, when these practitioners come to the last decoction, blow, blow, puff, puff, and all flies in fumo: ha, ha, ha! Poor wretches! I rather pity their folly and indiscretion, than their loss of time and money; for these may be recovered by industry: but to be a fool born, is a disease incurable.

For myself, I always from my youth have endeavoured to get the rarest secrets, and book them, either in exchange, or for money: I spared nor cost nor labour, where any thing was worthy to be learned. And, gentlemen, honourable gentlemen, I will undertake, by virtue of chemical art, out of the honourable hat that covers your head, to extract the four elements; that is to say, the fire, air, water, and earth, and return you your felt without burn or stain. For, whilst others have been at the Balloo, I have been at my book; and am now past the craggy paths of study, and come to the flowery plains of honour and reputation.

Sir Politick I do assure you, sir, that is his aim.

Volpone But to our price -

Peregrine And that withal, sir Pol.

Volpone You all know, honourable gentlemen, I never valued this ampulla, or vial, at less than eight crowns; but for this time, I am content to be deprived of it for six: six crowns is the price, and less in courtesy I know you cannot offer me; take it or leave it, howsoever, both it and I am at your service. I ask you not as the value of the thing, for then I should demand of you a thousand crowns, so the cardinals Montalto, Ferrese, the great Duke of Tuscany, my gossip, with divers other princes, have given me; but I despise money. Only to shew my affection to you, honourable gentlemen, and your illustrious State here, I have neglected the messages of these princes, mine own offices, franed my journey hither, only to present you with the fruits of my travels. - Tune your voices once more to the touch of your instruments, and give the honourable assembly some delightful recreation.

Peregrine What monstrous and most painful circumstance
Is here, to get some three or four gazettes,
Some three-pence in the whole! for that 'twill come to.

NANO sings

You that would last long, list to my song,
Make no more coil, but buy of this oil.
Would you be ever fair and young?
Stout of teeth, and strong of tongue?
Tart of palate? quick of ear?
Sharp of sight? of nostril clear?
Moist of hand? and light of foot?
Or, I will come nearer to't,
Would you live free from all diseases?
Do the act your mistress pleases,
Yet fright all aches from your bones?
Here's a medicine for the nones.

Volpone Well, I am in a humour at this time to make a present of the small quantity my coffer contains; to the rich in courtesy, and to the poor for God's sake. Wherefore now mark: I ask'd you six crowns; and six crowns, at other times, you have paid me; you shall not give me six crowns, nor five, not four, nor three, nor two, nor one; nor half a ducat; no, nor a moccinigo. Sixpence it will cost you, or six hundred pound - expect no lower price, for, by the banner of my front, I will not bate a bagatine, - that I will have, only, a pledge of your loves, to carry something from amongst you, to shew I am not contemn'd by you. Therefore, now, toss your handkerchiefs, cheerfully, cheerfully; and be advertised, that the first heroic spirit that deigns to grace me with a handkerchief, I will give it a little remembrance of something, beside, shall please it better, than if I had presented it with a double pistolet.

Peregrine Will you be that heroic spark, sir Pol?

CELIA at a window above, throws down her handkerchief

O, see! the window has prevented you.

Volpone Lady, I kiss your bounty; and for this timely grace you have done your poor Scoto of Mantua, I will return you, over and above my oil, a secret of that high and inestimable nature, shall make you for ever enamour'd on that minute, wherein your eye first descended on so mean, yet not altogether to be despised, an object. Here is a powder conceal'd in this paper, of which, if I should speak to the worth, nine thousand volumes were but as one page, that page as a line, that line as a word; so short is this pilgrimage of man (which some call life) to the expressing of it. Would I reflect on the price, why, the whole world is but as an empire, that empire as a province, that province as a bank, that bank as a private purse to the purchase of it. I will only tell you; it is the powder that made Venus a goddess (given her by Apollo,) that kept her perpetually young, clear'd her wrinkles, firm'd her gums, fill'd her skin, colour'd her hair; from her derived to Helen, and at the sack of Troy unfortunately lost: till now, in this our age, it was as happily recovered, by a studious antiquary, out of some ruins of Asia, who sent a moiety of it to the court of France, (but much sophisticated,) wherewith the ladies there, now,

colour their hair. The rest, of this present, remains with me; extracted to a quintessence: so that, wherever it but touches, in youth it perpetually preserves, in age restores the complexion; seats your teeth, did they dance like virginal jacks, firm as a wall; makes them white as ivory, that were black as -

Enter CORVINO

Corvino Spight o' the devil, and my shame! come down here;
Come down; - No house but mine to make your scene?
Signior Flaminio, will you down, sir? down?
What, is my wife your Franciscina, sir?
No windows on the whole Piazza, here,
To make your properties, but mine? but mine?

Beats away VOLPONE, NANO, etc.

Heart! ere tomorrow I shall be new-christen'd,
And call'd the Pantalone di Besogniosi,
About the town.

Peregrine What should this mean, sir Pol?

Sir Politick Some trick of state, believe it; I will home.

Peregrine It may be some design on you.

Sir Politick I know not,
I'll stand upon my guard.

Peregrine It is your best, sir.

Sir Politick This three weeks, all my advices, all my letters,
They have been intercepted.

Peregrine Indeed, sir!
Best have a care.

Sir Politick Nay, so I will.

Peregrine This knight,
I may not lose him, for my mirth, till night.

Exeunt

Scene 2: a room in Volpone's house

Enter VOLPONE and MOSCA

Volpone O, I am wounded!

Mosca Where, sir?

Volpone Not without;
Those blows were nothing: I could bear them ever.
But angry Cupid, bolting from her eyes,
Hath shot himself into me like a flame;
Where, now, he flings about his burning heat,
As in a furnace an ambitious fire,
Whose vent is stopt. The fight is all within me.
I cannot live, except thou help me, Mosca;
My liver melts, and I, without the hope
Of some soft air, from her refreshing breath,
Am but a heap of cinders.

Mosca 'Las, good sir,
Would you had never seen her!

Volpone Nay, would thou
Had'st never told me of her!

Mosca Sir, 'tis true;
I do confess I was unfortunate,
And you unhappy: but I'm bound in conscience,
No less than duty, to effect my best
To your release of torment, and I will, sir.

Volpone Dear Mosca, shall I hope?

Mosca Sir, more than dear,
I will not bid you to despair of aught
Within a human compass.

Volpone O, there spoke
My better angel. Mosca, take my keys,
Gold, plate, and jewels, all's at thy devotion;
Employ them how thou wilt; nay, coin me too:
So thou, in this, but crown my longings, Mosca.

Mosca Use but your patience.

Volpone So I have.

Mosca I doubt not.
To bring success to your desires.

Volpone Nay, then,
I not repent me of my late disguise.

Mosca If you can horn him, sir, you need not.

Volpone True:
Besides, I never meant him for my heir. -
Is not the colour of my beard and eyebrows
To make me known?

Mosca No jot.

Volpone I did it well.

Mosca So well, would I could follow you in mine,
With half the happiness! - [Aside] and yet I would
Escape your epilogue.

Volpone But were they gull'd
With a belief that I was Scoto?

Mosca Sir,
Scoto himself could hardly have distinguish'd!
I have not time to flatter you now; we'll part;
And as I prosper, so applaud my art.

Exeunt

Scene 3: A room in Corvino's house

Enter CORVINO, with his sword in his hand, dragging in CELIA

Corvino Death of mine honour, with the city's fool!
A juggling, tooth-drawing, prating mountebank!
And at a public window! where, whilst he,
With his strain'd action, and his dole of faces,
To his drug-lecture draws your itching ears,
A crew of old, unmarried, noted letchers,
Stood leering up like satyrs; and you smile
Most graciously, and fan your favours forth,
To give your hot spectators satisfaction!
What, was your mountebank their call? their whistle?
Or were you enamour'd on his copper rings,
His saffron jewel, with the toad-stone in't,
Or his embroider'd suit, with the cope-stitch,
Made of a herse cloth? or his old tilt-feather?
Or his starch'd beard? Well, you shall have him, yes!
He shall come home, and minister unto you
The fricace for the mother. Or, let me see,
I think you'd rather mount; would you not mount?
Why, if you'll mount, you may; yes, truly, you may:
And so you may be seen, down to the foot.
Get you a cittern, lady Vanity,
And be a dealer with the virtuous man;

Make one: I'll but protest myself a cuckold,
And save your dowry. I'm a Dutchman, I!
For, if you thought me an Italian,
You would be damn'd, ere you did this, you whore!
Thou'dst tremble, to imagine that the murder
Of father, mother, brother, all thy race,
Should follow, as the subject of my justice.

Celia Good sir, have patience.

Corvino What couldst thou propose
Less to thyself, than in this heat of wrath.
And stung with my dishonour, I should strike
This steel into thee, with as many stabs,
As thou wert gaz'd upon with goatish eyes?

Celia Alas, sir, be appeased! I could not think
My being at the window should more now
Move your impatience, than at other times.

Corvino No! not to seek and entertain a parley
With a known knave, before a multitude!
You were an actor with your handkerchief,
Which he most sweetly kist in the receipt,
And might, no doubt, return it with a letter,
And point the place where you might meet; your sister's,
Your mother's, or your aunt's might serve the turn.

Celia Why, dear sir, when do I make these excuses,
Or ever stir abroad, but to the church?
And that so seldom -

Corvino Well, it shall be less;
And thy restraint before was liberty,
To what I now decree: and therefore mark me.
First, I will have this bawdy light damm'd up;
And till't be done, some two or three yards off,
I'll chalk a line: o'er which if thou but chance
To set thy desperate foot, more hell, more horror,
More wild remorseless rage shall seize on thee,
Than on a conjuror, that had needless left
His circle's safety ere his devil was laid.
Then here's a lock which I will hang upon thee,
And, now I think on't, I will keep thee backwards;
Thy lodging shall be backwards; thy walks backwards;
Thy prospect, all be backwards; and no pleasure,
That thou shalt know but backwards: nay, since you force
My honest nature, know, it is your own,
Being too open, makes me use you thus:
Since you will not contain your subtle nostrils

In a sweet room, but they must snuff the air
Of rank and sweaty passengers.

Knocking within

One knocks.
Away, and be not seen, pain of thy life;
Nor look toward the window: if thou dost -
Nay, stay, hear this - let me not prosper, where,
But I will make thee an anatomy,
Dissect thee mine own self, and read a lecture
Upon thee to the city, and in public.
Away! -

Exit CELIA
Enter SERVANT

Who's there?

Servant 'Tis signior Mosca, sir.

Corvino Let him come in.

Exit Servant

His master's dead: there's yet
Some good to help the bad. -

Enter MOSCA

My Mosca, welcome!
I guess your news.

Mosca I fear you cannot, sir.

Corvino Is't not his death?

Mosca Rather the contrary.

Corvino Not his recovery?

Mosca Yes, sir.

Corvino I am curs'd,
I am bewitch'd, my crosses meet to vex me.
How? how? how? how?

Mosca Why, sir, with Scoto's oil;
Corbaccio and Voltore brought of it,
Whilst I was busy in an inner room -

Corvino Death! that damn'd mountebank; but for the law
Now, I could kill the rascal: it cannot be,
His oil should have that virtue. Have not I
Known him a common rogue, come fidling in
To the osteria, with a tumbling whore,
And, when he has done all his forced tricks, been glad
Of a poor spoonful of dead wine, with flies in't?
It cannot be. All his ingredients
Are a sheep's gall, a roasted bitch's marrow,
Some few sod earwigs, pounded caterpillars,
A little capon's grease, and fasting spittle:
I know them to a dram.

Mosca I know not, sir;
But some on't, there, they pour'd into his ears,
Some in his nostrils, and recover'd him;
Applying but the fricace.

Corvino Pox o' that fricace!

Mosca And since, to seem the more officious
And flatt'ring of his health, there, they have had,
At extreme fees, the college of physicians
Consulting on him, how they might restore him;
Where one would have a cataplasm of spices,
Another a flay'd ape clapp'd to his breast,
A third would have it a dog, a fourth an oil,
With wild cats' skins: at last, they all resolved
That, to preserve him, was no other means,
But some young woman must be straight sought out,
Lusty, and full of juice, to sleep by him;
And to this service, most unhappily,
And most unwillingly, am I now employ'd,
Which here I thought to pre-acquaint you with,
For your advice, since it concerns you most;
Because, I would not do that thing might cross
Your ends, on whom I have my whole dependance, sir:
Yet, if I do it not, they may delate
My slackness to my patron, work me out
Of his opinion; and there all your hopes,
Ventures, or whatsoever, are all frustrate!
I do but tell you, sir. Besides, they are all
Now striving, who shall first present him; therefore -
I could entreat you, briefly conclude somewhat;
Prevent them if you can.

Corvino Death to my hopes,
This is my villainous fortune! Best to hire
Some common courtezan.

Mosca Ay, I thought on that, sir;
But they are all so subtle, full of art -
And age again doting and flexible,
So as - I cannot tell - we may, perchance,
Light on a quean may cheat us all.

Corvino 'Tis true.

Mosca No, no: it must be one that has no tricks, sir,
Some simple thing, a creature made unto it;
Some wench you may command. Have you no kinswoman?
Odso - Think, think, think, think, think, think, think, sir.
One o' the doctors offer'd there his daughter.

Corvino How!

Mosca Yes, signior Lupo, the physician.

Corvino His daughter!

Mosca And a virgin, sir. Why, alas,
He knows the state of's body, what it is;
That nought can warm his blood, sir, but a fever;
Nor any incantation raise his spirit:
A long forgetfulness hath seized that part.
Besides sir, who shall know it? some one or two -

Corvino I pray thee give me leave. [Walks aside] If any man
But I had had this luck - The thing in't self,
I know, is nothing - Wherefore should not I
As well command my blood and my affections,
As this dull doctor? In the print of honour,
The cases are all one of wife and daughter.

Mosca [Aside] I hear him coming.

Corvino She shall do't: 'tis done.
Slight! if this doctor, who is not engaged,
Unless 't be for his counsel, which is nothing,
Offer his daughter, what should I, that am
So deeply in? I will prevent him: Wretch!
Covetous wretch! - Mosca, I have determined.

Mosca How, sir?

Corvino We'll make all sure. The party you wot of
Shall be mine own wife, Mosca.

Mosca Sir, the thing,
But that I would not seem to counsel you,

I should have motion'd to you, at the first:
And make your count, you have cut all their throats.
Why, 'tis directly taking a possession!
And in his next fit, we may let him go.
'Tis but to pull the pillow from his head,
And he is throttled: it had been done before,
But for your scrupulous doubts.

Corvino Ay, a plague on't,
My conscience fools my wit! Well, I'll be brief,
And so be thou, lest they should be before us:
Go home, prepare him, tell him with what zeal
And willingness I do it; swear it was
On the first hearing, as thou may'st do, truly,
Mine own free motion.

Mosca Sir, I warrant you,
I'll so possess him with it, that the rest
Of his starv'd clients shall be banish'd all;
And only you received. But come not, sir,
Until I send, for I have something else
To ripen for your good, you must not know't.

Corvino But do not you forget to send now.

Mosca Fear not.

Exit

Corvino Where are you, wife? my Celia! wife!

Re-enter CELIA

- What, blubbering?
Come, dry those tears. I think thou thought'st me in earnest;
Ha! by this light I talk'd so but to try thee:
Methinks the lightness of the occasion
Should have confirm'd thee. Come, I am not jealous.

Celia No!

Corvino Faith I am not, I, nor never was;
It is a poor unprofitable humour.
Do not I know, if women have a will,
They'll do 'gainst all the watches of the world,
And that the fiercest spies are tamed with gold?
Tut, I am confident in thee, thou shalt see't;
And see I'll give thee cause too, to believe it.
Come kiss me. Go, and make thee ready, straight,
In all thy best attire, thy choicest jewels,

Put them all on, and, with them, thy best looks:
We are invited to a solemn feast,
At old Volpone's, where it shall appear
How far I am free from jealousy or fear.

Exeunt

Act 3

Scene 1: a street

Enter MOSCA

Mosca I fear, I shall begin to grow in love
With my dear self, and my most properous parts,
They do so spring and burgeon; I can feel
A whimsy in my blood: I know not how,
Success hath made me wanton. I could skip
Out of my skin, now, like a subtle snake,
I am so limber. O! your parasite
Is a most precious thing, dropt from above,
Not bred 'mongst clods and clodpoles, here on earth.
I muse, the mystery was not made a science,
It is so liberally profest! almost
All the wise world is little else, in nature,
But parasites or sub-parasites. - And yet,
I mean not those that have your bare town-art,
To know who's fit to feed them; have no house,
No family, no care, and therefore mould
Tales for men's ears, to bait that sense; or get
Kitchen-invention, and some stale receipts
To please the belly, and the groin; nor those,
With their court dog-tricks, that can fawn and fleer,
Make their revenue out of legs and faces,
Echo my lord, and lick away a moth:
But your fine elegant rascal, that can rise,
And stoop, almost together, like an arrow;
Shoot through the air as nimbly as a star;
Turn short as doth a swallow; and be here,
And there, and here, and yonder, all at once;
Present to any humour, all occasion;
And change a visor, swifter than a thought!
This is the creature had the art born with him;
Toils not to learn it, but doth practise it
Out of most excellent nature: and such sparks
Are the true parasites, others but their zanis.

Enter BONARIO

Who's this? Bonario, old Corbaccio's son?
The person I was bound to seek. - Fair sir,
You are happily met.

Bonario That cannot be by thee.

Mosca Why, sir?

Bonario Nay, pray thee, know thy way, and leave me:
I would be loth to interchange discourse
With such a mate as thou art.

Mosca Courteous sir,
Scorn not my poverty.

Bonario Not I, by heaven;
But thou shalt give me leave to hate thy baseness.

Mosca Baseness!

Bonario Ay; answer me, is not thy sloth
Sufficient argument? thy flattery?
Thy means of feeding?

Mosca Heaven be good to me!
These imputations are too common, sir,
And easily stuck on virtue when she's poor.
You are unequal to me, and however
Your sentence may be righteous, yet you are not
That, ere you know me, thus proceed in censure:
St. Mark bear witness 'gainst you, 'tis inhuman.

Weeps

Bonario [Aside] What! does he weep? the sign is soft and good:
I do repent me that I was so harsh.

Mosca 'Tis true, that, sway'd by strong necessity,
I am enforced to eat my careful bread
With too much obsequy; 'tis true, beside,
That I am fain to spin mine own poor raiment
Out of my mere observance, being not born
To a free fortune: but that I have done
Base offices, in rending friends asunder,
Dividing families, betraying counsels,
Whispering false lies, or mining men with praises,
Train'd their credulity with perjuries,
Corrupted chastity, or am in love
With mine own tender ease, but would not rather
Prove the most rugged, and laborious course,

That might redeem my present estimation,
Let me here perish, in all hope of goodness.

Bonario [Aside] This cannot be a personated passion. -
I was to blame, so to mistake thy nature;
Prithee, forgive me: and speak out thy business.

Mosca Sir, it concerns you; and though I may seem,
At first to make a main offence in manners,
And in my gratitude unto my master;
Yet, for the pure love, which I bear all right,
And hatred of the wrong, I must reveal it.
This very hour your father is in purpose
To disinherit you -

Bonario How!

Mosca And thrust you forth,
As a mere stranger to his blood; 'tis true, sir,
The work no way engageth me, but, as
I claim an interest in the general state
Of goodness and true virtue, which I hear
To abound in you: and, for which mere respect,
Without a second aim, sir, I have done it.

Bonario This tale hath lost thee much of the late trust
Thou hadst with me; it is impossible:
I know not how to lend it any thought,
My father should be so unnatural.

Mosca It is a confidence that well becomes
Your piety; and form'd, no doubt, it is
From your own simple innocence: which makes
Your wrong more monstrous and abhorr'd. But, sir,
I now will tell you more. This very minute,
It is, or will be doing; and, if you
Shall be but pleased to go with me, I'll bring you,
I dare not say where you shall see, but where
Your ear shall be a witness of the deed;
Hear yourself written bastard, and profest
The common issue of the earth.

Bonario I am amazed!

Mosca Sir, if I do it not, draw your just sword,
And score your vengeance on my front and face:
Mark me your villain: you have too much wrong,
And I do suffer for you, sir. My heart
Weeps blood in anguish -

Bonario Lead; I follow thee.

Exeunt

Scene 2: a room in Volpone's house

Enter VOLPONE

Volpone Mosca stays long, methinks. - Bring forth you sports,
And help to make the wretched time more sweet.

Enter NANO, ANDROGYNO, and CASTRONE

Nano Dwarf, fool, and eunuch, well met here we be.
A question it were now, whether of us three,
Being all the known delicates of a rich man,
In pleasing him, claim the precedency can?

Castrone I claim for myself.

Androgyno And so doth the fool.

Nano 'Tis foolish indeed: let me set you both to school.
First for your dwarf, he's little and witty,
And every thing, as it is little, is pretty;
Else why do men say to a creature of my shape,
So soon as they see him, It's a pretty little ape?
And why a pretty ape, but for pleasing imitation
Of greater men's actions, in a ridiculous fashion?
Beside, this feat body of mine doth not crave
Half the meat, drink, and cloth, one of your bulks will have.
Admit your fool's face be the mother of laughter,
Yet, for his brain, it must always come after:
And though that do feed him, it's a pitiful case,
His body is beholding to such a bad face.

Knocking within

Volpone Who's there? my couch; away! look! Nano, see:

Exeunt ANDROGYNO and CASTRONE

Give me my caps, first go, enquire.

Exit NANO

- Now, Cupid
Send it be Mosca, and with fair return!

Nano [Within] It is the beauteous madam -

Volpone Would-be is it?

Nano The same.

Volpone Now torment on me! Squire her in;
For she will enter, or dwell here for ever:
Nay, quickly. [Retires to his couch] - That my fit were past! I fear
A second hell too, that my lothing this
Will quite expel my appetite to the other:
Would she were taking now her tedious leave.
Lord, how it threatens me what I am to suffer!

Re-enter NANO, with Lady POLITICK WOULD-BE

Lady Politick I thank you, good sir. 'Pray you signify
Unto your patron, I am here. - This band
Shews not my neck enough. - I trouble you, sir;
Let me request you, bid one of my women
Come hither to me. - In good faith, I am drest
Most favourably today! It is no matter:
'Tis well enough. -

Enter 1st WAITING-WOMAN

Look, see, these petulant things,
How they have done this!

Volpone [Aside] I do feel the fever
Entering in at mine ears; O, for a charm,
To fright it hence!

Lady Politick Come nearer: is this curl
In his right place, or this? Why is this higher
Than all the rest? You have not wash'd your eyes, yet!
Or do they not stand even in your head?
Where is your fellow? call her.

Exit 1st WOMAN

Nano Now, St. Mark
Deliver us! anon, she'll beat her women,
Because her nose is red.

Re-enter 1st with 2nd WOMAN

Lady Politick I pray you, view
This tire, forsooth: are all things apt, or no?

1st Woman One hair a little here, sticks out, forsooth.

Lady Politick Does't so, forsooth! and where was your dear sight
When it did so, forsooth! What now! bird-eyed?
And you, too? 'Pray you, both approach and mend it.
Now, by that light, I muse you are not ashamed!
I, that have preach'd these things so oft unto you,
Read you the principles, argued all the grounds,
Disputed every fitness, every grace,
Call'd you to counsel of so frequent dressings -

Nano [Aside] More carefully than of your fame or honour.

Lady Politick Made you acquainted, what an ample dowry
The knowledge of these things would be unto you,
Able, alone, to get you noble husbands
At your return: and you thus to neglect it!
Besides you seeing what a curious nation
The Italians are, what will they say of me?
"The English lady cannot dress herself."
Here's a fine imputation to our country!
Well, go your ways, and stay in the next room.
This fucus was too coarse too; it's no matter. -
Good sir, you'll give them entertainment?

Exeunt NANO and WAITING-WOMEN

Volpone The storm comes toward me.

Lady Politick [Goes to the couch] How does my Volpone?

Volpone Troubled with noise, I cannot sleep; I dreamt
That a strange fury enter'd, now, my house,
And, with the dreadful tempest of her breath,
Did cleave my roof asunder.

Lady Politick Believe me, and I
Had the most fearful dream, could I remember't -

Volpone [Aside] Out of my fate! I have given her the occasion
How to torment me: she will tell me her's.

Lady Politick Me thought, the golden mediocrity,
Polite and delicate -

Volpone O, if you do love me,
No more: I sweat, and suffer, at the mention
Of any dream; feel how I tremble yet.

Lady Politick Alas, good soul! the passion of the heart.
Seed-pearl were good now, boil'd with syrup of apples,
Tincture of gold, and coral, citron-pills,

Your elicampane root, myrobalanes -

Volpone [Aside] Ah me, I have ta'en a grass-hopper by the wing!

Lady Politick Burnt silk, and amber: You have muscadel
Good in the house -

Volpone You will not drink, and part?

Lady Politick No, fear not that. I doubt, we shall not get
Some English saffron, half a dram would serve;
Your sixteen cloves, a little musk, dried mints,
Bugloss, and barley-meal -

Volpone [Aside] She's in again!
Before I feign'd diseases, now I have one.

Lady Politick And these applied with a right scarlet cloth.

Volpone [Aside] Another flood of words! a very torrent!

Lady Politick Shall I, sir, make you a poultice?

Volpone No, no, no,
I'm very well, you need prescribe no more.

Lady Politick I have a little studied physic; but now,
I'm all for music, save, in the forenoons,
An hour or two for painting. I would have
A lady, indeed, to have all, letters and arts,
Be able to discourse, to write, to paint,
But principal, as Plato holds, your music,
And so does wise Pythagoras, I take it,
Is your true rapture: when there is concert
In face, in voice, and clothes: and is, indeed,
Our sex's chiefest ornament.

Volpone The poet
As old in time as Plato, and as knowing,
Says, that your highest female grace is silence.

Lady Politick Which of your poets? Petrarch, or Tasso, or Dante?
Guarini? Ariosto? Aretine?
Cieco di Hadria? I have read them all.

Volpone [Aside] Is every thing a cause to my destruction?

Lady Politick I think I have two or three of them about me.

Volpone [Aside] The sun, the sea, will sooner both stand still

Than her eternal tongue! nothing can 'scape it.

Lady Politick Here's Pastor Fido -

Volpone [Aside] Profess obstinate silence;
That's now my safest.

Lady Politick All our English writers,
I mean such as are happy in the Italian,
Will deign to steal out of this author, mainly:
Almost as much as from Montagnie:
He has so modern and facile a vein,
Fitting the time, and catching the court-ear!
Your Petrarch is more passionate, yet he,
In days of sonnetting, trusted them with much:
Dante is hard, and few can understand him.
But, for a desperate wit, there's Aretine;
Only, his pictures are a little obscene -
You mark me not.

Volpone Alas, my mind's perturb'd.

Lady Politick Why, in such cases, we must cure ourselves,
Make use of our philosophy -

Volpone Oh me!

Lady Politick And as we find our passions do rebel,
Encounter them with reason, or divert them,
By giving scope unto some other humour
Of lesser danger: as, in politic bodies,
There's nothing more doth overwhelm the judgment.
And cloud the understanding, than too much
Settling and fixing, and, as 'twere, subsiding
Upon one object. For the incorporating
Of these same outward things, into that part,
Which we call mental, leaves some certain faeces
That stop the organs, and as Plato says,
Assassinate our knowledge.

Volpone [Aside] Now, the spirit
Of patience help me!

Lady Politick Come, in faith, I must
Visit you more a days; and make you well:
Laugh and be lusty.

Volpone [Aside] My good angel save me!

Lady Politick There was but one sole man in all the world,

With whom I e'er could sympathise; and he
Would lie you, often, three, four hours together
To hear me speak; and be sometimes so rapt,
As he would answer me quite from the purpose,
Like you, and you are like him, just. I'll discourse,
An't be but only, sir, to bring you asleep,
How we did spend our time and loves together,
For some six years.

Volpone Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh!

Lady Politick For we were coaetanei, and brought up -

Volpone Some power, some fate, some fortunes rescue me!

Enter MOSCA

Mosca God save you, madam!

Lady Politick Good sir.

Volpone Mosca! welcome,
Welcome to my redemption.

Mosca Why, sir?

Volpone Oh,
Rid me of this my torture, quickly, there;
My madam, with the everlasting voice:
The bells, in time of pestilence, ne'er made
Like noise, or were in that perpetual motion!
The Cock-pit comes not near it. All my house,
But now, steam'd like a bath with her thick breath,
A lawyer could not have been heard; nor scarce
Another woman, such a hail of words
She has let fall. For hell's sake, rid her hence.

Mosca Has she presented?

Volpone O, I do not care;
I'll take her absence, upon any price,
With any loss.

Mosca Madam -

Lady Politick I have brought your patron
A toy, a cap here, of mine own work.

Mosca 'Tis well.
I had forgot to tell you, I saw your knight.

Where you would little think it. -

Lady Politick Where?

Mosca Marry,
Where yet, if you make haste, you may apprehend
Rowing upon the water in a gondole
With the most cunning courtezan of Venice.

Lady Politick Is't true?

Mosca Pursue them, and believe your eyes:
Leave me, to make your gift.

Exit LADY POLITICK hastily

- I knew 'twould take:
For, lightly, they that use themselves most license,
Are still most jealous.

Volpone Mosca, hearty thanks,
For thy quick fiction, and delivery of me.
Now to my hopes, what say'st thou?

Re-enter LADY POLITICK WOULD-BE

Lady Politick But do you hear, sir? -

Volpone Again! I fear a paroxysm.

Lady Politick Which way
Row'd they together?

Mosca Toward the Rialto.

Lady Politick I pray you lend me your dwarf.

Mosca I pray you take him.

Exit LADY POLITICK

Your hopes, sir, are like happy blossoms, fair,
And promise timely fruit, if you will stay
But the maturing; keep you at your couch,
Corbaccio will arrive straight, with the Will;
When he is gone, I'll tell you more.

Exit

Volpone My blood,
My spirits are return'd; I am alive:

Celia Not well, except you told me.

Corvino Now, I will:
Hark hither.

Exeunt

Scene 5: a closet opening into a gallery

Enter MOSCA and BONARIO

Mosca Sir, your father hath sent word,
It will be half an hour ere he come;
And therefore, if you please to walk the while
Into that gallery - at the upper end,
There are some books to entertain the time:
And I'll take care no man shall come unto you, sir.

Bonario Yes, I will stay there. - [Aside] I do doubt this fellow.

Exit

Mosca [Looking after him] There; he is far enough; he can hear nothing:
And, for his father, I can keep him off.

Exit

Scene 6: Volpone's chamber. - VOLPONE on his couch. Mosca sitting by him

Enter CORVINO, forcing in CELIA

Corvino Nay, now, there is no starting back, and therefore
Resolve upon it: I have so decreed.
It must be done. Nor would I move't afore,
Because I would avoid all shifts and tricks,
That might deny me.

Celia Sir, let me beseech you,
Affect not these strange trials; if you doubt
My chastity, why, lock me up for ever;
Make me the heir of darkness. Let me live,
Where I may please your fears, if not your trust.

Corvino Believe it, I have no such humour, I.
All that I speak I mean; yet I 'm not mad;
Nor horn-mad, see you? Go to, shew yourself
Obedient, and a wife.

Celia O heaven!

Corvino I say it,
Do so.

Celia Was this the train?

Corvino I've told you reasons;
What the physicians have set down; how much
It may concern me; what my engagements are;
My means; and the necessity of those means,
For my recovery: wherefore, if you be
Loyal, and mine, be won, respect my venture.

Celia Before your honour?

Corvino Honour! tut, a breath:
There's no such thing in nature: a mere term
Invented to awe fools. What, is my gold
The worse for touching, clothes for being look'd on?
Why, this is no more. An old decrepit wretch,
That has no sense, no sinew; takes his meat
With others' fingers; only knows to gape,
When you do scald his gums; a voice, a shadow;
And, what can this man hurt you?

Celia [Aside] Lord! what spirit
Is this hath enter'd him?

Corvino And for your fame,
That's such a jig; as if I would go tell it,
Cry it on the Piazza! who shall know it,
But he that cannot speak it, and this fellow,
Whose lips are in my pocket? save yourself,
(If you'll proclaim't, you may,) I know no other
Shall come to know it.

Celia Are heaven and saints then nothing?
Will they be blind or stupid?

Corvino How!

Celia Good sir,
Be jealous still, emulate them; and think
What hate they burn with toward every sin.

Corvino I grant you: if I thought it were a sin,
I would not urge you. Should I offer this
To some young Frenchman, or hot Tuscan blood
That had read Aretine, conn'd all his prints,
Knew every quirk within lust's labyrinth,
And were professed critic in lechery;

And I would look upon him, and applaud him,
This were a sin: but here, 'tis contrary,
A pious work, mere charity for physic,
And honest polity, to assure mine own.

Celia O heaven! canst thou suffer such a change?

Volpone Thou art mine honour, Mosca, and my pride,
My joy, my tickling, my delight! Go bring them.

Mosca [Advancing] Please you draw near, sir.

Corvino Come on, what -
You will not be rebellious? by that light -

Mosca Sir,
Signior Corvino, here, is come to see you.

Volpone Oh!

Mosca And hearing of the consultation had,
So lately, for your health, is come to offer,
Or rather, sir, to prostitute -

Corvino Thanks, sweet Mosca.

Mosca Freely, unask'd, or untreated -

Corvino Well.

Mosca As the true fervent instance of his love,
His own most fair and proper wife; the beauty,
Only of price in Venice -

Corvino 'Tis well urged.

Mosca To be your comfortress, and to preserve you.

Volpone Alas, I am past, already! Pray you, thank him
For his good care and promptness; but for that,
'Tis a vain labour e'en to fight 'gainst heaven;
Applying fire to stone - uh, uh, uh, uh! [Coughing]
Making a dead leaf grow again. I take
His wishes gently, though; and you may tell him,
What I have done for him: marry, my state is hopeless.
Will him to pray for me; and to use his fortune
With reverence, when he comes to't.

Mosca Do you hear, sir?
Go to him with your wife.

Corvino Heart of my father!
Wilt thou persist thus? come, I pray thee, come.
Thou seest 'tis nothing, Celia. By this hand,
I shall grow violent. Come, do't, I say.

Celia Sir, kill me, rather: I will take down poison,
Eat burning coals, do any thing. -

Corvino Be damn'd!
Heart, I will drag thee hence, home, by the hair;
Cry thee a strumpet through the streets; rip up
Thy mouth unto thine ears; and slit thy nose,
Like a raw rochet! - Do not tempt me; come,
Yield, I am loth - Death! I will buy some slave
Whom I will kill, and bind thee to him, alive;
And at my window hang you forth, devising
Some monstrous crime, which I, in capital letters,
Will eat into thy flesh with aquafortis,
And burning corsives, on this stubborn breast.
Now, by the blood thou hast incensed, I'll do it!

Celia Sir, what you please, you may, I am your martyr.

Corvino Be not thus obstinate, I have not deserved it:
Think who it is intreats you. 'Prithee, sweet; -
Good faith, thou shalt have jewels, gowns, attires,
What thou wilt think, and ask. Do but go kiss him.
Or touch him, but. For my sake. - At my suit. -
This once. - No! not! I shall remember this.
Will you disgrace me thus? Do you thirst my undoing?

Mosca Nay, gentle lady, be advised.

Corvino No, no.
She has watch'd her time. Ods precious, this is scurvy,
'Tis very scurvy; and you are -

Mosca Nay, good sir.

Corvino An arrant locust, by heaven, a locust!
Whore, crocodile, that hast thy tears prepared,
Expecting how thou'lt bid them flow -

Mosca Nay, 'pray you, sir!
She will consider.

Celia Would my life would serve
To satisfy -

Corvino S'death! if she would but speak to him,

And save my reputation, it were somewhat;
But spitefully to affect my utter ruin!

Mosca Ay, now you have put your fortune in her hands.
Why i'faith, it is her modesty, I must quit her.
If you were absent, she would be more cunning;
I know it: and dare undertake for her.
What woman can before her husband? 'pray you,
Let us depart, and leave her here.

Corvino Sweet Celia,
Thou may'st redeem all, yet; I'll say no more:
If not, esteem yourself as lost. Nay, stay there.
Shuts the door, and exit with Mosca

Celia O God, and his good angels! whither, whither,
Is shame fled human breasts? that with such ease,
Men dare put off your honours, and their own?
Is that, which ever was a cause of life,
Now placed beneath the basest circumstance,
And modesty an exile made, for money?

Volpone Ay, in Corvino, and such earth-fed minds,

Leaping from his couch

That never tasted the true heaven of love.
Assure thee, Celia, he that would sell thee,
Only for hope of gain, and that uncertain,
He would have sold his part of Paradise
For ready money, had he met a cope-man.
Why art thou mazed to see me thus revived?
Rather applaud thy beauty's miracle;
'Tis thy great work: that hath, not now alone,
But sundry times raised me, in several shapes,
And, but this morning, like a mountebank,
To see thee at thy window: ay, before
I would have left my practice, for thy love,
In varying figures, I would have contended
With the blue Porteus, or the horned flood.
Now art thou welcome.

Celia Sir!

Volpone Nay, fly me not.
Nor let thy false imagination
That I was bed-rid, make thee think I am so:
Thou shalt not find it. I am, now, as fresh,
As hot, as high, and in as jovial plight,
As when, in that so celebrated scene,

At recitation of our comedy,
For entertainment of the great Valois,
I acted young Antinous; and attracted
The eyes and ears of all the ladies present,
To admire each graceful gesture, note, and footing.

Sings

Come, my Celia, let us prove,
While we can, the sports of love,
Time will not be ours for ever,
He, at length, our good will sever;
Spend not then his gifts in vain;
Suns, that set, may rise again;
But if once we lose this light,
'Tis with us perpetual night.
Why should we defer our joys?
Fame and rumour are but toys.
Cannot we delude the eyes
Of a few poor household spies?
Or his easier ears beguile,
Thus removed by our wile? -
'Tis no sin love's fruits to steal:
But the sweet thefts to reveal;
To be taken, to be seen,
These have crimes accounted been.

Celia Some serene blast me, or dire lightning strike
This my offending face!

Volpone Why droops my Celia?
Thou hast, in place of a base husband, found
A worthy lover: use thy fortune well,
With secrecy and pleasure. See, behold,
What thou art queen of; not in expectation,
As I feed others: but possess'd and crown'd.
See, here, a rope of pearl; and each, more orient
Than that the brave Egyptian queen caroused:
Dissolve and drink them. See, a carbuncle,
May put out both the eyes of our St. Mark;
A diamond, would have bought Lollia Paulina,
When she came in like star-light, hid with jewels,
That were the spoils of provinces; take these,
And wear, and lose them: yet remains an ear-ring
To purchase them again, and this whole state.
A gem but worth a private patrimony,
Is nothing: we will eat such at a meal.
The heads of parrots, tongues of nightingales,
The brains of peacocks, and of estriches,
Shall be our food: and, could we get the phoenix,

Though nature lost her kind, she were our dish.

Celia Good sir, these things might move a mind affected
With such delights; but I, whose innocence
Is all I can think wealthy, or worth th' enjoying,
And which, once lost, I have nought to lose beyond it,
Cannot be taken with these sensual balts:
If you have conscience -

Volpone 'Tis the beggar's virtue;
If thou hast wisdom, hear me, Celia.
Thy baths shall be the juice of July-flowers,
Spirit of roses, and of violets,
The milk of unicorns, and panthers' breath
Gather'd in bags, and mixt with Cretan wines.
Our drink shall be prepared gold and amber;
Which we will take, until my roof whirl round
With the vertigo: and my dwarf shall dance,
My eunuch sing, my fool make up the antic,
Whilst we, in changed shapes, act Ovid's tales,
Thou, like Europa now, and I like Jove,
Then I like Mars, and thou like Erycine:
So, of the rest, till we have quite run through,
And wearied all the fables of the gods.
Then will I have thee in more modern forms,
Attired like some sprightly dame of France,
Brave Tuscan lady, or proud Spanish beauty;
Sometimes, unto the Persian sophy's wife;
Or the grand signior's mistress; and, for change,
To one of our most artful courtezans,
Or some quick Negro, or cold Russian;
And I will meet thee in as many shapes:
Where we may so transfuse our wandering souls
Out at our lips, and score up sums of pleasures,

Sings

That the curious shall not know
How to tell them as they flow;
And the envious, when they find
What their number is, be pined.

. Celia If you have ears that will be pierced - or eyes
That can be open'd - a heart that may be touch'd -
Or any part that yet sounds man about you -
If you have touch of holy saints - or heaven -
Do me the grace to let me 'scape - if not,
Be bountiful and kill me. You do know,
I am a creature, hither ill betray'd,
By one, whose shame I would forget it were:

If you will deign me neither of these graces,
Yet feed your wrath, sir, rather than your lust,
(It is a vice comes nearer manliness,)
And punish that unhappy crime of nature,
Which you miscall my beauty: flay my face,
Or poison it with ointments, for seducing
Your blood to this rebellion. Rub these hands,
With what may cause an eating leprosy,
E'en to my bones and marrow: any thing,
That may disfavour me, save in my honour -
And I will kneel to you, pray for you, pay down
A thousand hourly vows, sir, for your health;
Report, and think you virtuous -

Volpone Think me cold,
Frozen and impotent, and so report me?
That I had Nestor's hernia, thou wouldst think.
I do degenerate, and abuse my nation,
To play with opportunity thus long;
I should have done the act, and then have parley'd.
Yield, or I'll force thee.

Seizes her

Celia O! just God!

Volpone In vain -

Bonario [Rushing in] Forbear, foul ravisher, libidinous swine!
Free the forced lady, or thou diest, impostor.
But that I'm loth to snatch thy punishment
Out of the hand of justice, thou shouldst, yet,
Be made the timely sacrifice of vengeance,
Before this altar, and this dross, thy idol. -
Lady, let's quit the place, it is the den
Of villainy; fear nought, you have a guard:
And he, ere long, shall meet his just reward.

Exeunt BONARIO and CELIA

Volpone Fall on me, roof, and bury me in ruin!
Become my grave, that wert my shelter! O!
I am unmask'd, unspirited, undone,
Betray'd to beggary, to infamy -

Enter MOSCA, wounded and bleeding

Mosca Where shall I run, most wretched shame of men,
To beat out my unlucky brains?

Volpone Here, here.
What! dost thou bleed?

Mosca O that his well-driv'n sword
Had been so courteous to have cleft me down
Unto the navel, ere I lived to see
My life, my hopes, my spirits, my patron, all
Thus desperately engaged, by my error!

Volpone Woe on thy fortune!

Mosca And my follies, sir.

Volpone Thou hast made me miserable.

Mosca And myself, sir.
Who would have thought he would have hearken'd so?

Volpone What shall we do?

Mosca I know not; if my heart
Could expiate the mischance, I'd pluck it out.
Will you be pleased to hang me, or cut my throat?
And I'll requite you, sir. Let's die like Romans,
Since we have lived like Grecians.

Knocking within

Volpone Hark! who's there?
I hear some footing; officers, the saffi,
Come to apprehend us! I do feel the brand
Hissing already at my forehead; now,
Mine ears are boring.

Mosca To your couch, sir, you,
Make that place good, however.

VOLPONE lies down, as before

Guilty men
Suspect what they deserve still.

Enter CORBACCIO

Signior Corbaccio!

Corbaccio Why, how now, Mosca?

Mosca O, undone, amazed, sir.
Your son, I know not by what accident,
Acquainted with your purpose to my patron,

Touching your Will, and making him your heir,
Enter'd our house with violence, his sword drawn
Sought for you, call'd you wretch, unnatural,
Vow'd he would kill you.

Corbaccio Me!

Mosca Yes, and my patron.

Corbaccio This act shall disinherit him indeed;
Here is the Will.

Mosca 'Tis well, sir.

Corbaccio Right and well:
Be you as careful now for me.

Enter VOLTORE, behind

Mosca My life, sir,
Is not more tender'd; I am only yours.

Corbaccio How does he? will he die shortly, think'st thou?

Mosca I fear
He'll outlast May.

Corbaccio Today?

Mosca No, last out May, sir.

Corbaccio Could'st thou not give him a dram?

Mosca O, by no means, sir.

Corbaccio Nay, I'll not bid you.

Voltore [Coming forward] This is a knave, I see.

Mosca [Seeing VOLTORE. Aside] How, signior Voltore! did he hear me?

Voltore Parasite!

Mosca Who's that? - O, sir, most timely welcome -

Voltore Scarce,
To the discovery of your tricks, I fear.
You are his, only? and mine also, are you not?

Mosca Who? I, sir?

Voltore You, sir. What device is this
About a Will?

Mosca A plot for you, sir.

Voltore Come,
Put not your foists upon me; I shall scent them.

Mosca Did you not hear it?

Voltore Yes, I hear Corbaccio
Hath made your patron there his heir.

Mosca 'Tis true,
By my device, drawn to it by my plot,
With hope -

Voltore Your patron should reciprocate?
And you have promised?

Mosca For your good, I did, sir.
Nay, more, I told his son, brought, hid him here,
Where he might hear his father pass the deed:
Being persuaded to it by this thought, sir,
That the unnaturalness, first, of the act,
And then his father's oft disclaiming in him,
(Which I did mean t'help on,) would sure enrage him
To do some violence upon his parent,
On which the law should take sufficient hold,
And you be stated in a double hope:
Truth be my comfort, and my conscience,
My only aim was to dig you a fortune
Out of these two old rotten sepulchres -

Voltore I cry thee mercy, Mosca.

Mosca Worth your patience,
And your great merit, sir. And see the change!

Voltore Why, what success?

Mosca Most hapless! you must help, sir.
Whilst we expected the old raven, in comes
Corvino's wife, sent hither by her husband -

Voltore What, with a present?

Mosca No, sir, on visitation;
(I'll tell you how anon;) and staying long,
The youth he grows impatient, rushes forth,

Seizeth the lady, wounds me, makes her swear
(Or he would murder her, that was his vow)
To affirm my patron to have done her rape:
Which how unlike it is, you see! and hence,
With that pretext he's gone, to accuse his father,
Defame my patron, defeat you -

Voltore Where is her husband?
Let him be sent for straight.

Mosca Sir, I'll go fetch him.

Voltore Bring him to the Scrutineo.

Mosca Sir, I will.

Voltore This must be stopt.

Mosca O you do nobly, sir.
Alas, 'twas labour'd all, sir, for your good;
Nor was there want of counsel in the plot:
But fortune can, at any time, o'erthrow
The projects of a hundred learned clerks, sir.

Corbaccio [Listening] What's that?

Voltore Will't please you, sir, to go along?

Exit CORBACCIO, followed by VOLTORE

Mosca Patron, go in, and pray for our success.

Volpone [Rising from his couch]
Need makes devotion: heaven your labour bless!

Exeunt

Act 4

Scene 4: a street

Enter SLR POLITICK WOULD-BE and PEREGRINE

Sir Politick I told you, sir, it was a plot; you see
What observation is! You mention'd me
For some instructions: I will tell you, sir,
(Since we are met here in the height of Venice,)
Some few particulars I have set down,
Only for this meridian, fit to be known
Of your crude traveller; and they are these.

I will not touch, sir, at your phrase, or clothes,
For they are old.

Peregrine Sir, I have better.

Sir Politick Pardon,
I meant, as they are themes.

Peregrine O, sir, proceed:
I'll slander you no more of wit, good sir.

Sir Politick First, for your garb, it must be grave and serious,
Very reserv'd and lock'd; not tell a secret
On any terms, not to your father; scarce
A fable, but with caution: made sure choice
Both of your company, and discourse; beware
You never speak a truth -

Peregrine How!

Sir Politick Not to strangers,
For those be they you must converse with most;
Others I would not know, sir, but at distance,
So as I still might be a saver in them:
You shall have tricks else past upon you hourly.
And then, for your religion, profess none,
But wonder at the diversity, of all:
And, for your part, protest, were there no other
But simply the laws o' the land, you could content you
Nic. Machiavel, and Monsieur Bodin, both
Were of this mind. Then must you learn the use
And handling of your silver fork at meals,
The metal of your glass; (these are main matters
With your Italian;) and to know the hour
When you must eat your melons, and your figs.

Peregrine Is that a point of state too?

Sir Politick Here it is:
For your Venetian, if he see a man
Preposterous in the least, he has him straight;
He has; he strips him. I'll acquaint you, sir,
I now have lived here, 'tis some fourteen months
Within the first week of my landing here,
All took me for a citizen of Venice,
I knew the forms so well -

Peregrine [Aside] And nothing else.

Sir Politick I had read Contarene, took me a house,

Dealt with my Jews to furnish it with moveables -
Well, if I could but find one man, one man
To mine own heart, whom I durst trust, I would -

Peregrine What, what, sir?

Sir Politick Make him rich; make him a fortune:
He should not think again. I would command it.

Peregrine As how?

Sir Politick With certain projects that I have;
Which I may not discover.

Peregrine [Aside] If I had
But one to wager with, I would lay odds now,
He tells me instantly.

Sir Politick One is, and that
I care not greatly who knows, to serve the state
Of Venice with red herrings for three years,
And at a certain rate, from Rotterdam,
Where I have correspondence. There's a letter,
Sent me from one o' the states, and to that purpose:
He cannot write his name, but that's his mark.

Peregrine He is a chandler?

Sir Politick No, a cheesemonger.
There are some others too with whom I treat
About the same negociation;
And I will undertake it: for, 'tis thus.
I'll do't with ease, I have cast it all: Your hoy
Carries but three men in her, and a boy;
And she shall make me three returns a year:
So, if there come but one of three, I save;
If two, I can defalk: - but this is now,
If my main project fail.

Peregrine Then you have others?

Sir Politick I should be loth to draw the subtle air
Of such a place, without my thousand aims.
I'll not dissemble, sir: where'er I come,
I love to be considerative; and 'tis true,
I have at my free hours thought upon
Some certain goods unto the state of Venice,
Which I do call my Cautions; and, sir, which
I mean, in hope of pension, to propound
To the Great Council, then unto the Forty,

So to the Ten. My means are made already -

Peregrine By whom?

Sir Politick Sir, one that, though his place be obscure,
Yet he can sway, and they will hear him. He's
A commandador.

Peregrine What! a common serjeant?

Sir Politick Sir, such as they are, put it in their mouths,
What they should say, sometimes as well as greater:
I think I have my notes to shew you -

Searching his pockets

Peregrine Good sir.

Sir Politick But you shall swear unto me, on your gentry,
Not to anticipate -

Peregrine I, sir!

Sir Politick Nor reveal
A circumstance - My paper is not with me.

Peregrine O, but you can remember, sir.

Sir Politick My first is
Concerning tinder-boxes. You must know,
No family is here without its box.
Now, sir, it being so portable a thing,
Put case, that you or I were ill affected
Unto the state, sir; with it in our pockets,
Might not I go into the Arsenal,
Or you, come out again, and none the wiser?

Peregrine Except yourself, sir.

Sir Politick Go to, then. I therefore
Advertise to the state, how fit it were,
That none but such as were known patriots,
Sound lovers of their country, should be suffer'd
To enjoy them in their houses; and even those
Seal'd at some office, and at such a bigness
As might not lurk in pockets.

Peregrine Admirable!

Sir Politick My next is, how to enquire, and be resolv'd,

By present demonstration, whether a ship,
Newly arrived from Soria, or from
Any suspected part of all the Levant,
Be guilty of the plague: and where they use
To lie out forty, fifty days, sometimes,
About the Lazaretto, for their trial;
I'll save that charge and loss unto the merchant,
And in an hour clear the doubt.

Peregrine Indeed, sir!

Sir Politick Or - I will lose my labour.

Peregrine 'My faith, that's much.

Sir Politick Nay, sir, conceive me. It will cost me in onions,
Come thirty livres -

Peregrine Which is one pound sterling.

Sir Politick Beside my water-works: for this I do, sir.
First, I bring in your ship 'twixt two brick walls;
But those the state shall venture: On the one
I strain me a fair tarpauling, and in that
I stick my onions, cut in halves: the other
Is full of loop-holes, out at which I thrust
The noses of my bellows; and those bellows
I keep, with water-works, in perpetual motion,
Which is the easiest matter of a hundred.
Now, sir, your onion, which doth naturally
Attract the infection, and your bellows blowing
The air upon him, will show, instantly,
By his changed colour, if there be contagion;
Or else remain as fair as at the first.
Now it is known, 'tis nothing.

Peregrine You are right, sir.

Sir Politick I would I had my note.

Peregrine 'Faith, so would I:
But you have done well for once, sir.

Sir Politick Were I false,
Or would be made so, I could shew you reasons
How I could sell this state now to the Turk,
Spite of their gallies or their -

Examining his papers

Peregrine Pray you, sir Pol.

Sir Politick I have them not about me.

Peregrine That I fear'd:
They are there, sir.

Sir Politick No, this is my diary,
Wherein I note my actions of the day.

Peregrine Pray you, let's see, sir. What is here?
[Reads]
Notandum,
A rat had knawn my spur-leathers; notwithstanding,
I put on new, and did go forth: but first
I threw three beans over the threshold. Item,
I went and bought two tooth-picks, whereof one
I burst immediately, in a discourse
With a Dutch merchant, 'bout racion del stato.
From him I went and paid a moccinigo
For piecing my silk stockings; by the way
I cheapen'd sprats; and at St. Mark's I urined.
'Faith these are politic notes!

Sir Politick Sir, I do slip
No action of my life, but thus I quote it.

Peregrine Believe me, it is wise!

Sir Politick Nay, sir, read forth.

Enter, at a distance, Lady POLITICK WOULD-BE, NANO, and two
WAITING-WOMEN.

Lady Politick Where should this loose knight be, trow? sure he's housed.

Nano Why, then he's fast.

Lady Politick Ay, he plays both with me.
I pray you stay. This heat will do more harm
To my complexion, than his heart is worth.
(I do not care to hinder, but to take him.)
How it comes off! [Rubbing her cheeks]

1st Woman My master's yonder.

Lady Politick Where?

2nd Woman With a young gentleman.

Lady Politick That same's the party;
In man's apparel! 'Pray you, sir, jog my knight:
I will be tender to his reputation,
However he demerit.

Sir Politick [Seeing her] My lady!

Peregrine Where?

Sir Politick 'Tis she indeed, sir; you shall know her. She is,
Were she not mine, a lady of that merit;
For fashion and behaviour; and for beauty
I durst compare -

Peregrine It seems you are not jealous,
That dare commend her.

Sir Politick Nay, and for discourse -

Peregrine Being your wife, she cannot miss that.

Sir Politick [Introducing PEREGRINE] Madam,
Here is a gentleman, pray you, use him fairly;
He seems a youth, but he is -

Lady Politick None.

Sir Politick Yes, one
Has put his face as soon into the world -

Lady Politick You mean, as early? but today?

Sir Politick How's this?

Lady Politick Why, in this habit, sir; you apprehend me: -
Well, master Would-be, this doth not become you;
I had thought the odour, sir, of your good name
Had been more precious to you; that you would not
Have done this dire massacre on your honour;
One of your gravity and rank besides!
But knights, I see, care little for the oath
They make to ladies; chiefly, their own ladies.

Sir Politick Now, by my spurs, the symbol of my knighthood, -

Peregrine [Aside] Lord, how his brain is humbled for an oath!

Sir Politick I reach you not.

Lady Politick Right, sir, your policy
May bear it through thus. -

[To PEREGRINE] Sir, a word with you.
I would be loth to contest publicly
With any gentlewoman, or to seem
Forward, or violent, as the courtier says;
It comes too near rusticity in a lady,
Which I would shun by all means: and however
I may deserve from master Would-be, yet
T'have one fair gentlewoman thus be made
The unkind instrument to wrong another,
And one she knows not, ay, and to persever,
In my poor judgment, is not warranted
From being a solecism in our sex,
If not in manners.

Peregrine How is this!

Sir Politick Sweet madam,
Come nearer to your aim.

Lady Politick Marry, and will, sir.
Since you provoke me with your impudence,
And laughter of your light land-syren here,
Your Sporus, your hermaphrodite -

Peregrine What's here?
Poetic fury, and historic storms!

Sir Politick The gentleman, believe it, is of worth,
And of our nation.

Lady Politick Ay, your White-friars nation.
Come, I blush for you, master Would-be, I;
And am asham'd you should have no more forehead,
Than thus to be the patron, or St. George,
To a lewd harlot, a base fricatrice,
A female devil, in a male outside.

Sir Politick Nay,
An you be such a one, I must bid adieu
To your delights. The case appears too liquid.

Exit

Lady Politick Ay, you may carry't clear, with your state-face! -
But for your carnival concupiscence,
Who here is fled for liberty of conscience,
From furious persecution of the marshal,
Her will I dis'ple.

Peregrine This is fine, i'faith!

And do you use this often? Is this part
Of your wit's exercise, 'gainst you have occasion?
Madam -

Lady Politick Go to, sir.

Peregrine Do you hear me, lady?
Why, if your knight have set you to beg shirts,
Or to invite me home, you might have done it
A nearer way, by far.

Lady Politick This cannot work you
Out of my snare.

Peregrine Why, am I in it, then?
Indeed your husband told me you were fair.
And so you are; only your nose inclines,
That side that's next the sun, to the queen-apple.

Lady Politick This cannot be endur'd by any patience.

Enter MOSCA

Mosca What is the matter, madam?

Lady Politick If the senate
Right not my quest in this, I will protest them
To all the world, no aristocracy.

Mosca What is the injury, lady?

Lady Politick Why, the callet
You told me of, here I have ta'en disguised.

Mosca Who? this! what means your ladyship? the creature
I mention'd to you is apprehended now,
Before the senate; you shall see her -

Lady Politick Where?

Mosca I'll bring you to her. This young gentlernan,
I saw him land this morning at the port.

Lady Politick Is't possible! how has my judgment wander'd?
Sir, I must, blushing, say to you, I have err'd;
And plead your pardon.

Peregrine What, more changes yet!

Lady Politick I hope you have not the malice to remember
A gentlewoman's passion. If you stay

In Venice here, please you to use me, sir -

Mosca Will you go, madam?

Lady Politick Pray you, sir, use me; in faith,
The more you see me, the more I shall conceive
You have forgot our quarrel;

Exeunt Lady WOULD-BE, MOSCA, NANO, and WAITING-WOMEN

Peregrine This is rare!
Sir Politick Would-be? no; sir Politick Bawd,
To bring me thus acquainted with his wife!
Well, wise sir Pol, since you have practised thus
Upon my freshman-ship, I'll try your salt-head,
What proof it is against a counter-plot.

Exit

Scene 2: the Scrutineo, or Senate-House

Enter VOLTORE, CORBACCIO, CORVINO, and MOSCA

Voltore Well, now you know the carriage of the business,
Your constancy is all that is required
Unto the safety of it.

Mosca Is the lie
Safely convey'd amongst us? is that sure?
Knows every man his burden?

Corvino Yes.

Mosca Then shrink not.

Corvino But knows the advocate the truth?

Mosca O, sir,
By no means; I devised a formal tale,
That salv'd your reputation. But be valiant, sir.

Corvino I fear no one but him, that this his pleading
Should make him stand for a co-heir -

Mosca Co-halter!
Hang him; we will but use his tongue, his noise,
As we do croakers here.

Corvino Ay, what shall he do?

Mosca When we have done, you mean?

Corvino Yes.

Mosca Why, we'll think:

Sell him for mummia; he's half dust already.

Do you not smile, [to VOLTORE] to see this buffalo,
How he doth sport it with his head? - [Aside] I should,
If all were well and past. - Sir, [To CORBACCIO] only you
Are he that shall enjoy the crop of all,
And these not know for whom they toil.

Corbaccio Ay, peace.

Mosca [Turning to CORVINO] But you shall eat it. [Aside] Much!
[TO VOLTORE] Worshipful sir,
Mercury sit upon your thundering tongue,
Or the French Hercules, and make your language
As conquering as his club, to beat along,
As with a tempest, flat, our adversaries;
But much more yours, sir.

Voltore Here they come, have done.

Mosca I have another witness, if you need, sir,
I can produce.

Voltore Who is it?

Mosca Sir, I have her.

Enter Avocatori and take their seats, BONARIO, CELIA, Notario,
Commandadori, Saffi, and other Officers of justice

1st Avocatori The like of this the senate never heard of.

2nd Avocatori 'Twill come most strange to them when we report it.

4th Avocatori The gentlewoman has been ever held
Of unreproved name.

3rd Avocatori So has the youth.

4th Avocatori The more unnatural part that of his father.

2nd Avocatori More of the husband.

1st Avocatori I not know to give
His act a name, it is so monstrous!

4th Avocatori But the impostor, he's a thing created

To exceed example!

1st Avocatori And all after-times!

2nd Avocatori I never heard a true voluptuary
Described, but him.

3rd Avocatori Appear yet those were cited?

Notario All but the old magnifico, Volpone.

1st Avocatori Why is not he here?

Mosca Please your fatherhoods,
Here is his advocate: himself's so weak,
So feeble -

4th Avocatori What are you?

Bonario His parasite,
His knave, his pandar: I beseech the court,
He may be forced to come, that your grave eyes
May bear strong witness of his strange impostures.

Voltore Upon my faith and credit with your virtues,
He is not able to endure the air.

2nd Avocatori Bring him, however.

3rd Avocatori We will see him.

4th Avocatori Fetch him.

Voltore Your fatherhoods' fit pleasures be obey'd;

Exeunt OFFICERS

But sure, the sight will rather move your pities,
Than indignation. May it please the court,
In the mean time, he may be heard in me;
I know this place most void of prejudice,
And therefore crave it, since we have no reason
To fear our truth should hurt our cause.

3rd Avocatori Speak free.

Voltore Then know, most honour'd fathers, I must now
Discover to your strangely abused ears,
The most prodigious and most frontless piece
Of solid impudence, and treachery,
That ever vicious nature yet brought forth

To shame the state of Venice. This lewd woman,
That wants no artificial looks or tears
To help the vizor she has now put on,
Hath long been known a close adulteress
To that lascivious youth there; not suspected,
I say, but known, and taken in the act
With him; and by this man, the easy husband,
Pardon'd; whose timeless bounty makes him now
Stand here, the most unhappy, innocent person,
That ever man's own goodness made accused.
For these not knowing how to owe a gift
Of that dear grace, but with their shame; being placed
So above all powers of their gratitude,
Began to hate the benefit; and, in place
Of thanks, devise to extirpe the memory
Of such an act: wherein I pray your fatherhoods
To observe the malice, yea, the rage of creatures
Discover'd in their evils; and what heart
Such take, even from their crimes: - but that anon
Will more appear. - This gentleman, the father,
Hearing of this foul fact, with many others,
Which daily struck at his too tender ears,
And grieved in nothing more than that he could not
Preserve himself a parent, (his son's ills
Growing to that strange flood,) at last decreed
To disinherit him.

1st Avocatori These be strange turns!

2nd Avocatori The young man's fame was ever fair and honest.

Voltore So much more full of danger is his vice,
That can beguile so under shade of virtue.
But, as I said, my honour'd sires, his father
Having this settled purpose, by what means
To him betray'd, we know not, and this day
Appointed for the deed; that parricide,
I cannot style him better, by confederacy
Preparing this his paramour to be there,
Enter'd Volpone's house, (who was the man,
Your fatherhoods must understand, design'd
For the inheritance,) there sought his father: -
But with what purpose sought he him, my lords?
I tremble to pronounce it, that a son
Unto a father, and to such a father,
Should have so foul, felonious intent!
It was to murder him: when being prevented
By his more happy absence, what then did he?
Not check his wicked thoughts; no, now new deeds,
(Mischief doth never end where it begins)

An act of horror, fathers! he dragg'd forth
The aged gentleman that had there lain bed-rid
Three years and more, out of his innocent couch,
Naked upon the floor, there left him; wounded
His servant in the face: and, with this strumpet
The stale to his forged practice, who was glad
To be so active, - (I shall here desire
Your fatherhoods to note but my collections,
As most remarkable, -) thought at once to stop
His father's ends, discredit his free choice
In the old gentleman, redeem themselves,
By laying infamy upon this man,
To whom, with blushing, they should owe their lives.

1st Avocatori What proofs have you of this?

Bonario Most honoured fathers,
I humbly crave there be no credit given
To this man's mercenary tongue.

2nd Avocatori Forbear.

Bonario His soul moves in his fee.

3rd Avocatori O sir.

Bonario This fellow,
For six sols more, would plead against his Maker.

1st Avocatori You do forget yourself.

Voltore Nay. nay, grave fathers,
Let him have scope: can any man imagine
That he will spare his accuser, that would not
Have spared his parent?

1st Avocatori Well, produce your proofs.

Celia I would I could forget I were a creature.

Voltore Signior Corbaccio!

CORBACCIO comes forward

4th Avocatori What is he?

Voltore The father.

2nd Avocatori Has he had an oath?

Notario Yes.

Corbaccio What must I do now?

Notario Your testimony's craved.

Corbaccio Speak to the knave?
I'll have my mouth first stopt with earth; my heart
Abhors his knowledge: I disclaim in him.

1st Avocatori But for what cause?

Corbaccio The mere portent of nature!
He is an utter stranger to my loins.

Bonario Have they made you to this?

Corbaccio I will not hear thee,
Monster of men, swine, goat, wolf, parricide!
Speak not, thou viper.

Bonario Sir, I will sit down,
And rather wish my innocence should suffer,
Than I resist the authority of a father.

Voltore Signior Corvino!

CORVINO comes forward

2nd Avocatori This is strange.

1st Avocatori Who's this?

Notario The husband.

4th Avocatori Is he sworn?

Notario He is.

3rd Avocatori Speak, then.

Corvino This woman, please your fatherhoods, is a whore,
Of most hot exercise, more than a partrich,
Upon record -

1st Avocatori No more.

Corvino Neighs like a jennet.

Notario Preserve the honour of the court.

Corvino I shall,
And modesty of your most reverend ears.

And yet I hope that I may say, these eyes
Have seen her glued unto that piece of cedar,
That fine well-timber'd gallant; and that here
The letters may be read, thorough the horn,
That makes the story perfect.

Mosca Excellent! sir.

Corvino [Aside to MOSCA] There is no shame in this now, is there?

Mosca None.

Corvino Or if I said, I hoped that she were onward
To her damnation, if there be a hell
Greater than whore and woman; a good catholic
May make the doubt.

3rd Avocatori His grief hath made him frantic.

1st Avocatori Remove him hence.

CELIA swoons

2nd Avocatori Look to the woman.

Corvino Rare!
Prettily feign'd, again!

4th Avocatori Stand from about her.

1st Avocatori Give her the air.

3rd Avocatori [To MOSCA] What can you say?

Mosca My wound,
May it please your wisdoms, speaks for me, received
In aid of my good patron, when he mist
His sought-for father, when that well-taught dame
Had her cue given her, to cry out, A rape!

Bonario O most laid impudence! Fathers -

3rd Avocatori Sir, be silent;
You had your hearing free, so must they theirs.

2nd Avocatori I do begin to doubt the imposture here.

4th Avocatori This woman has too many moods.

Voltore Grave fathers,
She is a creature of a most profest

And prostituted lewdness.

Corvino Most impetuous,
Unsatisfied, grave fathers!

Voltore May her feignings
Not take your wisdoms: but this day she baited
A stranger, a grave knight, with her loose eyes,
And more lascivious kisses. This man saw them
Together on the water, in a gondola.

Mosca Here is the lady herself, that saw them too;
Without; who then had in the open streets
Pursued them, but for saving her knight's honour.

1st Avocatori Produce that lady.

2nd Avocatori Let her come.

Exit Mosca

4th Avocatori These things,
They strike with wonder.

3rd Avocatori I am turn'd a stone.

Re-enter MOSCA with Lady WOULD-BE

Mosca Be resolute, madam.

Lady Politick [Pointing to CELIA] Ay, this same is she.
Out, thou camelion harlot! now thine eyes
Vie tears with the hyena. Dar'st thou look
Upon my wronged face? - I cry your pardons,
I fear I have forgettingly transgressed
Against the dignity of the court -

2nd Avocatori No, madam.

Lady Politick And been exorbitant -

2nd Avocatori You have not, lady.

4th Avocatori These proofs are strong.

Lady Politick Surely, I had no purpose
To scandalise your honours, or my sex's.

3rd Avocatori We do believe it.

Lady Politick Surely, you may believe it.

2nd Avocatori Madam, we do.

Lady Politick Indeed you may; my breeding
Is not so coarse -

4th Avocatori We know it.

Lady Politick To offend
With pertinacy -

3rd Avocatori Lady -

Lady Politick Such a presence!
No surely.

1st Avocatori We well think it.

Lady Politick You may think it.

1st Avocatori Let her o'ercome. What witnesses have you
To make good your report?

Bonario Our consciences.

Celia And heaven, that never fails the innocent.

4th Avocatori These are no testimonies.

Bonario Not in your courts,
Where multitude, and clamour overcomes.

1st Avocatori Nay, then you do wax insolent.

Re-enter OFFICERS, bearing VOLPONE on a couch

Voltore Here, here,
The testimony comes, that will convince,
And put to utter dumbness their bold tongues:
See here, grave fathers, here's the ravisher,
The rider on men's wives, the great impostor,
The grand voluptuary! Do you not think
These limbs should affect ventry? or these eyes
Covet a concubine? pray you mark these hands;
Are they not fit to stroke a lady's breasts? -
Perhaps he doth dissemble!

Bonario So he does.

Voltore Would you have him tortured?

Bonario I would have him proved.

Voltore Best try him then with goads, or burning irons,
Put him to the strappado: I have heard
The rack hath cured the gout; 'faith, give it him,
And help him of a malady; be courteous.
I'll undertake, before these honour'd fathers,
He shall have yet as many left diseases,
As she has known adulterers, or thou strumpets. -
O, my most equal hearers, if these deeds,
Acts of this bold and most exorbitant strain,
May pass with sufferance, what one citizen
But owes the forfeit of his life, yea, fame,
To him that dares traduce him? which of you
Are safe, my honour'd fathers? I would ask,
With leave of your grave fatherhoods, if their plot
Have any face or colour like to truth?
Or if, unto the dullest nostril here,
It smell not rank, and most abhorred slander?
I crave your care of this good gentleman,
Whose life is much endanger'd by their fable;
And as for them, I will conclude with this,
That vicious persons, when they're hot and flesh'd
In impious acts, their constancy abounds:
Damn'd deeds are done with greatest confidence.

1st Avocatori Take them to custody, and sever them.

2nd Avocatori 'Tis pity two such prodigies should live.

1st Avocatori Let the old gentleman be return'd with care.

Exeunt Officers with VOLPONE

I'm sorry your credulity hath wrong'd him.

4th Avocatori These are two creatures!

3rd Avocatori I've an earthquake in me.

2nd Avocatori Their shame, even in their cradles, fled their faces.

4th Avocatori [To VOLTORE] You have done a worthy service to the state,
sir,
In their discovery.

1st Avocatori You shall hear, ere night,
What punishment the court decrees upon them.

Exeunt AVOCATORI, NOTARIO, and OFFICERS with BONARIO and CELIA

Voltore We thank your fatherhoods. - How like you it?

Mosca Rare.
I'd have your tongue, sir, tipt with gold for this;
I'd have you be the heir to the whole city;
The earth I'd have want men, ere you want living:
They're bound to erect your statue in St. Mark's.
Signior Corvino, I would have you go
And shew yourself, that you have conquer'd.

Corvino Yes.

Mosca It was much better that you should profess
Yourself a cuckold thus, than that the other
Should have been proved.

Corvino Nay, I consider'd that:
Now it is her fault.

Mosca Then it had been yours.

Corvino True; I do doubt this advocate still.

Mosca I'faith
You need not, I dare ease you of that care.

Corvino I trust thee, Mosca.

Exit

Mosca As your own soul, sir.

Corbaccio Mosca!

Mosca Now for your business, sir.

Corbaccio How! have you business?

Mosca Yes, your's, sir.

Corbaccio O, none else?

Mosca None else, not I.

Corbaccio Be careful, then.

Mosca Rest you with both your eyes, sir.

Corbaccio Dispatch it.

Mosca Instantly.

Corbaccio And look that all,

Whatever, be put in, jewels, plate, moneys,
Household stuff, bedding, curtains.

Mosca Curtain-rings, sir:
Only the advocate's fee must be deducted.

Corbaccio I'll pay him now; you'll be too prodigal.

Mosca Sir, I must tender it.

Corbaccio Two chequines is well.

Mosca No, six, sir.

Corbaccio 'Tis too much.

Mosca He talk'd a great while;
You must consider that, sir.

Corbaccio Well, there's three -

Mosca I'll give it him.

Corbaccio Do so, and there's for thee.

Exit

Mosca [Aside] Bountiful bones! What horrid strange offence
Did he commit 'gainst nature, in his youth,
Worthy this age? - [To VOLTORE] You see, sir, how I work
Unto your ends: take you no notice.

Voltore No,
I'll leave you.

Exit

Mosca All is yours, the devil and all:
Good advocate! - Madam, I'll bring you home.

Lady Politick No, I'll go see your patron.

Mosca That you shall not:
I'll tell you why. My purpose is to urge
My patron to reform his Will; and for
The zeal you have shewn today, whereas before
You were but third or fourth, you shall be now
Put in the first: which would appear as begg'd,
If you were present. Therefore -

Lady Politick You shall sway me.

Exeunt

Act 5

Scene 1: a room in Volpone's house

Enter VOLPONE

Volpone Well, I am here, and all this brunt is past.
I ne'er was in dislike with my disguise
'Till this fled moment: here 'twas good, in private;
But in your public, - cave whilst I breathe.
'Fore God, my left leg 'gan to have the cramp,
And I apprehended straight some power had struck me
With a dead palsy: Well! I must be merry,
And shake it off. A many of these fears
Would put me into some villainous disease,
Should they come thick upon me: I'll prevent 'em.
Give me a bowl of lusty wine, to fright
This humour from my heart. [Drinks] - Hum, hum, hum!
'Tis almost gone already; I shall conquer.
Any device, now, of rare ingenious knavery,
That would possess me with a violent laughter,
Would make me up again. [Drinks again] - So, so, so, so!
This heat is life; 'tis blood by this time: - Mosca!

Enter MOSCA

Mosca How now, sir? does the day look clear again?
Are we recover'd, and wrought out of error,
Into our way, to see our path before us?
Is our trade free once more?

Volpone Exquisite Mosca!

Mosca Was it not carried learnedly?

Volpone And stoutly:
Good wits are greatest in extremities.

Mosca It were a folly beyond thought, to trust
Any grand act unto a cowardly spirit:
You are not taken with it enough, methinks.

Volpone O, more than if I had enjoy'd the wench:
The pleasure of all woman-kind's not like it.

Mosca Why now you speak, sir. We must here be fix'd;
Here we must rest; this is our master-piece;

We cannot think to go beyond this.

Volpone True,
Thou hast play'd thy prize, my precious Mosca.

Mosca Nay, sir,
To gull the court -

Volpone And quite divert the torrent
Upon the innocent.

Mosca Yes, and to make
So rare a music out of discords -

Volpone Right.
That yet to me's the strangest, how thou hast borne it!
That these, being so divided 'mongst themselves,
Should not scent somewhat, or in me or thee,
Or doubt their own side.

Mosca True, they will not see't.
Too much light blinds them, I think. Each of them
Is so possest and stuff with his own hopes,
That any thing unto the contrary,
Never so true, or never so apparent,
Never so palpable, they will resist it -

Volpone Like a temptation of the devil.

Mosca Right, sir.
Merchants may talk of trade, and your great signiors
Of land that yields well; but if Italy
Have any glebe more fruitful than these fellows,
I am deceiv'd. Did not your advocate rare?

Volpone O - "My most honour'd fathers, my grave fathers,
Under correction of your fatherhoods,
What face of truth is here? If these strange deeds
May pass, most honour'd fathers" - I had much ado
To forbear laughing.

Mosca It seem'd to me, you sweat, sir.

Volpone In troth, I did a little.

Mosca But confess, sir,
Were you not daunted?

Volpone In good faith, I was
A little in a mist, but not dejected;

Never, but still my self.

Mosca I think it, sir.
Now, so truth help me, I must needs say this, sir,
And out of conscience for your advocate,
He has taken pains, in faith, sir, and deserv'd,
In my poor judgment, I speak it under favour,
Not to contrary you, sir, very richly -
Well - to be cozen'd.

Volpone Troth, and I think so too,
By that I heard him, in the latter end.

Mosca O, but before, sir: had you heard him first
Draw it to certain heads, then aggravate,
Then use his vehement figures - I look'd still
When he would shift a shirt: and, doing this
Out of pure love, no hope of gain -

Volpone 'Tis right.
I cannot answer him, Mosca, as I would,
Not yet; but for thy sake, at thy entreaty,
I will begin, even now - to vex them all,
This very instant.

Mosca Good sir.

Volpone Call the dwarf
And eunuch forth.

Mosca Castrone, Nano!

Enter CASTRONE and NANO

Nano Here.

Volpone Shall we have a jig now?

Mosca What you please, sir.

Volpone Go.
Straight give out about the streets, you two,
That I am dead; do it with constancy,
Sadly, do you hear? impute it to the grief
Of this late slander.

Exeunt CASTRONE and NANO

Mosca What do you mean, sir?

Volpone O,
I shall have instantly my Vulture, Crow,
Raven, come flying hither, on the news,
To peck for carrion, my she-wolf, and all,
Greedy, and full of expectation -

Mosca And then to have it ravish'd from their mouths!

Volpone 'Tis true. I will have thee put on a gown,
And take upon thee, as thou wert mine heir:
Shew them a will: Open that chest, and reach
Forth one of those that has the blanks; I'll straight
Put in thy name.

Mosca It will be rare, sir.

Gives him a paper

Volpone Ay,
When they ev'n gape, and find themselves deluded -

Mosca Yes.

Volpone And thou use them scurvily!
Dispatch, get on thy gown.

Mosca [Putting on a gown] But what, sir, if they ask
After the body?

Volpone Say, it was corrupted.

Mosca I'll say, it stunk, sir; and was fain to have it
Coffin'd up instantly, and sent away.

Volpone Any thing; what thou wilt. Hold, here's my will.
Get thee a cap, a count-book, pen and ink,
Papers afore thee; sit as thou wert taking
An inventory of parcels: I'll get up
Behind the curtain, on a stool, and hearken;
Sometime peep over, see how they do look,
With what degrees their blood doth leave their faces,
O, 'twill afford me a rare meal of laughter!

Mosca [Putting on a cap, and setting out the table, etc.]
Your advocate will turn stark dull upon it.

Volpone It will take off his oratory's edge.

Mosca But your clarissimo, old round-back, he
Will crump you like a hog-louse, with the touch.

Volpone And what Corvino?

Mosca O, sir, look for him,
Tomorrow morning, with a rope and dagger,
To visit all the streets; he must run mad.
My lady too, that came into the court,
To bear false witness for your worship -

Volpone Yes,
And kiss'd me 'fore the fathers, when my face
Flow'd all with oils.

Mosca And sweat, sir. Why, your gold
Is such another med'cine, it dries up
All those offensive savours: it transforms
The most deformed, and restores them lovely,
As 'twere the strange poetical girdle. Jove
Could not invent t' himself a shroud more subtle
To pass Acrisius' guards. It is the thing
Makes all the world her grace, her youth, her beauty.

Volpone I think she loves me.

Mosca Who? the lady, sir?
She's jealous of you.

Volpone Dost thou say so?

Knocking within

Mosca Hark,
There's some already.

Volpone Look.

Mosca It is the Vulture;
He has the quickest scent.

Volpone I'll to my place,
Thou to thy posture.

Goes behind the curtain

Mosca I am set.

Volpone But, Mosca,
Play the artificer now, torture them rarely.

Enter VOLTORE

Voltore How now, my Mosca?

Mosca [Writing] Turkey carpets, nine -

Voltore Taking an inventory! that is well.

Mosca Two suits of bedding, tissue -

Voltore Where's the Will?
Let me read that the while.

Enter Servants, with CORBACCIO in a chair

Corbaccio So, set me down,
And get you home.

Exeunt Servants

Voltore Is he come now, to trouble us!

Mosca Of cloth of gold, two more -

Corbaccio Is it done, Mosca?

Mosca Of several velvets eight -

Voltore I like his care.

Corbaccio Dost thou not hear?

Enter CORVINO

Corbaccio Ha! is the hour come, Mosca?

Volpone [Peeping over the curtain] Ay, now they muster.

Corvino What does the advocate here,
Or this Corbaccio?

Corbaccio What do these here?

Enter Lady POLITICK WOULD-BE

Lady Politick Mosca!
Is his thread spun?

Mosca Eight chests of linen -

Volpone O,
My fine dame Would-be, too!

Corvino Mosca, the Will,
That I may shew it these, and rid them hence.

Mosca Six chests of diaper, four of damask. - There.

Gives them the Will carelessly, over his shoulder

Corbaccio Is that the Will?

Mosca Down-beds and bolsters -

Volpone Rare!

Be busy still. Now they begin to flutter:

They never think of me. Look, see, see, see!

How their swift eyes run over the long deed,

Unto the name, and to the legacies,

What is bequeathed them there -

Mosca Ten suits of hangings -

Volpone Ay, in their garters, Mosca. Now their hopes
Are at the gasp.

Voltore Mosca the heir!

Corbaccio What's that?

Volpone My advocate is dumb; look to my merchant,
He has heard of some strange storm, a ship is lost,
He faints; my lady will swoon. Old glazen eyes,
He hath not reach'd his despair yet.

Corbaccio All these
Are out of hope; I am, sure, the man.

Takes the Will

Corvino But, Mosca -

Mosca Two cabinets.

Corvino Is this in earnest?

Mosca One
Of ebony -

Corvino Or do you but delude me?

Mosca The other, mother of pearl - I am very busy.
Good faith, it is a fortune thrown upon me -
Item, one salt of agate - not my seeking.

Lady Politick Do you hear, sir?

Mosca A perfumed box - 'Pray you forbear,
You see I'm troubled - made of an onyx -

Lady Politick How!

Mosca Tomorrow or next day, I shall be at leisure
To talk with you all.

Corvino Is this my large hope's issue?

Lady Politick Sir, I must have a fairer answer.

Mosca Madam!
Marry, and shall: 'pray you, fairly quit my house.
Nay, raise no tempest with your looks; but hark you,
Remember what your ladyship offer'd me
To put you in an heir; go to, think on it:
And what you said e'en your best madams did
For maintenance; and why not you? Enough.
Go home, and use the poor sir Pol, your knight, well,
For fear I tell some riddles; go, be melancholy.

Exit Lady WOULD-BE

Volpone O, my fine devil!

Corvino Mosca, 'pray you a word.

Mosca Lord! will you not take your dispatch hence yet?
Methinks, of all, you should have been the example.
Why should you stay here? with what thoughts, what promise?
Hear you; do you hot know, I know you an ass,
And that you would most fain have been a wittol,
If fortune would have let you? that you are
A declared cuckold, on good terms? This pearl,
You'll say, was yours? right: this diamond?
I'll not deny't, but thank you. Much here else?
It may be so. Why, think that these good works
May help to hide your bad. I'll not betray you;
Although you be but extraordinary,
And have it only in title, it sufficeth:
Go home, be melancholy too, or mad.

Exit CORVINO

Volpone Rare Mosca! how his villainy becomes him!

Voltore Certain he doth delude all these for me.

Corbaccio Mosca the heir!

Volpone O, his four eyes have found it.

Corbaccio I am cozen'd, cheated, by a parasite slave;
Harlot, thou hast gull'd me.

Mosca Yes, sir. Stop your mouth,
Or I shall draw the only tooth is left.
Are not you he, that filthy covetous wretch,
With the three legs, that here, in hope of prey,
Have, any time this three years, snuff'd about,
With your most grovelling nose, and would have hired
Me to the poisoning of my patron, sir?
Are not you he that have today in court
Profess'd the disinheriting of your son?
Perjured yourself? Go home, and die, and stink.
If you but croak a syllable, all comes out:
Away, and call your porters!

Exit CORBACCIO

Go, go, stink.

Volpone Excellent varlet!

Voltore Now, my faithful Mosca,
I find thy constancy.

Mosca Sir!

Voltore Sincere.

Mosca [Writing] A table
Of porphyry - I marle you'll be thus troublesome.

Voltore Nay, leave off now, they are gone.

Mosca Why, who are you?
What! who did send for you? O, cry you mercy,
Reverend sir! Good faith, I am grieved for you,
That any chance of mine should thus defeat
Your (I must needs say) most deserving travails:
But I protest, sir, it was cast upon me,
And I could almost wish to be without it,
But that the will o' the dead must be observ'd.
Marry, my joy is that you need it not;
You have a gift, sir, (thank your education,)
Will never let you want, while there are men,
And malice, to breed causes. Would I had
But half the like, for all my fortune, sir!
If I have any suits, as I do hope,

Things being so easy and direct, I shall not,
I will make bold with your obstreperous aid,
Conceive me, - for your fee, sir. In mean time,
You that have so much law, I know have the conscience
Not to be covetous of what is mine.
Good sir, I thank you for my plate; 'twill help
To set up a young man. Good faith, you look
As you were costive; best go home and purge, sir.

Exit VOLTORE

Volpone [Comes from behind the curtain]
Bid him eat lettuce well. My witty mischief,
Let me embrace thee. O that I could now
Transform thee to a Venus! - Mosca, go,
Straight take my habit of clarissimo,
And walk the streets; be seen, torment them more:
We must pursue, as well as plot. Who would
Have lost this feast?

Mosca I doubt it will lose them.

Volpone O, my recovery shall recover all.
That I could now but think on some disguise
To meet them in, and ask them questions:
How I would vex them still at every turn!

Mosca Sir, I can fit you.

Volpone Canst thou?

Mosca Yes, I know
One o' the commandadori, sir, so like you;
Him will I straight make drunk, and bring you his habit.

Volpone A rare disguise, and answering thy brain!
O, I will be a sharp disease unto them.

Mosca Sir, you must look for curses -

Volpone Till they burst;
The Fox fares ever best when he is curst.

Exeunt

Scene 2: a hall in Sir Politick's house

Enter PEREGRINE disguised, and three Merchants

Peregrine Am I enough disguised?

1st Merchant I warrant you.

Peregrine All my ambition is to fright him only.

2nd Merchant If you could ship him away, 'twere excellent.

3rd Merchant To Zant, or to Aleppo?

Peregrine Yes, and have his
Adventures put i' the Book of Voyages,
And his gull'd story register'd for truth.
Well, gentlemen, when I am in a while,
And that you think us warm in our discourse,
Know your approaches.

1st Merchant Trust it to our care.

Exeunt Merchants
Enter Waiting-woman.

Peregrine Save you, fair lady! Is sir Pol within?

Woman I do not know, sir.

Peregrine Pray you say unto him,
Here is a merchant upon earnest business,
Desires to speak with him.

Woman I will see, sir.

Exit

Peregrine I pray you. -
I see the family is all female here.

Re-enter Waiting-woman

Woman He says, sir, he has weighty affairs of state,
That now require him whole; some other time
You may possess him.

Peregrine Pray you say again,
If those require him whole, these will exact him,
Whereof I bring him tidings.

Exit Woman

What might be
His grave affair of state now? - how to make

Bolognian sausages here in Venice, sparing
One o' the ingredients?

Re-enter Waiting-woman

Woman Sir, he says, he knows
By your word tidings, that you are no statesman,
And therefore wills you stay.

Peregrine Sweet, pray you return him;
I have not read so many proclamations,
And studied them for words, as he has done -
But - here he deigns to come.

Exit Woman
Enter SIR POLITICK

Sir Politick Sir, I must crave
Your courteous pardon. There hath chanced today,
Unkind disaster 'twixt my lady and me;
And I was penning my apology,
To give her satisfaction, as you came now.

Peregrine Sir, I am grieved I bring you worse disaster:
The gentleman you met at the port today,
That told you, he was newly arrived -

Sir Politick Ay, was
A fugitive punk?

Peregrine No, sir, a spy set on you;
And he has made relation to the senate,
That you profest to him to have a plot
To sell the State of Venice to the Turk.

Sir Politick O me!

Peregrine For which, warrants are sign'd by this time,
To apprehend you, and to search your study
For papers -

Sir Politick Alas, sir, I have none, but notes
Drawn out of play-books -

Peregrine All the better, sir.

Sir Politick And some essays. What shall I do?

Peregrine Sir, best
Convey yourself into a sugar-chest;

Or, if you could lie round, a frail were rare,
And I could send you aboard.

Sir Politick Sir, I but talk'd so,
For discourse sake merely.

Knocking within

Peregrine Hark! they are there.

Sir Politick I am a wretch, a wretch!

Peregrine What will you do, sir?
Have you ne'er a currant-butt to leap into?
They'll put you to the rack; you must be sudden.

Sir Politick Sir, I have an ingine -

3rd Merchant [Within] Sir Politick Would-be!

2nd Merchant [Within] Where is he?

Sir Politick That I have thought upon before time.

Peregrine What is it?

Sir Politick I shall ne'er endure the torture.
Marry, it is, sir, of a tortoise-shell,
Fitted for these extremities: pray you, sir, help me.
Here I've a place, sir, to put back my legs,
Please you to lay it on, sir

Lies down while Peregrine plaecs the shell upon him

with this cap,

And my black gloves. I'll lie sir, like a tortoise,
'Till they are gone.

Peregrine And call you this an ingine?

Sir Politick Mine own device - Good sir, bid my wife's women
To burn my papers.

Exit PEREGRINE
The three MERCHANTS rush in

1st Merchant Where is he hid?

3rd Merchant We must,
And will sure find him.

2nd Merchant Which is his study?

Re-enter PEREGRINE

1st Merchant What
Are you, sir?

Peregrine I am a merchant, that came here
To look upon this tortoise.

3rd Merchant How!

1st Merchant St. Mark!
What beast is this!

Peregrine It is a fish.

2nd Merchant Come out here!

Peregrine Nay, you may strike him, sir, and tread upon him;
He'll bear a cart.

1st Merchant What, to run over him?

Peregrine Yes, sir.

3rd Merchant Let's jump upon him.

2nd Merchant Can he not go?

Peregrine He creeps, sir.

1st Merchant Let's see him creep.

Peregrine No, good sir, you will hurt him.

2nd Merchant Heart, I will see him creep, or prick his guts.

3rd Merchant Come out here!

Peregrine [Aside to SIR POLITICK] Pray you, sir! - Creep a little.

1st Merchant Forth.

2nd Merchant Yet farther.

Peregrine [Aside to SIR POLITICK] Good sir! - Creep.

2nd Merchant We'll see his legs.

They pull off the shell and discover him

3rd Merchant Ods so, he has garters!

1st Merchant Ay, and gloves!

2nd Merchant Is this
Your fearful tortoise?

Peregrine [Discovering himself] Now, sir Pol, we are even;
For your next project I shall be prepared:
I am sorry for the funeral of your notes, sir.

1st Merchant 'Twere a rare motion to be seen in Fleet-street.

2nd Merchant Ay, in the Term.

1st Merchant Or Smithfield, in the fair.

3rd Merchant Methinks 'tis but a melancholy sight.

Peregrine Farewell, most politic tortoise!

Exeunt PEREGRINE and MERCHANTS
Re-enter WAITING-WOMAN

Sir Politick Where's my lady?
Knows she of this?

Woman I know not, sir.

Sir Politick Enquire. -
O, I shall be the fable of all feasts,
The freight of the gazetti, ship-boy's tale;
And, which is worst, even talk for ordinaries.

Woman My lady's come most melancholy home,
And says, sir, she will straight to sea for physic.

Sir Politick And I to shun this place and clime for ever,
Creeping with house on back, and think it well
To shrink my poor head in my politic shell.

Exeunt

Scene 3: a room in Volpone's house

Enter MOSCA in the habit of a Clarissimo, and VOLPONE in that of a
Commandador

Volpone Am I then like him?

Mosca O, sir, you are he:
No man can sever you.

Volpone Good.

Mosca But what am I?

Volpone 'Fore heaven, a brave clarissimo; thou becom'st it!
Pity thou wert not born one.

Mosca [Aside] If I hold
My made one, 'twill be well.

Volpone I'll go and see
What news first at the court.

Exit

Mosca Do so. My Fox
Is out of his hole, and ere he shall re-enter,
I'll make him languish in his borrow'd case,
Except he come to composition with me. -
Androgyno, Castrone, Nano!

Enter ANDROGYNO, CASTRONE, and NANO

All Here.

Mosca Go, recreate yourselves abroad; go sport. -

Exeunt

So, now I have the keys, and am possest.
Since he will needs be dead afore his time,
I'll bury him, or gain by him: I am his heir,
And so will keep me, till he share at least.
To cozen him of all, were but a cheat
Well placed; no man would construe it a sin:
Let his sport pay for't. This is call'd the Fox-trap.

Exit

Scene 4: a street

Enter CORBACCIO and CORVINO

Corbaccio They say, the court is set.

Corvino We must maintain
Our first tale good, for both our reputations.

Corbaccio Why, mine's no tale: my son would there have kill'd me.

Corvino That's true, I had forgot: - [Aside] mine is, I'm sure.
But for your Will, sir.

Corbaccio Ay, I'll come upon him
For that hereafter, now his patron's dead.

Enter VOLPONE

Volpone Signior Corvino! and Corbaccio! sir,
Much joy unto you.

Corvino Of what?

Volpone The sudden good
Dropt down upon you -

Corbaccio Where?

Volpone And none knows how,
From old Volpone, sir.

Corbaccio Out, arrant knave!

Volpone Let not your too much wealth, sir, make you furious.

Corbaccio Away, thou varlet!

Volpone Why, sir?

Corbaccio Dost thou mock me?

Volpone You mock the world, sir; did you not change Wills?

Corbaccio Out, harlot!

Volpone O! belike you are the man,
Signior Corvino? 'faith, you carry it well;
You grow not mad withal; I love your spirit:
You are not over-leaven'd with your fortune.
You should have some would swell now, like a wine-fat,
With such an autumn - Did he give you all, sir?

Corvino Avoid, you rascal!

Volpone Troth, your wife has shewn
Herself a very woman; but you are well,
You need not care, you have a good estate,
To bear it out, sir, better by this chance:
Except Corbaccio have a share.

Corbaccio Hence, varlet.

Volpone You will not be acknown, sir; why, 'tis wise.
Thus do all gamesters, at all games, dissemble:
No man will seem to win.

Exeunt CORVINO and CORBACCIO

Here comes my vulture,
Heaving his beak up in the air, and snuffing.

Enter VOLTORE

Voltore Outstript thus, by a parasite! a slave,
Would run on errands, and make legs for crumbs!
Well, what I'll do -

Volpone The court stays for your worship.
I e'en rejoice, sir, at your worship's happiness,
And that it fell into so learned hands,
That understand the fingering -

Voltore What do you mean?

Volpone I mean to be a suitor to your worship,
For the small tenement, out of reparations,
That, to the end of your long row of houses,
By the Piscaria: it was, in Volpone's time,
Your predecessor, ere he grew diseased,
A handsome, pretty, custom'd bawdy-house
As any was in Venice, none dispraised;
But fell with him: his body and that house
Decay'd together.

Voltore Come, sir, leave your prating.

Volpone Why, if your worship give me but your hand,
That I may have the refusal, I have done.
'T a mere toy to you, sir; candle-rents;
As your learn'd worship knows -

Voltore What do I know?

Volpone Marry, no end of your wealth, sir: God decrease it!

Voltore Mistaking knave! what, mock'st thou my misfortune?

Exit

Volpone His blessing on your heart, sir; would 'twere more! -
Now to my first again, at the next corner.

Exit

Scene 5: another part of the street

Enter CORBACCIO and CORVINO
MOSCA passes over the Stage, before them

Corbaccio See, in our habit! see the impudent varlet!

Corvino That I could shoot mine eyes at him like gun-stones!

Enter VOLPONE

Volpone But is this true, sir, of the parasite?

Corbaccio Again, to afflict us! monster!

Volpone In good faith, sir,
I'm heartily grieved, a beard of your grave length
Should be so over-reach'd. I never brook'd
That parasite's hair; methought his nose should cozen:
There still was somewhat in his look, did promise
The bane of a clarissimo.

Corbaccio Knave -

Volpone Methinks
Yet you, that are so traded in the world,
A witty merchant, the fine bird, Corvino,
That have such moral emblems on your name,
Should not have sung your shame, and dropt your cheese
To let the Fox laugh at your emptiness.

Corvino Sirrah, you think the privilege of the place,
And your red saucy cap, that seems to me
Nail'd to your jolt-head with those two chequines,
Can warrant your abuses; come you hither:
You shall perceive, sir, I dare beat you; approach.

Volpone No haste, sir, I do know your valour well,
Since you durst publish what you are, sir.

Corvino Tarry,
I'd speak with you.

Volpone Sir, sir, another time -

Corvino Nay, now.

Volpone O lord, sir! I were a wise man,
Would stand the fury of a distracted cuckold.

As he is running off, re-enter MOSCA

Corbaccio What, come again!

Volpone Upon 'em, Mosca; save me.

Corbaccio The air's infected where he breathes.

Corvino Let's fly him.

Exeunt CORVINO and CORBACCIO

Volpone Excellent basilisk! turn upon the vulture.

Enter VOLTORE

Voltore Well, flesh-fly, it is summer with you now;
Your winter will come on.

Mosca Good advocate,
Prithee not rail, nor threaten out of place thus;
Thou'lt make a solecism, as madam says.
Get you a biggin more, your brain breaks loose.

Exit

Voltore Well, sir.

Volpone Would you have me beat the insolent slave,
Throw dirt upon his first good clothes?

Voltore This same
Is doubtless some familiar.

Volpone Sir, the court,
In troth, stays for you. I am mad, a mule
That never read Justinian, should get up,
And ride an advocate. Had you no quirk
To avoid gullage, sir, by such a creature?
I hope you do but jest; he has not done it,
'Tis but confederacy, to blind the rest.
You are the heir.

Voltore A strange, officious,

Troublesome knave! thou dost torment me.

Volpone I know -
It cannot be, sir, that you should be cozen'd;
'Tis not within with the wit of man to do it;
You are so wise, so prudent; and 'tis fit
That wealth and wisdom still should go together.

Exeunt

Scene 6: the Scrutineo or Senate-House

Enter AVOCATORI, NOTARIO, BONARIO, CELIA, CORBACCIO, CORVINO,
COMMANDADORI,
SAFFI, etc.

1st Avocatori Are all the parties here?

Notario All but the advocate.

2nd Avocatori And here he comes.

Enter VOLTORE and VOLPONE

1st Avocatori Then bring them forth to sentence.

Voltore O, my most honour'd fathers, let your mercy
Once win upon your justice, to forgive -
I am distracted

Volpone [Aside] What will he do now?

Voltore O,
I know not which to address myself to first;
Whether your fatherhoods, or these innocents -

Corvino [Aside] Will he betray himself?

Voltore Whom equally
I have abused, out of most covetous ends -

Corvino The man is mad!

Corbaccio What's that?

Corvino He is possest.

Voltore For which, now struck in conscience, here, I prostrate
Myself at your offended feet, for pardon.

1st &
2nd Avocatori Arise.

Celia O heaven, how just thou art!

Volpone [Aside] I am caught
In mine own noose -

Corvino [To CORBACCIO] Be constant, sir: nought now
Can help, but impudence.

1st Avocatori Speak forward.

Commandador Silence!

Voltore It is not passion in me, reverend fathers,
But only conscience, conscience, my good sires,
That makes me now tell truth. That parasite,
That knave, hath been the instrument of all.

1st Avocatori Where is that knave? fetch him.

Volpone I go.

Exit

Corvino Grave fathers,
This man's distracted; he confest it now:
For, hoping to be old Volpone's heir,
Who now is dead -

3rd Avocatori How!

2nd Avocatori Is Volpone dead?

Corvino Dead since, grave fathers.

Bonario O sure vengeance!

1st Avocatori Stay,
Then he was no deceiver.

Voltore O no, none:
The parasite, grave fathers.

Corvino He does speak
Out of mere envy, 'cause the servant's made
The thing he gaped for: please your fatherhoods,
This is the truth, though I'll not justify
The other, but he may be some deal faulty.

Voltore Ay, to your hopes, as well as mine, Corvino:
But I'll use modesty. Pleaseth your wisdoms,
To view these certain notes, and but confer them;
As I hope favour, they shall speak clear truth.

Corvino The devil has enter'd him!

Bonario Or bides in you.

4th Avocatori We have done ill, by a public officer
To send for him, if he be heir.

2nd Avocatori For whom?

4th Avocatori Him that they call the parasite.

3rd Avocatori 'Tis true,
He is a man of great estate, now left.

4th Avocatori Go you, and learn his name, and say, the court
Entreats his presence here, but to the clearing
Of some few doubts.

Exit NOTARY

2nd Avocatori This same's a labyrinth!

1st Avocatori Stand you unto your first report?

Corvino My state,
My life, my fame -

Bonario Where is it?

Corvino Are at the stake.

1st Avocatori Is yours so too?

Corbaccio The advocate's a knave,
And has a forked tongue -

2nd Avocatori Speak to the point.

Corbaccio So is the parasite too.

1st Avocatori This is confusion.

Voltore I do beseech your fatherhoods, read but those -

Giving them papers

Corvino And credit nothing the false spirit hath writ:
It cannot be, but he's possess'd, grave fathers.

The scene closes

Scene 7: a street

Enter VOLPONE

Volpone To make a snare for mine own neck! and run
My head into it, wilfully! with laughter!
When I had newly 'scaped, was free, and clear,
Out of mere wantonness! O, the dull devil
Was in this brain of mine, when I devised it,
And Mosca gave it second; he must now
Help to sear up this vein, or we bleed dead. -

Enter NANO, ANDROGYNO, and CASTRONE

How now! who let you loose? whither go you now?
What, to buy gingerbread, or to drown killings?

Nano Sir, master Mosca call'd us out of doors,
And bid us all go play, and took the keys.

Androgyno Yes.

Volpone Did master Mosca take the keys? why so!
I'm farther in. These are my fine conceits!
I must be merry, with a mischief to me!
What a vile wretch was I, that could not bear
My fortune soberly? I must have my crotchets,
And my conundrums! Well, go you, and seek him:
His meaning may be truer than my fear.
Bid him, he straight come to me to the court;
Thither will I, and, if 't be possible,
Unscrew my advocate, upon new hopes:
When I provok'd him, then I lost myself.

Exeunt

Scene 8: the Scrutineo, or Senate-House

AVOCATORI, BONARIO, CLLIA, CORBACCIO, CORVINO, COMMANDADORI,
SAFFI, etc.,
as before

1st Avocatori These things can ne'er be reconciled. He, here,

Shewing the papers

Professeth, that the gentleman was wrong'd,
And that the gentlewoman was brought thither,
Forced by her husband, and there left.

Voltore Most true.

Celia How ready is heaven to those that pray!

1st Avocatori But that
Volpone would have ravished her, he holds
Utterly false, knowing his impotence.

Corvino Grave fathers, he's possest; again, I say,
Possest: nay, if there be possession, and
Obsession, he has both.

3rd Avocatori Here comes our officer.

Enter VOLPONE

Volpone The parasite will straight be here, grave fathers.

4th Avocatori You might invent some other name, sir varlet.

3rd Avocatori Did not the notary meet him?

Volpone Not that I know.

4th Avocatori His coming will clear all.

2nd Avocatori Yet, it is misty.

Voltore May't please your fatherhoods -

Volpone [Whispers VOLTORE] Sir, the parasite
Will'd me to tell you, that his master lives;
That you are still the man; your hopes the same;
And this was only a jest -

Voltore How?

Volpone Sir, to try
If you were firm, and how you stood affected.

Voltore Art sure he lives?

Volpone Do I live, sir?

Voltore O me!

I was too violent.

Volpone Sir, you may redeem it.
They said, you were possest; fall down, and seem so:
I'll help to make it good.

VOLTORE falls

- God bless the man! -
Stop your wind hard, and swell - See, see, see, see!
He vomits crooked pins! his eyes are set,
Like a dead hare's hung in a poulter's shop!
His mouth's running away! Do you see, signior?
Now it is in his belly.

Corvino Ay, the devil!

Volpone Now in his throat.

Corvino Ay, I perceive it plain.

Volpone 'Twill out, 'twill out! stand clear. See where it flies,
In shape of a blue toad, with a bat's wings!
Do you not see it, sir?

Corbaccio What? I think I do.

Corvino 'Tis too manifest.

Volpone Look! he comes to himself!

Voltore Where am I?

Volpone Take good heart, the worst is past, sir.
You are dispossest.

1st Avocatori What accident is this!

2nd Avocatori Sudden, and full of wonder!

3rd Avocatori If he were
Possest, as it appears, all this is nothing.

Corvino He has been often subject to these fits.

1st Avocatori Shew him that writing: - do you know it, sir?

Volpone [Whispers VOLTORE] Deny it, sir, forswear it; know it not.

Voltore Yes, I do know it well, it is my hand;
But all that it contains is false.

Bonario O practice!

2nd Avocatori What maze is this!

1st Avocatori Is he not guilty then,
Whom you there name the parasite?

Voltore Grave fathers,
No more than his good patron, old Volpone.

4th Avocatori Why, he is dead.

Voltore O no, my honour'd fathers,
He lives -

1st Avocatori How! lives?

Voltore Lives.

2nd Avocatori This is subtler yet!

3rd Avocatori You said he was dead.

Voltore Never.

3rd Avocatori You said so.

Corvino I heard so.

4th Avocatori Here comes the gentleman; make him way.

Enter MOSCA

3rd Avocatori A stool.

4th Avocatori [Aside] A proper man; and, were Volpone dead,
A fit match for my daughter.

3rd Avocatori Givs him way.

Volpone [Aside to MOSCA] Mosca, I was almost lost; the advocate
Had betrayed all; but now it is recovered;
All's on the hinge again - Say, I am living.

Mosca What busy knave is this! - Most reverend fathers,
I sooner had attended your grave pleasures,
But that my order for the funeral
Of my dear patron, did require me -

Volpone [Aside] Mosca!

Mosca Whom I intend to bury like a gentleman.

Volpone [Aside] Ay, quick, and cozen me of all.

2nd Avocatori Still stranger!
More intricate!

1st Avocatori And come about again!

4th Avocatori [Aside] It is a match, my daughter is bestow'd.

Mosca [Aside to VOLPONE] Will you give me half?

Volpone First, I'll be hang'd.

Mosca I know
Your voice is good, cry not so loud.

1st Avocatori Demand
The advocate. - Sir, did you not affirm
Volpone was alive?

Volpone Yes, and he is;
This gentleman told me so. [Aside to MOSCA] Thou shalt have half. -

Mosca Whose drunkard is this same? speak, some that know him:
I never saw his face. [Aside to VOLPONE] I cannot now
Afford it you so cheap.

Volpone No!

1st Avocatori What say you?

Voltore The officer told me.

Volpone I did, grave fathers,
And will maintain he lives, with mine own life,
And that this creature [Points to MOSCA] told me. [Aside] I was born
With all good stars my enemies.

Mosca Most grave fathers,
If such an insolence as this must pass
Upon me, I am silent: 'twas not this
For which you sent, I hope.

2nd Avocatori Take him away.

Volpone Mosca!

3rd Avocatori Let him be whipt.

Volpone Wilt thou betray me?
Cozen me?

3rd Avocatori And taught to bear himself
Toward a person of his rank.

4th Avocatori Away.

The officers seize VOLPONE

Mosca I humbly thank your fatherhoods.

Volpone [Aside] Soft, soft: Whipt!
And lose all that I have! If I confess,
It cannot be much more.

4th Avocatori Sir, are you married?

Volpone They'll be allied anon; I must be resolute:
The Fox shall here uncase.

Throws off his disguisc

Mosca Patron!

Volpone Nay, now
My ruins shall not come alone: your match
I'll hinder sure: my substance shall not glue you,
Nor screw you into a family.

Mosca Why, patron!

Volpone I am Volpone, and this [Pointing to Mosca] is my knave;
This, [To VOLTORE] his own knave; this,
[To CORBACCIO] avarice's fool;
This, [To CORVINO] a chimera of wittol, fool, and knave:
And, reverend fathers, since we all can hope
Nought but a sentence, let's not now despair it.
You hear me brief.

Corvino May it please your fatherhoods -

Commandador Silence.

1st Avocatori The knot is now undone by miracle.

2nd Avocatori Nothing can be more clear.

3rd Avocatori Or can more prove
These innocent.

1st Avocatori Give them their liberty.

Bonario Heaven could not long let such gross crimes be hid.

2nd Avocatori If this be held the high-way to get riches,
May I be poor!

3rd Avocatori This is not the gain, but torment.

1st Avocatori These possess wealth, as sick men possess fevers,
Which trulier may be said to possess them.

2nd Avocatori Disrobe that parasite.

Corvino &
Mosca Most honour'd fathers! -

1st Avocatori Can you plead aught to stay the course of justice?
If you can, speak.

Corvino &
Voltore We beg favour.

Celia And mercy.

1st Avocatori You hurt your innocence, suing for the guilty.
Stand forth; and first the parasite: You appear
T'have been the chiefest minister, if not plotter,
In all these lewd impostures; and now, lastly,
Have with your impudence abused the court,
And habit of a gentleman of Venice,
Being a fellow of no birth or blood:
For which our sentence is, first, thou be whipt;
Then live perpetual prisoner in our gallies.

Volpone I thank you for him.

Mosca Bane to thy wolvish nature!

1st Avocatori Deliver him to the saffi.

MOSCA is carried out

- Thou, Volpone,
By blood and rank a gentleman, canst not fall
Under like censure; but our judgment on thee
Is, that thy substance all be straight confiscate
To the hospital of the Incurabili:
And, since the most was gotten by imposture,
By feigning lame, gout, palsy, and such diseases,

Thou art to lie in prison, cramp'd with irons,
Till thou be'st sick and lame indeed. - Remove him.

He is taken from the Bar.

Volpone This is call'd mortifying of a Fox.

1st Avocatori Thou, Voltore, to take away the scandal
Thou hast given all worthy men of thy profession,
Art banish'd from their fellowship, and our state.
Corbaccio! - bring him near - We here possess
Thy son of all thy state, and confine thee
To the monastery of San Spirito;
Where, since thou knewest not how to live well here,
Thou shalt be learn'd to die well.

Corbaccio Ah! what said he?

Commandador You shall know anon, sir.

1st Avocatori Thou, Corvino, shalt
Be straight embark'd from thine own house, and row'd
Round about Venice, through the grand canale,
Wearing a cap, with fair long ass's ears,
Instead of horns; and so to mount, a paper
Pinn'd on thy breast, to the Berlina -

Corvino Yes,
And have mine eyes beat out with stinking fish,
Bruised fruit, and rotten eggs - 'Tis well. I am glad
I shall not see my shame yet.

1st Avocatori And to expiate
Thy wrongs done to thy wife, thou art to send her
Home to her father, with her dowry trebled:
And these are all your judgments.

All Honour'd fathers. -

1st Avocatori Which may not be revoked. Now you begin,
When crimes are done, and past, and to be punish'd,
To think what your crimes are: away with them.
Let all that see these vices thus rewarded,
Take heart and love to study 'em! Mischiefs feed
Like beasts, till they be fat, and then they bleed.

Exeunt

VOLPONE comes forward

The seasoning of a play, is the applause.
Now, though the Fox be punish'd by the laws,
He yet doth hope, there is no suffering due,
For any fact which he hath done 'gainst you;
If there be, censure him; here he doubtful stands:
If not, fare jovially, and clap your hands.