Appendix:
The Duchess of Malfi
Introductory Note

Nearly every aspect of Brecht’s adaptation of John Webster’s *Duchess of Malfi*—the text, the collaborators’ shares, the dates of composition and revision, even the spelling of the title itself—offers puzzles and confusions almost impossible of certain solution.

Both the origin of the project to adapt the play and the process of that adaptation helped to ensure that the result would be neither a full-scale reworking (of the order of *Edward II* or *Coriolanus*) nor a purely Brechtian enterprise. Elisabeth Bergner, the actress, and her husband, the producer Paul Czinner, suggested the play as suitable material for Brecht’s attention and Miss Bergner’s talents. Around April or May 1943, work on the project began in New York. H. R. Hays, Brecht’s early translator, also worked on the adaptation at this time. From this period dates *The Duchess of Malfi... An Adaptation for the Modern Stage* copyrighted 26 June 1943, by Brecht and Hays, and a variety of drafts in the Brecht Archive in Berlin. Many sheets from this copyrighted version became the basis for Brecht’s further work. The text we print here represents the final joint work of Brecht and Hays on this copyrighted text.

In December 1943, Brecht invited W. H. Auden to join the effort, and shortly thereafter Hays withdrew. Bergner and Czinner seem to have suggested about this time that an effort be made to incorporate material from Webster’s other tragedy, *The White Devil*, into the new adaptation, and some subsequent texts, including the one printed below, use scenes and lines from this play (see the editorial notes to Act one, scene 2 and Act two, scenes 3 and 5). The *Duchess* appears in Brecht’s journal as a finished work on 21 July 1943, possibly a reference to the Brecht–Hays copyrighted version or to the text printed below. Brecht continued to work on it; however, for another journal entry covering his next New York visit (November 1943 to March 1944) describes it as ‘not completely finished’, while as late as June–July 1945 it is only described as finished ‘in the rough’.

Although Brecht continued to write, Auden’s name alone appears on a text, copyrighted 24 October 1945, which is largely reworked Webster with an excellently concise first act (apparently Auden’s, work but following Webster’s text closely). Brecht re-appears with Auden in a version copyrighted on 4 April 1946, and continued his association with the project at least through the trial performances in Providence, Rhode Island (20 September
1946), in Boston (week of 23 September), in Hartford, Connecticut (30 September and 1 October), in New Haven, Connecticut (2–4 October) and in Princeton, New Jersey (7–8 October). Although the programmes and advertisements for the trial productions mention Brecht along with Auden, Brecht’s name appears nowhere in the New York programme or in the generally condemnatory reviews. The final Broadway version had returned to Webster’s original with some revisions and modernization; it even included the Julia subplot which had been excised from all the versions subsequent to the one printed here (see editorial note to Act two, scene 4).

It is not easy to make a precise statement of Brecht’s practical contribution to adapting the Duchess. Certainly, he made important decisions about restructuring the play and rearranging large units of Webster’s original. These decisions led him to write new scenes, such as the battlefield scene (2, 1) and the Cardinal’s murder (2, 7), and to rewrite the play’s conclusion. Brecht made many smaller and more detailed contributions as well. He understood Webster’s English well enough to rearrange the play without having always to pass through a German version first. For example, having decided to increase the economic motive for Ferdinand’s murder of his sister, Brecht adds (in English) some lines from Webster’s IV.ii to his own 1, 2. For longer passages, sometimes sandwiched between pieces of Webster or of translated Brecht, he often used German. In some versions of 2, 6, for instance, the Duchess’ reading of Ferdinand’s letter appears in German in the text with two marginal translations, one quite literal and another, a replacement, more fluent and in near-blank verse. At another point, opposite an English speech near the end of the echo scene, appears the note, ‘Brecht’s rough translation’ (see the editorial notes on 3, 1), suggesting that Brecht may have occasionally translated his own German. In one of the drafts for Ferdinand’s concluding speech to 3, 2 (see the notes), some of the English spellings suggest Brecht’s mental translation from German cognates or his use of similar sounds. H. R. Hays also testifies to Brecht’s ability to read and write English, when he wished. Thus, while it might be accurate to say that Brecht’s chief contribution lies in his wholly original scenes, the rearrangement of Webster’s original, and some very clear-sighted choices of omissions and new emphases, it must be added that he often dipped into the minutiae of the play. He had the ability and the interest to work over single lines and short speeches.
Our text reproduces a copy in the possession of H. R. Hays; obvious typographical errors and misspellings have been silently corrected. Brecht Archive sources for material in the editorial notes are cited in the appropriate places.

(The editor of this text gratefully acknowledges the help of Lee Bliss, Edward Mendelson, and the New York Public Library Theatre Collection, Lincoln Center, and the financial assistance of the University of California Research Committee.)
A Note on *The Duchess*

by H. R. Hays

Early in 1943 Brecht came to New York and broached the idea of the *Duchess of Malfi* to me as a vehicle for Elisabeth Bergner, who was currently playing on Broadway in a whodunit. Brecht and I were both fond of the Webster piece and both felt that it sprawled too much for a successful production. The idea was to eliminate the anticlimactic series of deaths at the end, tighten up the script, and emphasize the implicit incest motivation of the duke. I remember that Bergner felt like discussing the project only after her performances and, in consequence, a series of midnight meetings resulted in a contract to prepare the play. We began working in April 1943. I did all of the writing, in the style of Webster, though Brecht and I discussed the scenes to be eliminated or added, and the content of scenes, and he sometimes contributed images. Brecht was very much at home in English literature and could speak English quite well (when he wasn’t facing a congressional committee).

I remember that the death scene of the duchess produced a crisis. Brecht told me that Bergner had flopped in *Camille* and, in consequence, was frightened of the duchess’s recumbent demise. Since some of Webster’s finest writing is in the scene, Brecht suggested that we introduce the notion that if she could be kept on her feet she might be able to work off the numbing effect of the poison. Thus we were able to keep the lines in and pacify Bergner. Brecht was always practical.

We finished the script and Brecht, Bergner, and her husband-producer, Paul Czinner, disappeared in the direction of Hollywood. Brecht, I suppose, kept in touch with them, for in a letter of June 1943 he spoke of having shown the script to Eisler, who was ready to begin on the music as soon as Czinner gave him a contract.

At any rate, late in 1943 the Czinners and Brecht were all back in New York. We had a meeting in my agent’s office, at
which Mr Czinner announced that what the project needed was ‘a British poet’. I hit the roof and told them to take my name off the script. Needless to say, the poet was Auden, whose name they hoped would be success insurance. Brecht did not at first withdraw, but later, when he saw what was happening, he too removed his name from the script. I think about the only one of our scenes left in the script, when the production went on, was the excommunication scene. The Auden version lasted about a week on Broadway and most of the critics found Bergner inadequate.

[Part of an essay originally written for inclusion in the volume of Brecht Poems 1913–1956. For the 1925 production of Dumas' Camille at the Deutsches Theater, with Bergner in the title part, Brecht was called in to rewrite the fifth act, where she dies. According to the director, Bernhard Reich, the script has been lost.]
The Duchess of Malfi
by
John Webster

An adaptation for the modern stage
by
Bertolt Brecht and H. R. Hays

Edited with notes
by
A. R. Braunmuller
CHARACTERS
in order of appearance

ANTONIO BOLOGNA
DELIO
FERDINAND, DUKE OF CALABRIA
BOSOLA
CASTRUCHIO
THE CARDINAL OF ANCONA
THE DUCHESS OF MALFI
CARIOLA
OLD LADY
NEGRO PAGE
THE DUCHESS' TWO SONS
A MONK
A FLUTE PLAYER
A PHYSICIAN
A PRIEST
COUNT MALATESTA

COURTIERs · GENTLEMEN · LADIES · OFFICERS · PILGRIMS · MURDERERS · ATTENDANTS · SERVANTS · WAITING WOMEN
ACT ONE

Scene 1

Presence chamber in the palace of the Duchess of Malfi
Delio and Antonio are on.

ANTONIO

In these unruly times you are welcome, Cousin Delio.
I fear my letter drew you rudely
Out of sweet France. How did you like it there?

DELIO

'Tis still a land of sunshine. You will spend
In a fortnight what you may scarcely win there
In a twelve month. The French are exceeding skilful
In the arts, not those of love alone
But likewise martial stratagem. In Paris
I have studied their new fashion of gunnery.

ANTONIO

New come from Paris, how doth Malfi please you?

DELIO

So well that I am sorry I shall straightway
Be leaving it. I thank you, dear Antonio,
For my preferment with Lord Ferdinand.
'Tis agreed I follow him to the wars.

ANTONIO

Here comes the great Calabrian Duke.

They give way as Duke Ferdinand and courtiers, Bosola and Castruchio enter.

FERDINAND

Are the galleys come about yet?

CASTRUCHIO

They are, my lord. But methinks you should not desire to
go to war in person.

FERDINAND

Now for some weighty reason. Why not?

CASTRUCHIO

It is fitting a soldier should rise to be a prince but not
necessary a prince should descend to be a captain.
FERDINAND

No?

CASTRUCHIO

No, my lord, he were far better do it by deputy.

FERDINAND

This war too nearly touches mine honour. Since the old Duke of Malfi fell, I have sworn to defend my sister Duchess in his stead. While I live she need fear no foe.

CASTRUCHIO

Believe my experience. That realm is never long quiet where the ruler is a soldier.

FERDINAND

Antonio, great master of our sister Duchess' household! Your cousin pleases me. His skill in this new science of gunnery From France we'll soon know how to use in Cyprus.

Enter courtier.

COURTIER

Your brother, the Lord Cardinal and sister duchess will be here anon. The people line the streets awaiting your progress to the haven.

Crowd noises.

Hark, your grace may hear their lusty shouts.

Duke moves off towards the window to observe the crowd.

DELIO

Apart with Antonio.

The presence begins to fill. You promised me To make me partaker of the natures Of some of your great courtiers.

ANTONIO

Well, there's the Cardinal.

DELIO

What's his temper? They say he's a great scoundrel.

ANTONIO

He should have been Pope but did bestow bribes too impudently. Some good he hath done.
DELIO
What's his brother, my new master?

ANTONIO
The Duke, there? A most perverse and turbulent nature.

DELIO
Twins?

ANTONIO
In quality. 'Tis said he and his brother are like plumtrees that grow crooked over standing pools. They are rich and o'er-laden with fruit but none but crows, pies and caterpillars feed on them.

DELIO
What of their sister, the fair Duchess?

ANTONIO
You never fixed your eye on three fair medals
Cast in one figure of so different temper.
For her discourse it is so full of rapture
You will only begin then to be sorry
When she doth end her speech and wish, in wonder,
She held it less vainglory to talk much.
She throws upon a man so sweet a look
That it were able to raise one that lay
Dead in a palsy but in that look
There speaketh so divine a continence
As cuts off all lascivious and vain hope.
Her days are practised in such noble virtue
That sure her nights, nay more her very sleeps,
Are more in heaven than other ladies' shrifts.
Let all sweet ladies break their flattering glasses
And dress themselves in her.

DELIO
Fie, Antonio,
Have you turned scholar studying of her virtues?

ANTONIO
I'll case the picture up. Only this much—
All her particular worth grows to this sum.
She stains time past, lights the time to come.
Enter Cardinal, Duchess and Cariola.

CARDINAL

Crossing to Ferdinand:
We are to part from you.
To Duchess:

And your own discretion
Must now be your director.

FERDINAND

You are a widow;
You know already what man is and therefore
Let not youth, high promotion, eloquence—

CARDINAL

No, nor anything without the addition, honour,
Sway your high blood.

FERDINAND

Marry? They are most lascivious
Will wed twice.

CARDINAL

Oh fie!

FERDINAND

Their livers are more spotted

Than Laban's sheep.

DUCHESS

Diamonds are of most value,
They say, that have passed through most jewellers' hands.

FERDINAND

Whores, by that rule, are precious.

DUCHESS

Will you hear me?

I'll never marry.

CARDINAL

So most widows say.
But commonly that motion lasts no longer
Than the turning of an hourglass, the funeral sermon
And it end both together.

FERDINAND

Now hear me:
You live in a rank pasture here in the court.  
There is a kind of honeydew that's deadly.  
'Twill poison your fame; look to it; be not cunning.  
For they whose faces do belie their hearts 
Are witches, ere they arrive at twenty years,  
Aye, and give the devil suck.

DUCHESS

This is terribly good counsel.

FERDINAND

Hypocrisy is woven of a fine small thread, 
Subtler than Vulcan's engine; yet believe it 
Your darkest actions, nay your privatest thoughts, 
Will come to light.

CARDINAL

You may flatter yourself 
And take your own choice privately to be married 
Under the eyes of night.

FERDINAND

Think it the best voyage 
That e'er you made, like the irregular crab, 
Which though it goes backward, thinks it goes right 
Because it goes its own way, but observe; 
Such weddings may more properly be said 
To be executed than celebrated.

CARDINAL

The marriage night 
Is the entrance into some prison.

FERDINAND

And those joys, 
Those lustful pleasures are like heavy sleeps 
Which do forerun man's mischief.

CARDINAL

Wisdom begins at the end. Remember it.

DUCHESS

To Cardinal.

We'll bear you company to your litter.
Cardinal gives her his arm and they go out. Ferdinand beckons to Bosola and takes him apart.

FERDINAND

Giving him money.
There's gold.

BOSOLA

Whose throat must I cut?

FERDINAND

I give you that
To live in the court here and observe the Duchess,
To note all the particulars of her behaviour;
What suitors do solicit her for marriage
And whom she best affects. She's a young widow;
I would not have her marry again.

BOSOLA

No, Sir?

FERDINAND

Do not ask the reason but be satisfied.
I say I would not.
There is a place that I procured for you
This morning, the provisorship of the horse.

BOSOLA

The provisorship of the horse? Say then my corruption
Grew out of horse dung. Oh that your bounty
Should make me a villain! I am your creature
Exits.

DELIO

To Antonio.
I knew this fellow seven years in the galleys
For a notorious murder.
Duchess re-enters and goes to Ferdinand.

DUCHESS

I think that speech between you both was studied,
It came so roundly off.

FERDINAND

You are my sister.
This was my father's poignard, do you see?
Show a poignard.
I would be loth to see it look rusty since it was his.
I would have you give over these chargeable revels.
A visor and a mask are whispering rooms
That ne'er were built for goodness. Fare ye well,
And women like that part which, like the lamprey,
Hath never a bone in it.

Duchess
Fie, sir!
Ferdinand
Nay,
I meant the tongue, variety of courtship.
What cannot a neat knave with a smooth tale
Make a woman believe. Farewell lusty widow.
He goes out. She pauses for a moment, then follows with courtiers.
Voice
Way for the Duke! Make way for Duke Ferdinand! Way for
the Duke! The Duke is off to the wars!
Crowd noises.

Scene 2

Boudoir of the Duchess of Malfi.
Duchess and Cariola are on.

Duchess
Shall all this move me? If my royal kindred
Lie in my way unto this marriage,
I'll make them my low footsteps. And even now,
Even in this hate, as men in some great battles
By apprehending danger, have achieved
Almost impossible actions (I have heard soldiers say so),
So I, through frights and threatenings, will assay
This dangerous adventure. Let old wives report
I winked and chose a husband! Cariola,
To thy known secrecy I have given up
More than my life, my fame.
CARIOLA

Both shall be safe;
For I'll conceal this secret from the world
As warily as those that trade in poison
Keep poison from their children.

DUCHESS

Thy protestation
Is ingenious and hearty: I believe it.
Is Antonio come?

CARIOLA

He attends you.

DUCHESS

Good dear soul,
Leave me: but place thyself behind the arras
Where thou mayst overhear us. Wish me good speed.

Cariola goes behind the arras.
For I am going into a wilderness
Where I shall find nor path nor friendly clew
To be my guide.

Enter Antonio.

I sent for you; sit down;
Take pen and ink and write: are you ready?

ANTONIO

Yes.

DUCHESS

What did I say?

ANTONIO

That I should write somewhat.

DUCHESS

Oh, I remember:

After this triumph and this large expense,
It's fit (like thrifty husbands) we inquire
What's laid up for tomorrow.

ANTONIO

So please your beauteous excellence.

DUCHESS

Beauteous?
Indeed I thank you: I look young for your sake.
As my steward you have taken my cares upon you.

ANTONIO
I'll fetch your grace the particulars
Of all your revenues and your expenses.

DUCHESS
Oh, you are an upright treasurer; but you mistook
For when I said I meant to make inquiry
What's laid up for tomorrow, I did mean
What's laid up yonder for me.

ANTONIO
Where?

DUCHESS
In heaven.

I am making my will (as 'tis fit princes should
In perfect memory), and I pray sir, tell me
Were it not better to make it smiling, thus,
Than in deep groans and terrible ghastly looks
As if the gifts we parted with procured
That violent distraction?

ANTONIO
Oh, much better.

DUCHESS
If I had a husband now this care were quit:
But I intend to make you overseer.
What good deed shall we first remember? Say.

ANTONIO
Begin with that first good deed began i' th' world,
After man's creation, the sacrament of marriage,
I'd have you first provide for a good husband:
Give him all.

DUCHESS
St. Winfrid, that were a strange will!

ANTONIO
'Twere strange if there were no will in you
To marry again.
DUCHESS
What do you think of marriage?

ANTONIO
I take it as those that deny purgatory,
It locally contains or heaven or hell;
There's no third place in it.

DUCHESS
How do you like it?

ANTONIO
My banishment, feeding on my melancholy,
Would often reason thus—

DUCHESS
Pray let's hear it.

ANTONIO
Say a man never marry, nor have children,
What takes that from him? Only the bare name
Of being a father, or the weak delight
To see the little wanton ride a cock-horse
Upon a painted stick or hear him chatter
Like a taught starling.

DUCHESS
Fie, fie, what's all this?
One of your eyes is bloodshot. Use my ring to it.
They say 'tis a good remedy. 'Twas my wedding ring
And I did vow never to part with it
But to my second husband.

ANTONIO
You have parted with it now.

DUCHESS
Yes, to help your eyesight.

ANTONIO
You have made me stark blind.

DUCHESS
How?

ANTONIO
There is a saucy and ambitious devil
Is dancing in this circle.
Duchess
Remove him.

Antonio
How?

Duchess
There needs small conjuration when your finger
May do it: thus, is it fit?

Antonio
What said you?

He kneels.

Duchess
Sir,
This goodly roof of yours is too low built;
I can not stand upright in’t, nor discourse
Without I raise it higher: Raise yourself,
Or if you please, my hand to help you: so.

Antonio
Ambition, madam, is a great man’s madness
That is not kept in chains and close-pent rooms
But in fair lightsome lodgings and is girt
With the wild noise of prattling visitants
Which makes it lunatic beyond all cure.
Conceive not I am so stupid but I aim
Whereo your favours tend: but he’s a fool
That, being acold, would thrust his hands in the fire
To warm them.

Duchess
So, now the ground’s broke,
You may discover what a wealthy mine
I make you lord of.

Antonio
Oh, my unworthiness!

Duchess
You were ill to sell yourself:
This dark’ning of your worth is not like that
Which tradesmen use in the city; their false lights
Are to rid bad wares off: and I must tell you
If you will know where breathes a complete man
(I speak it without flattery), turn your eyes
And progress through yourself.

ANTONIO
Were there nor heaven nor hell,
I should be honest. I have long served virtue
And never taken wages of her.

DUCHESS
Now she pays it.
The misery of us that are born great,
We are forced to woo because none dare woo us:
And as a tyrant doubles with his words
And fearfully equivocates, so we
Are forced to express our violent passions
In riddles and in dreams and leave the path
Of simple virtue which was never made
To seem the thing it is not. Go, brag
You have left me heartless; mine is in your bosom.
I hope twill multiply love there. You do tremble.
Make not your heart so dead a piece of flesh
To fear more than to love me. Sir, be confident.
What is it distracts you? This is flesh and blood, sir;
’Tis not the figure cut in alabaster
Kneels at my husband’s tomb. Awake, awake, man,
I do here put off all vain ceremony
And only do appear to you a young widow
That claims you for her husband, and like a widow,
I use but half a blush in it.

ANTONIO
Truth speak for me,
I will remain the constant sanctuary
Of your good name.

DUCHESS
I thank you, gentle love;
I have seen children oft eat sweetmeats thus
As fearful to devour them too soon.
ANTONIO
But for your brothers?

DUCHESS
Still in his arms.

Do not think of them!
All discord without this circumference
Is only to be pitied and not feared:
Yet, should they know it, time will easily
Scatter the tempest.

ANTONIO
These words should be mine,
And all the parts you have spoke, if some part of it
Would not have savoured of flattery.

DUCHESS
Kneel.

Enter Cariola.

ANTONIO
Hah!

DUCHESS
Be not amazed, this woman’s of my counsel:
I have often heard lawyers say a contract in a chamber,
Per verba de presenti, is absolute marriage.
Bless, heaven, this sacred gordian, which let violence
Never untwine!

ANTONIO
And may our sweet affections, like the spheres,
Be still in motion!

DUCHESS
Quickening and make
The like soft music!

ANTONIO
That we may imitate the loving palms,
Best emblem of a peaceful marriage,
That never bore fruit divided!

DUCHESS
What can the church force more?
ANTONIO
May fortune know no accident
Either of joy or sorrow to divide
Our fixed wishes!

DUCHESS
How can the church build faster?
We now are man and wife and 'tis the church
That must but echo this. Maid, stand apart;
I now am blind!

ANTONIO
What do you mean by this?

DUCHESS
I would have you lead your fortune by the hand
Unto your marriage bed:
(You speak in me in this, for we now are one.)
We'll only lie and talk together and plot
To appease my passionate kindred; and if you please,
Like the old tale, in Alexander and Lodowicke,
Lay a naked sword between us, keep us chaste.
Oh let me shroud my blushes in your bosom,
Since 'tis the treasury of all my secrets!
Duchess and Antonio exit.

CARIOLA
Whether the spirit of greatness or of woman
Reign in her most, I know not; but it shows
A fearful madness. I owe her much of pity.

Scene 3

A room in the Duchess' palace. Some months later.
Enter Bosola with a book.

BOSOLA
What thing is in this outward form of man
To be beloved? We account it ominous
If nature do produce a colt, or lamb,
A fawn or goat in any limb resembling
A man and fly from it as a prodigy.
Man stands amazed to see his own deformity
In any other creature but himself.
But in our own flesh, though we bear diseases
Which have their true names only taken from beasts
And the most ulcerous wolf and swinish measles;
Though we are eaten up with lice and worms
And though continually we bear about us
A rotten and dead body, we delight
To hide it in rich tissue. All our fear,
Nay all our terror is lest our physician
Should put us in the ground to be made sweet.
But I have work on foot: I observe our duchess
Is sick a days, she pukes, her stomach seethes,
The fins of her eyelids look most teeming blue,
She wanes in the cheek and waxes fat in the flank
And, contrary to our Italian fashion,
Wears a loose-bodied gown; there's somewhat in it.
I have a trick may chance discover it—
A pretty one—I have bought some apricots,
The first our spring yields.

Enter Antonio.

ANTONIO

Pointing to book.
You are studying to become a great wise fellow?

BOSOLA

Let me be simply honest.

ANTONIO

I do understand your inside.

BOSOLA

Do you so?
Shall I confess myself to you? I look no higher than I can reach: They are gods that must ride on winged horses. A lawyer's mule of a slow pace will suit both my disposition and business. For, mark me, when a man's mind rides faster than his horse can gallop, they both quickly tire.
ANTONIO
You would look up to heaven but I think the devil that rules in the air stands in your light.

BOSOLA
Oh sir, you are lord of the ascendant, chief man with the Duchess. Search the heads of the greatest rivers in the world, you shall find them but bubbles of water. Some would think the souls of princes were brought forth by some more weighty cause than those of meaner persons. They are deceived, there's the same hand to them, the like passions sway them; the same reason that makes a vicar go to law for a tithe-pig and undo his neighbours makes them spoil a whole province and batter down goodly cities with the cannon.

Enter Duchess and ladies of her court.

DUCHESS
Your arm, Antonio: do I now grow fat?
I am exceeding short-winded. Bosola
I would have you sir, provide for me a litter
Such a one as the Duchess of Florence rode in.

BOSOLA
The duchess used one when she was great with child.

DUCHESS
I think she did.

To lady.
Come hither, mend my ruff,
Here, when? Thou art such a tedious lady
And thy breath smells of lemon peels—would thou hadst done!
Shall I swoon under thy fingers? I am
So troubled with the vapours!

BOSOLA
Aside.
I fear too much.

DUCHESS
I have heard you say the French courtiers
Wear their hats on fore the king.
I have seen it.

ANTONIO

DUCHESS

In the presence.

ANTONIO

Yes.

DUCHESS

Why should not we bring up that fashion?
'Tis ceremony more than duty that consists
In the removing of a piece of felt.
Be you the example to the rest o' th' court.
Put on your hat first.

ANTONIO

You must pardon me.

I have seen in colder countries than in France
Nobles stand bare to the prince: and the distinction
Methought showed reverently.

BOSOLA

I have a present for your grace.

DUCHESS

For me, sir?

BOSOLA

Apricots, madam.

DUCHESS

O sir, where are they?
I have heard of none to year.

BOSOLA

Aside.

Good, her colour rises.

DUCHESS

As they are brought on.
Indeed I thank you; they are wondrous fair ones.
What an unskilful fellow is our gardener!
We shall have none this month.

BOSOLA

As she bites into one.

Will not your grace pare them?
No, they taste of musk methinks; indeed they do.

I know not; yet I wish your Grace had pared them.

Why?

I forgot to tell you the knave gardener,
Only to raise his profit by them sooner,
Did ripen them in horse dung.

Oh you jest.

You shall judge. Pray taste one.

Indeed, madam,

I do not love the fruit.

Sir, you are loath
To rob us of our dainties. 'Tis a delicate fruit;
They say they are restorative.

'Tis a pretty

Art, this grafting.

'Tis so; a bettering of nature.

To make a pippin grow upon a crab,
A damson on a blackthorn—

How greedily she eats them!

A whirlwind strike off these bawd-farthingales!
For, but for that and the loose-bodied gown,
I should have discovered apparently
The young springal cutting a caper in her belly.

I thank you, Bosola, they were right good ones,
If they do not make me sick.
ANTONIO
    How now, madam?

DUCHESS
This green fruit and my stomach are not friends—
How they swell me!

BOSOLA

Aside.

Nay, you are too much swelled already!

DUCHESS
Oh, I am in an extreme cold sweat!

BOSOLA
    I am very sorry.

DUCHESS
Lights to my chamber! O, good Antonio,
I fear I am undone!
Exit with her ladies.

ANTONIO
Shut up the court gates.

CASTRUCHIO
Why, sir? What’s the danger?

ANTONIO
Shut up the posterns presently and call
All the officers of the court.

CASTRUCHIO
    I shall instantly.

They exit.

BOSOLA
So, so, there’s no question but her tetchiness and most
vulturous eating of the apricots are apparent signs of breeding.
Now!

Exits.

After a moment Antonio enters from one side, Cariola and an old
lady from the other, carrying linens and a ewer of water.

OLD LADY
Sir, you are the happy father of a son,
Your wife commends him to you.
ANTONIO
Blessed comfort!
For heaven's sake tend her well. I'll presently
Go set a figure for his nativity.

Scene 4

'The court of the palace.
Enter Bosola with a dark lantern.

BOSOLA
Sure I did hear a woman shriek
And the sound came, if I received it right,
From the Duchess' lodgings. There's some stratagem
In the confining all our courtiers
To their several wards. I must have part of it;
My intelligence will freeze else.
It may be 'twas the melancholy bird,
Best friend of silence and of solitariness,
The owl that screamed so. Hsh! Antonio!

ANTONIO
Enters with a candle and his sword drawn.

BOSOLA
Antonio? Put not your face nor body
To such a forced expression of fear.
I am Bosola, your friend.

ANTONIO
Bosola?

Aside.
This mole does undermine me.—Heard you not
A noise even now?

BOSOLA
From whence?
ANTONIO
From the Duchess' lodging.
Not I. Did you?

ANTONIO
I did or else I dreamed.

BOSOLA
Let's walk towards it.

ANTONIO
No; it may be 'twas

But the rising of the wind.

BOSOLA
Very likely.

Methinks 'tis very cold and yet you sweat.
You look wildly.

ANTONIO
I have been setting a figure
For the Duchess' jewels. They are stolen.

BOSOLA
And what have you discovered?

ANTONIO
What's that to you?

'Tis rather to be questioned what design,
When all men are commanded to their lodgings,
Makes you a night walker?

BOSOLA
In sooth I'll tell you.

Now all the court's asleep, I thought the devil
Had least to do here. I came to say my prayers.

ANTONIO

Aside.

I fear this fellow will undo me.

To Bosola:
You gave the Duchess apricots today.
Pray heaven they were not poisoned.

BOSOLA
Poisoned? A Spanish fig
For the imputation.
Antonio

Traitors are ever confident
Till they are discovered. There were jewels stolen, too.
In my belief none are to be suspected
More than yourself.

Bosola

You are a false steward.

Antonio

Saucy slave! I'll pull thee up by the roots.
You are an impudent snake indeed, sir.
Are you scarce warm and do you show your sting?
You libel well, sir!

Bosola

Now, sir, copy it out
And I will set my hand to it.

Antonio

My nose bleeds.

_Takes out handkerchief and drops paper as he does so._

One that were superstitious would count
This ominous, when it merely comes by chance.
Two letters that are wrought here for my name
Are drowned in blood. Mere accident. For you, sir,
I'll take order. This door you pass not.
I do not hold it fit that you come near
The Duchess' lodgings till you have quit yourself.

_Exits._

Bosola

Antonio here did drop a paper—

_Raises lantern._

Some of your help, false friend—Oh, here it is. What's here?

A child's nativity calculated?

'The duchess was delivered of a son tween the hours twelve
and one in the night, Anno Dom. 1504'.

That's this year—

'decimo nono Decembris',

That's this night—

'Taken according to the meridian of Malfi'.
That's our Duchess. Happy discovery!
'The lord of the first house being in the ascendant signifies short life; and Mars being in a human sign joined to the tail of the Dragon, in the eighth house, doth threaten a violent death. Caetera non scrutantur'.
Why, now 'tis most apparent this precise fellow
Is the Duchess' pimp. I have it to my wish.
This is news indeed.
Our courtiers were cased up for it. It needs must follow
That I must be committed on pretence
Of poisoning her which I'll endure and laugh at.
If one could find the father now! But that
Time will discover. Let me be dismissed,
I'll bear intelligence of this to the Duke
Shall make his gall overflow his liver.
Though lust do mask in ne'er so strange disguise,
She's oft found witty but is never wise.

Scene 1

The Duke of Calabria's tent.
Ferdinand attended by a Negro page who hands him his armour on state. Offstage a soldier sings.

SONG
I wrote my love a letter
When we entered fair Milan:
Oh the war will soon be over
For the cook has lost his coppers
And the captain's lost his head
And we've shot away our lead.

Ferdinand
Methinks this war, like a long winter, hath no end:
And Spring, frost-bitten, waits on victory.
To page:
My corselet.
Page begins to buckle it on.
How now, boy? How fares it with your love?

She is well save for the stripes she hath earned from my rival.
She hath an eye like a dark lantern for its light is securely hidden.

FERDINAND
'Tis time you rid her of this scurvy knave.

How can I? I am so small a thing she cannot see me. 'Tis e'en the same to her an I had not been born.

FERDINAND
And you born for her!

She hath received no intelligence of it. Or mayhap she puts no credence i' th' stars.

FERDINAND
A tragedy.

If she but knew it.
Soldier enters.

SOLDIER
Entering.
A gentleman would see the Duke.

FERDINAND
His name?

SOLDIER
Bosola.

FERDINAND
Bosola here?
'Tis very strange. What should be his business? I'll see him.

To page:
Now my beaver.
Soldier exits and Bosola enters.

BOSOLA
Travel-stained and ragged.
Your Grace.
FERDINAND
How fares the Duchess?

BOSOLA
Blackbirds, they say, fatten best in hard weather. Why not I? Sir, I am worn out in your service. 'Tis two years since I left Malfi. There are rewards for horses and dogs but for a faithful servant only a sore breech from riding, these several scars, and scarce enough rags to cover my flesh.

FERDINAND
How fares the Duchess?

BOSOLA
Your Grace, I was pitifully misdirected. I have been robbed, lain in prison, took sick of the plague and like to have died only to bring you intelligence shall earn your ingratitude. I am like a raven of ill omen that endures a score of tempests, two score snowstorms, eludes the hawk and the fowler, to croak a message against which all would stop their ears. Thus I am very industrious to work my own ruin.

FERDINAND
I said: how fares the Duchess?

BOSOLA
Excellently.

She hath a son.

Ferdinand stands amazed.

BOSOLA
I said she hath a son.

FERDINAND
No!

The Duke half draws his sword. Bosola quickly hands him a paper.

BOSOLA
Read this nativity. It speaks for me.

While the Duke reads the paper the soldier sings offstage.

But when we left the city
Then a second war began
Though the first was scarcely over
And I'll drink a thousand beakers
With a whore upon my knee
Till my love again I see.
FERDINAND

Reads.
The Duchess was delivered of a son . . .
Reads on, then speaks slowly.
Mars joined to the Dragon’s tail doth prophesy
Short life, a violent death.—Although ere now
I put little faith i’ the stars, this forecast
I’d believe—could I believe thee, lying knave!
Suddenly.
Who is the man?

BOSOLA

I know not.

FERDINAND

Violently.
Uncase me, slave!
He begins to tear off his armour. Outside alarms and sounds of battle.
Ho, send me Delio. He shall command for me. I’ll go to Malfi.
Delio enters. He is bleeding.

DELIO

Your Grace, the enemy hath surprised us. They fall upon us mightily with a great body of fresh horse. The Duchess’ great standard hath been taken.

FERDINAND

No matter.
We give you our command. I am for Malfi.
You shall lead our troops.

DELIO

Alas, I can not.

He falls.

FERDINAND

What’s this? Delio’s hurt? We are undone!
A Soldier rushes in.

SOLDIER

Sir, you are sorely needed.
Ferdinand snatcheth up his armour and rushes out buckling it on. The sound of battle grows. Ferdinand turns back suddenly and speaks to Bosola.

FERDINAND

Thou villain, 'tis false! Thy paper is counterfeit. Yet I'll come in a fortnight. Depend upon it—I'll come shortly. Late or soon I'll come And should this bloody war endure ten years Or e'en a score of years I'll come thereafter And should I fall my vengeful ghost will come To set our house in order. Breathe no word of this. Meanwhile do you return and this I charge you: Find out the father!

He exits clapping his visor shut. All during the end of this scene a monotonous trumpet call has been playing outside.

BOSOLA

Why should she not bear a son? Her brother steals enough land for five sons. Yet the Duke's eyes did start from his head to hear it. 'Twas as if a Calabrian knight in Turkey should hear his betrothed lies with another and he denied a furlough. Yet all this is but policy for a gentleman like him was never in such a sweat over less than a dukedom.

Scene 2

A room in the Duchess' palace.

Enter Antonio and Delio.

ANTONIO

Our noble cousin, my most beloved Delio, Oh you have been a stranger long at court. Came you along with the Lord Ferdinand?

DELIO

I did, sir. 'He hath been most eager To revisit Malfi and twice made ready To return and twice he could not. In the end The victory was greater. But how fares Your noble Duchess?
ANTONIO
She is well.

DELI
I think
You hold your tongue in check. Speak freely.

ANTONIO
I do fear some great misfortune threatens.
Since you saw her she hath had three children.

DELI
How? Is she married?

ANTONIO
No, 'tis all in secret.

DELI
But is't known?

ANTONIO
The rumour spreads apace.

DELI
What say the common people?

ANTONIO
The rabble
Do directly say she is a strumpet.

DELI
And your graver heads; what is their opinion?

ANTONIO
They are politic and say nothing.

DELI
But who, then, is the father?

ANTONIO
I cannot tell you. Tell me, Delio,
Hath not this news arrived yet to the ear
of the Lord Ferdinand?

DELI
Meseemed his bearing
Altered the longer he tarried in the field.
He grew so quiet that he seemed to sleep
The tempest out as dormice do in winter.
I could now believe some rumour reached him
For houses that are haunted are most still.

ANTONIO

Hark, the procession comes.

_The sound of cheering multitudes is heard outside. The two men go_
towards the window in order to look down at the street. They are_
obliged to speak loudly to be heard above the tumult._

DELIO

The Duke brings home the realm of Cyprus as booty and the
people rejoice as if the tailors and pastrycooks were to get
some of it.

ANTONIO

What are those wooden beams that stand so high?

DELIO

Prows of Turkish ships our Duke hath set upon carts for the
crowd to gape at. Well he knows how the rabble love a brave
show.

ANTONIO

'Tis a very forest of captured standards yonder!

DELIO

Ay, they serve well to hide the worn faces of our soldiers.
Methinks their joy would have been greater had the war been
shorter.

ANTONIO

Enough of this victory. I'd sooner hear the women laugh and
jest as they hang upon their husbands' arms and lift their
children for a father's kiss.

DELIO

Be still! Here comes the Duke.
_Enter Ferdinand, Duchess and Bosola._

FERDINAND

I'll instantly to bed,

For I am weary. I am to bespeak
A husband for you.

DUCHESS

For me, sir? Pray who is't?
FERDINAND

The great Count Malatesta.

DUCHESS

Laughing.

Fie upon him!
A count? He's so old and thin
You may look quite through him. When I choose
A husband, I will marry for your honour

FERDINAND

You shall do well in't. How is't, worthy Antonio?

DUCHESS

But, sir, I am to have a private conference with you
About a scandalous report is spread
Touching mine honour.

FERDINAND

Let me be ever deaf to it.
One of Pasquill's paper bullets, court calumny,
A pestilent air which princes' palaces
Are seldom purged of. Yet, say that it were true
I pour it in your bosom, my fixed love
Would strongly excuse, extenuate, nay deny
Faults were they apparent in you. Go, be safe
In your own innocency.

DUCHESS

Oh bless'd comfort!

This deadly air is purged!

Exeunt all except Ferdinand and Bosola.

FERDINAND

Her guilt treads
Hot burning plowshares. Now, Bosola,
How thrives our intelligence?

BOSOLA

Sir, uncertainly.
'Tis rumoured she hath had three bastards now.
But by whom we may go read i' the' stars.
FERDINAND

Why, some
Hold opinion all things are written there.

BOSOLA

Yes, if we could find spectacles to read them.
I do suspect there hath been some sorcery
Used on the Duchess.

FERDINAND

Sorcery? To what purpose?

BOSOLA

To make her dote on some desertless fellow
She shames to acknowledge.

FERDINAND

Can your faith give way
To think there’s power in potions or in charms
To make us love whether we will or no?

BOSOLA

Most certainly.

FERDINAND

Away! Do you think that herbs or charms
Can force the will? Some trials have been made
In this foolish practice but the ingredients
Were lenitive poisons such as are of force
To make the patient mad; and straight the witch
Swears by equivocation they are in love.
This witchcraft lies in her rank blood. This night
I will force a confession from her. You told me
You had got, within these two days, a false key
Into her bed chamber.

BOSOLA

I have.

FERDINAND

As I would wish.

BOSOLA

What do you intend to do?

FERDINAND

Can you guess?
Scene 3

_The bedchamber of the Duchess._
Enter Duchess, Antonio, Cariola.

DUCHESS

Bring me the casket hither and the glass.
You get no lodging here tonight, my Lord.

ANTONIO

Indeed I must persuade one.

DUCHESS

Very good.
I hope in time 'twill grow into a custom
That husbands shall come with cap and knee
To purchase a night's lodging of their wives.

ANTONIO

I must lie here.

DUCHESS

Must? You are lord of misrule.

ANTONIO

Indeed my rule is only in the night.

DUCHESS

To what use will you put me?

ANTONIO

We'll sleep together.

DUCHESS

Alas, what pleasure can two lovers find in sleep?

CARIOLA

Good sir, I lie with her often and I know
She'll much disquiet you.

ANTONIO

See, you are complained of.
CARIOLA
For she's the sprawlingest bedfellow.
ANTONIO
I shall like her the better for that.
CARIOLA
Sir, shall I ask you a question?
ANTONIO
I pray thee, Cariola.
CARIOLA
Wherefore still when you lie with my lady
Do you rise so early?
ANTONIO
Labouring men
Count the clock oftenest, Cariola,
Are glad when their task's ended.
DUCHESS
I'll stop your mouth.

Kisses him.

ANTONIO
Nay that's but one, Venus had two soft doves
To draw her chariot. I must have another.
Kisses her again.
When wilt thou marry, Cariola?
CARIOLA
Never, my lord.

ANTONIO
Oh fie this single life? Forgo it.
We read how Daphne, for her peevish slight,
Became a fruitless bay tree; Syrinx turned
To the pale empty reed; Anaxarete
Was frozen into marble; whereas, those
Which married, or proved kind unto their friends
Were, by a gracious influence, transhaped
Into the olive, pomegranate, mulberry;
Became flowers, precious stones or eminent stars.

CARIOLA
Your husband is a scholar. But I pray you, tell me
If there were proposed me wisdom, riches and beauty
In three several young men which should I choose?

ANTONIO
'Tis a hard question. This was Paris' case
And he was blind in it and there was great cause
For how was it possible he could judge right,
Having three amorous goddesses in view
And they stark naked? 'Twas a motion
Were able to benight the apprehension
Of the severest councillor of Europe.

DUCHESS
If I were to choose between wisdom, riches and beauty,
I'd choose love. Even so, you shall not sleep here.

CARIOLA
'Tis well, for the silkworm is accustomed
To fast every third day and the next following
Spins the better for it.

They laugh.

DUCHESS
I pray thee tell me
When were we so merry? My hair tangles.

ANTONIO
'Takes Cariola aside.
Pray thee, Cariola, let's steal forth the room
And let her talk to herself. I have diverse times
Served her the like when she hath chafed extremely.
I love to see her angry. Softly, Cariola.

They tiptoe out.

DUCHESS
Doth not the colour of my hair 'gin to change?
When I wax grey, I shall have all the court
Powder their hair with orris to be like me.
You have cause to love me, I entered you into my heart

Enter Ferdinand unseen.

Before you would vouchsafe to call for the keys.
We shall one day have my brother take you napping. Methinks his presence, being now in court, Should make you keep your own bed. But you'll say Love mixed with fear is sweetest. I'll assure you You shall get no more children till my brothers Consent to be godfathers. Have you lost your tongue? Have I angered you? Forgive me, husband, You shall sleep here. In truth I fear nothing For I have tasted so much joy that now, Whether I am doomed to live or die, I can do both.

Ferdinand disclose himself and gives her a poignard.

FERDINAND
Die then, quickly.
Virtue, where art thou hid? What hideous thing Is it that doth eclipse thee?

DUCHESS
Pray sir, hear me.

FERDINAND
Or is it true thou art but a bare name And no essential thing.

DUCHESS
Sir—

FERDINAND
Do not speak.

DUCHESS
No sir. I will plant my soul in mine ears to hear you.

FERDINAND
Oh most imperfect light of human reason That mak'st us so unhappy to foresee What we can least prevent! Pursue thy wishes And glory in them. There's in shame no comfort But to be past all bounds and sense of shame.

DUCHESS
I pray sir, hear me. I am married.
FERDINAND
So!

DUCHESS
Perhaps not to your liking but for that,
Alas, your shears do come untimely now
To clip the bird’s wings that’s already flown.
Will you see my husband?

FERDINAND
No, only if I could change
Eyes with a basilisk.

DUCHESS
Sure, you came hither
By his confederacy?

FERDINAND
The howling of a wolf
Is music to thee, screech owl—prithee peace.
Whate’er thou art that hast enjoyed my sister,
For I am sure you hear me, for thine own sake
Let me not know thee. I came hither prepared
To work thy discovery yet am now persuaded
It would beget such violent effects
As would damn us both. I would not for ten millions
I had beheld thee. Therefore use all means
I never may have knowledge of thy name;
And for thee, vile woman,
If thou do wish thy lecher may grow old
In thy embraces, I would have thee build
Such a room for him as our hermits
To holier use inhabit. Let not the sun
Shine on him till he’s dead. Let dogs and monkeys
Only converse with him and such dumb things
To whom nature denies use to sound his name.
Do not keep a parroqueeto lest she learn it;
If thou do love him, cut out thine own tongue
Lest it betray him.

DUCHESS
Why might not I marry?
I have not gone about, in this, to create
Any new world or custom.

FERDINAND
Thou art undone.
Thou has ta’en that massy sheet of lead
That hid thy husband’s bones and folded it
About my heart.

DUCHESS
Mine bleeds for it.

FERDINAND
Thine? Heart?
What should I name it unless a hollow bullet
Filled with unquenchable wildfire.

DUCHESS
You are in this
Too strict and, were you not my princely brother,
I would say too jealous. My reputation
Is safe.

FERDINAND
Dost thou know what reputation is?
I’d tell thee—but to no avail since th’ instruction
Comes now too late. And so for you I say
You have shook hands with Reputation
And made him invisible. So fare you well.
I will never see you more.

DUCHESS
Why should only I,
Of all the other princes of the world,
Be cased up like a holy relic? I have youth
And a little beauty.

FERDINAND
So have some virgins
That are witches. I will never see thee more.

Exits.
Enter Antonio with a pistol and Cariola.

DUCHESS
You saw this apparition?
ANTONIO
Yes. We are
Betrayed; how came he hither?
To Cariola.
I should turn
This to thee for that.
DUCHESS
That gallery gave him entrance.
ANTONIO
I would this terrible thing would come again
That it might see me standing in your chamber
Your loving arms about my neck.
DUCHESS
No, No! You must instantly part hence.
ANTONIO
Why so?
DUCHESS
Oh, Antonio, do you not see
This is no storm the winds shall scatter. 'Twas
No judge who stood here but an executioner
Performing sentence on himself
And by the fearful pain driv'n to greater excess.
We are powerless to defend our love.
ANTONIO
I have heard soldiers speak of a great captain
Who cried: I'm powerless to defend me, I'll attack—
DUCHESS
I say 'tis death, Antonio! Give me my clothes,
Cariola.
ANTONIO
Persisting.
There is a weapon, little used but mighty
Even against the mightiest. Let us employ it.
Let us oppose your brother and against his frenzy
Hold up the gorgon head of reason.
DUCHESS
Oh, Antonio,
Your reason is unreason to my strangely
Distracted brother.

ANTONIO
He strives 'gainst nature

Who opposes love.

DUCHESS
Such love as ours defies
Nature, duty and established law.
I cherish this, our reckless love the more,
True passion beyond question for it is
Itself unquestioning. Alas if but the Duke
Had felt its like he would be merciful.
If he had loved he would be gentle now.
You must leave me, Antonio.

ANTONIO
This is wild counsel. Let’s call up the officers
Of your palace, bid them renew their oaths
Of loyalty and attend you closely to prevent
All dark designs upon your person. Having armed
Our arguments with these precautions,
We’ll speak with your too hasty brother and unfold
The history of our honourable marriage.

DUCHESS
You are deceived, dear love.
*She shows him the dagger.*

ANTONIO
Ha, what means this?

DUCHESS
He left this with me and it seems did wish
I’d use it on myself.

ANTONIO
Give it to me.
*The Duchess does not answer but lays the poignard down and goes on dressing.*

Methinks some strange enchantment, sprung
From ties of blood hath bewitched thee. You seem
Altered and can hear your husband’s voice no more.
Duchess
Nay, Antonio, here is no time for pride.
It is your welfare that concerns me
And our children’s safety.

Antonio
Where are the children now?

Cariola
I have conveyed them to another wing of the palace.
The little boy hath asked for his father.

Knocking within.

Duchess
As if a mine beneath my feet were ready
To be blown up.

Cariola
’Tis Bosola.

Duchess
Away!

Oh misery! Methinks unjust actions
Should wear these masks and curtains and not we.

She embraces Antonio.

Now leave me. I have fashioned it already.

Antonio

Sadly.

I would you had given me leave to defend you
As any fishmonger would strike a blow
To shield his dear ones. But do not spare me.
Great adversaries now do menace you,
Let’s put an end to strife between us two.

Exit Antonio. Enter Bosola.

Bosola
The Duke, your brother, is ta’en up in a whirlwind;
Hath took horse an’s rid post to Rome.

Duchess
So late?
BOSOLA
He told me, as he mounted into the saddle,
You were undone.

DUCHESS
Indeed I am very near it.

BOSOLA
What's the matter?

DUCHESS
Antonio, master of our household,
Hath dealt so falsely with me in's accounts:
My brother stood engaged with me for money
Ta'en up of certain Milanese money-lenders
And Antonio let the bonds be forfeit.

BOSOLA
Strangel This is cunning.

DUCHESS
And hereupon
My brother's bills at Naples are protested
Against. Call up our officers.

BOSOLA
I shall.

He exits. Antonio enters.

DUCHESS
The place that you must fly is to Ancona.
'Tis the diocese of my brother, the Lord Cardinal. Surely he will be merciful
And give us shelter, and even sanctify
Our marriage for we may bribe him,
He is covetous. I'll feign a pilgrimage
To our Lady of Loretto. We shall meet there.
Hire a house and I'll send after you
My treasure and my jewels. Our weak safety
Runs upon ingenious wheels. Short syllables
Must stand for periods. I must now accuse you
Of such a feigned crime as is a noble lie
Cause it must shield our honours. I'll give out
You have dealt falsely with me in your accounts.
ANTONIO

'Tis a good stratagem. Yet I do fear
Lest you yourself may learn to scorn me
When I am gone for you'll have many teachers.
Say what you will but stop your ears with wax.

DUCHESS

Dear friend, I'll love no one that hates thee.
Lacking your sweet presence, I'll gaze upon
Your portrait oftener than my looking glass.
Hark, they are coming.

Enter Bosola and gentlemen.

ANTONIO

Will your grace hear me?

DUCHESS

I have got well by you, you have yielded me
A million of loss. I am like to inherit
The people's curses for your stewardship.
You had the trick in audit time to be sick
Till I had signed your quietus and that cured you
Without the help of a doctor. Gentlemen,
I would have this man be an example to you all
So you shall hold my favour. Pray observe him
For he has done that, alas, you would not think of
And, because I intend to be rid of him,
I mean not to publish. Use your fortune elsewhere.

ANTONIO

I am strongly armed to brook my overthrow
As commonly men bear with a hard year.
I will not blame the cause on it but do think
The necessity of my malevolent star
Procures this, not her humour. O the inconstant
And rotten ground of service! You may see
'Tis even like him that in a winter night
Takes a long slumber o'er a dying fire,
As loath to part from it, yet parts thence as cold
As when he first sat down.
Act Two, Scene 3

Duchess

We do confiscate,
Towards the satisfying of your accounts,
All that you have.

Antonio

I am all yours and 'tis very fit
All mine should be so.

Duchess

So, sir, you have your pass.

Antonio

You may see, gentlemen, what it is to serve
A prince with body and soul. Exit.

Bosola

Here’s an example for extortion; what moisture is drawn out
of the sea, when foul weather comes, pours down and runs
into the sea again.

Duchess

I would know what are your opinions of this Antonio.

2nd Officer

He could not abide to see a pig’s head gaping. I thought your
grace would find him a Jew.

3rd Officer

I would you had been his officer for your own sake.

4th Officer

You would have had more money.

1st Officer

He stopped his ears with black wool and to those that came
to him for money said he was thick of hearing.

2nd Officer

Some said he was a hermaphrodite for he could not abide a
woman.

4th Officer

And how scurvy proud he would look when the treasury was
full! Well, let him go.

1st Officer

Yes, and the chippings of the buttery fly after him to scour
his golden chain.
DUCHESS

Leave us, Gentlemen.

Exit officers. Bosola remains. At first the Duchess pays no
attention to him then begins to listen as he speaks.

BOSOLA

Alas, poor gentleman!

DUCHESS

Poor! He has amply filled his coffers.

BOSOLA

Sure he was too honest.
These are rogues that in his prosperity could have wished
His dirty stirrup rivetted through their noses;
Would have prostituted their daughters to his lust,
Made their first born intelligencers; and do these lice
Drop off now?

DUCHESS

I did not know you were his friend.

BOSOLA

Let me show you what a most unvalued jewel
You have in a wanton humour thrown away.
To bless the man shall find him. He was an excellent
Courtier and most faithful; a soldier that thought it
As beastly to know his own value too little
As devilish to acknowledge it too much.
Both his virtue and his form deserved a far better fortune;
His breast was filled with all perfection,
And yet it seemed a private whispering room,
It made so little noise of it.

DUCHESS

But he was basely descended.

BOSOLA

Will you make yourself a mercenary herald
Rather to examine men's pedigrees than virtues?
You shall miss him;
For know an honest statesman to a prince
Is like a cedar planted by a spring;
The spring bathes the tree's root, the grateful tree
Rewards it with his shadow. You have not done so.
I would sooner swim to the Bermudas on two politicians’
Rotten bladders, tied together with an intelligencer’s heart-
string
Than depend upon so changeable a prince’s favour.
Fare thee well, Antonio! Since the malice of the world
Would needs down with thee, it can not be said yet
That any ill thing happened to thee, considering thy fall
Was accompanied with virtue.

**Duchess**

Oh you render me excellent music!

**Bosola**

Say you?

**Duchess**

This good one that you speak of is my husband.

**Bosola**

Do I not dream? Can this ambitious age
Have so much goodness in it as to prefer
A man merely for worth, without these shadows
Of wealth and painted honours? Possible?

**Duchess**

I have had three children by him.

**Bosola**

Fortunate lady!

For you have made your private nuptial bed
The humble and fair seminary of peace.
And the neglected poets of your time
In honour of this trophy of a man
Raised by that curious engine your white hand
Shall thank you in your grave for it; and make that
More reverend than all the cabinets
Of living princes. For Antonio,
His fame shall likewise flow from many a pen
When heralds shall want coats to sell to men.

**Duchess**

As I taste comfort in this friendly speech.
So I would find concealment.
You shall take charge of all my coin and jewels
And follow him for he retires himself to Ancona,
Whither within a few days I mean to follow thee.
_Duchess exits._

**BOSOLA**

What rests but I reveal all to my lord?
Now for this act I am certain to be raised
And men that paint weeds to the life are praised.

### Scene 4

*A Room in the Cardinal’s Palace.*

_On stage Cardinal and Ferdinand with a letter._

**FERDINAND**

She’s loose in the hilts;
Grown a notorious strumpet.

**CARDINAL**

Speak lower.

**FERDINAND**

Lower?

Read here what’s written by my intelligencer.
A servant, her own steward!

**CARDINAL**

_Reads letter._

Can this be certain?

**FERDINAND**

Rhubarb, oh. for rhubarb
To purge this choler! Here’s the cursed day
To prompt my memory and here it shall stick
Till of her bleeding heart I make a sponge
To wipe it out.

**CARDINAL**

Why do you make yourself
So wild a tempest?

**FERDINAND**

Would I could be one
That I might toss her palace 'bout her ears,
Root up her goodly forests, blast her
And lay her general territory as waste
As she hath done her honor.

CARDINAL
   Shall our blood,
The royal blood of Aragon and Castile
Be thus attainted?

FERDINAND
   Apply desperate physic,
We must not now use balsamum but fire,
The smarting cupping glass for that's the means
To purge infected blood, such blood as hers.
There is a kind of pity in mine eye—
I'll give it to my handkerchief and now 'tis here.
I'll bequeath this to her bastards.

CARDINAL
   What to do?

FERDINAND
Why to make soft lint for their mother's wounds
When I have hewed her to pieces.

CARDINAL
   Cursed creature.

FERDINAND
Foolish men,
That ere will trust their honour in a bark
Made of so slight, weak bulrush as is woman,
Apt every minute to sink it.

CARDINAL
This ignorance, when it hath purchased honour,
It can not wield it.

FERDINAND
   Methinks I see her laughing,
Excellent hyena! Talk to me somewhat quickly,
Or my imagination will carry me
To see her in the shameful act of sin.
CARDINAL

With Antonio?

FERDINAND

As soon do it with some strong-thighed bargeman
Or one o’ the woodyard that can quoit the sledge
Or toss the bar, or else some lovely squire
That carries coal up to her private lodging.

CARDINAL

You fly beyond your reason.

FERDINAND

Go to, mistress!

’Tis not your whore’s milk that shall quench my wildfire,
But your whore’s blood.

CARDINAL

How idly shows this rage, which carries you
As men conveyed by witches through the air
On violent whirlwinds! This intemperate noise
Fitly resembles deaf men’s shrill discourse,
Who talk aloud, thinking all other men
To have their imperfection.

FERDINAND

Have you not

My palsy?

CARDINAL

Yes, I can be angry
Without this rupture.

Looks at letter.

She will visit Ancona.

FERDINAND

You shall not receive her!

CARDINAL

I will think upon it.

FERDINAND

I could kill her now,
In you or in myself, for I do think
It is some sin in us heaven doth revenge
By her.
CARDINAL

Are you stark mad?

FERDINAND

I would have their bodies
Burnt in a coal pit with the vantage stopped
That their cursed smoke might not ascend to heaven;
Or dip the sheets they lie in in pitch or sulphur,
Wrap them in it and then light them like a match;
Or else boil their bastards to a cullice
And give it to their lecherous father to renew
The sin of his back.

CARDINAL

Coldly.

I’ll leave you.

FERDINAND

Nay, I have done.
I am confident that had I been damned in hell
And should have heard of this, it would have put me
Into a cold sweat. In, in! I’ll go sleep.
Now that I know who leaps my sister
I’ll find scorpions to string my whips
And fix her in a general eclipse.
Ferdinand exits.

CARDINAL

Calls.
Julia, come forth.

JULIA

Comes out of hiding, perhaps from behind a screen.
I will not be served thus. I will not be hidden
Like a common strumpet. I’ll home to my husband.

CARDINAL

What trick didst thou invent to come to Rome
Without him?

JULIA

Why, my lord, I told him
I came to visit an old hermit here
For my devotions. But I will not stay.
CARDINAL
When thou art with thy husband
Thou hast only kisses from him and high feeding.
But what delight is that? 'Tis just like one
That hath a little fingering on the lute
But cannot tune it.

JULIA
You told me of a piteous wound in the heart
And a sick liver when you wooed me first.

CARDINAL
Come, I'll love you wisely. That's jealously
Since I am very certain you cannot make me cold.

JULIA
You have prevailed with me beyond my strongest thoughts.
I would not now find you inconstant.

CARDINAL
You fear
My constancy because you have approved
Those giddy and wild turnings in yourself.

JULIA
Shamelessly.

Had you been i' the street' under my chamber window
Even there I would have courted you.

CARDINAL
I pray thee, come kiss me. I have news for thee.

JULIA
What is it?

CARDINAL
The Spanish jennet you have begged for
You shall have.

JULIA
You told me that you lacked for money.

CARDINAL
I will have some shortly.

JULIA
How?
CARDINAL

Do not ask.

JULIA

Fingering the gold chain he wears.
This is gold.

CARDINAL

Hath it not a fine colour?

JULIA

I have a bird more beautiful.

CARDINAL

It hath

A pretty sound.

JULIA

A lute string far exceeds it.
It hath no smell like lavender or civet.

CARDINAL

Yet 'tis able to set husband against wife,
Brother against sister and turn saint into sinner.
It is a very valorous mineral,
Who hath it needs no arms to rule the world.

Scene 5

The Shrine of our Lady of Loretto in Ancona. Enter two pilgrims.

1ST PILGRIM

We are fortunate our pilgrimage brings us
Here today. The cardinal himself conducts
The service for his sister, the duchess
Who hath arrived from Malfi to pay her vow
At the shrine of Our Lady of Loretto.

2ND PILGRIM

She hath much need to pray. 'Tis whispered
Through all Ancona that she came seeking shelter
For her steward lover and her bastards.