

# **THE OLD WIFE'S TALE**

by

GEORGE PEELE

CAST OF CHARACTERS

*(in order of their appearance)*

ANTIC

FROLIC

FANTASTIC

CLUNCH

MADGE

FIRST BROTHER

SECOND BROTHER

OLD MAN

VENELIA

LAMPRISCUS

HARVEST-MEN

HUANEBANGO

BOOBY

SACRAPANT

DELIA

FRIAR

TWO FURIES

EUMENIDES

WIGGEN

CHURCHWARDEN

SEXTON

COREBUS

ZANTIPPA

CELANTA

VOICE IN THE WELL

HEAD IN THE WELL

JACK

HOSTESS

SCENE ONE

*Enter ANTIC, FROLIC, and FANTASTIC.*

ANTIC

How now, fellow Frolic! What, all amot? Doth this sadness become thy madness? What though we have lost our way in the woods? Yet never hang the head as though thou hadst no hope to live till tomorrow. For Fantastic and I will warrant thy life tonight for twenty in the hundred.

FROLIC

Antic and Fantastic, as I am frolic franion, never in all my life was I so dead slain. What, to lose our way in the wood, without either fire or candle, so uncomfortable? *O coelum! O terra! O maria! O Neptune!*

FANTASTIC

Why makes thou it so strange, seeing Cupid hath led our young master to the fair lady, and she is the only saint he hath sworn to serve?

FROLIC

What resteth then, but we commit him to his wench, and each of us take his stand up in a tree and sing out our ill fortune to the tune of 'O man in desperation'?

ANTIC

Desperately spoken, fellow Frolic, in the dark; but seeing it falls out thus, let us rehearse the old proverb:  
Three merry men, and three merry men,  
And three merry men be we;  
I in the wood, and thou on the ground,  
And Jack sleeps in the tree.

*A dog barks.*

FANTASTIC

Hush! A dog in the wood, or a wooden dog! O comfortable hearing! I had even as lief the chamberlain of the White Horse had called me up to bed.

FROLIC

Either hath this trotting cur gone out of his circuit, or else are we near some village,

*(Enter CLUNCH, a smith, with a lantern and candle)*  
which should not be far off, for I perceive the glimmering of a glow-worm, a candle, or a cat's eye, my life for a

(MORE)

FROLIC (CONT'D)

halfpenny. -- In the name of my own father, be thou ox or ass that appearest, tell us what thou art!

CLUNCH

What am I? Why, I am Clunch the smith. What are you? What make you in my territories at this time of the night?

ANTIC

What do we make, dost thou ask? Why, we make faces for fear; such as if thy mortal eye could behold, would make thee water the long seams of thy side slops, smith.

FROLIC

And, in faith, sir, unless your hospitality do relieve us, we are like to wander with a sorrowful 'heigh- ho' among the owlets and hobgoblins of the forest. Good Vulcan, for Cupid's sake that hath cozened us all, befriend us as thou mayest, and command us howsoever, wheresoever, whensoever, in whatsoever, for ever and ever.

CLUNCH

Well, masters, it seems to me you have lost your way in the wood. In consideration whereof, if you will go with Clunch to his cottage, you shall have house-room and a good fire to sit by, although we have no bedding to put you in.

ALL

O blessed smith, O bountiful Clunch!

CLUNCH

For your further entertainment, it shall be as it may be, so and so.

SCENE TWO

*A dog barks.*

CLUNCH

Hark! This is Ball, my dog, that bids you welcome in his own language. Come, take heed for stumbling on the threshold. -- Open door, Madge; take in guests.

*Enter MADGE, the Old Wife.*

MADGE

Welcome, Clunch, and good fellows all, that come with my good man. For my good man's sake, come on, sit down. Here is a piece of cheese and a pudding of my own making.

ANTIC

Thanks, gammer. A good example for the wives of our town.

FROLIC

Gammer, thou and thy good man sit lovingly together. We come to chat and not to eat.

CLUNCH

Well, masters, if you will eat nothing, take away. Come, what do we to pass away the time? Lay a crab in the fire to roast for lamb's-wool. What, shall we have a game at trump or ruff to drive away the time? How say you?

FANTASTIC

This smith leads a life as merry as a king with Madge his wife. Sirrah Frolic, I am sure thou art not without some round or other; no doubt but Clunch can bear his part.

FROLIC

Else think you me ill brought up! So set to it when you will.

*They sing.*

ALL

Whenas the rye reach to the chin,  
And chopcherry, chopcherry ripe within,  
Strawberries swimming in the cream  
And schoolboys playing in the stream.  
Then 'O', then 'O', then 'O' my true love said,  
Till that time come again,  
She could not live a maid.

ANTIC

This sport does well. But methinks, gammer, a merry winter's tale would drive away the time trimly. Come, I am sure you are not without a score.

FANTASTIC

I' faith, gammer, a tale of an hour long were as good as an hour's sleep.

FROLIC

Look you, gammer, of the giant and the king's daughter, and I know not what. I have seen the day, when I was a little one, you might have drawn me a mile after you with such a discourse.

MADGE

Well, since you be so importunate, my good man shall fill the pot and get him to bed. They that ply their work must keep good hours. One of you go lie with him; he is a cleanskinned man, I tell you, without either spavin or windgall. So I am content to drive away the time with an old wife's winter's tale.

FANTASTIC

No better hay in Devonshire. A' my word, gammer, I'll be one of your audience.

FROLIC

And I another, that's flat.

ANTIC

Then must I to bed with the good man. Bona nox, gammer. Good night, Frolic.

CLUNCH

Come on, my lad. Thou shalt take thy unnatural rest with me.

*Exeunt ANTIC and CLUNCH.*

FROLIC

Yet this vantage shall we have of them in the morning, to be ready at the sight thereof extempore.

MADGE

Now this bargain, my masters, must I make with you, that you will say 'hum' and 'ha' to my tale; so shall I know you are awake.

BOTH

Content, gammer, that will we do.

MADGE

Once upon a time, there was a king, or a lord, or a duke that had a fair daughter, the fairest that ever was, as white as snow, and as red as blood; and once upon a time, his daughter was stolen away, and he sent all his men to seek out his daughter, and he sent so long that he sent all his men out of his land.

FROLIC

Who dressed his dinner then?

MADGE

Nay, either hear my tale or kiss my tail!

FANTASTIC

Well said! On with your tale, gammer.

MADGE

O Lord, I quite forgot! There was a conjurer, and this conjurer could do anything, and he turned himself into a great dragon and carried the king's daughter away in his mouth to a castle that he made of stone, and there he kept her I know not how long, till at last all the king's men went out so long that her two brothers went to seek her. O, I forget: she -- he, I would say -- turned a proper young man to a bear in the night and a man in the day, and keeps by a cross that parts three several ways, and he made his lady run mad. God's me bones! Who comes here?

SCENE THREE

*Enter the TWO BROTHERS.*

FROLIC

Soft, gammer, here some come to tell your tale for you.

FANTASTIC

Let them alone; let us hear what they will say.

FIRST BROTHER

Upon these chalky cliffs of Albion We are arrived now with tedious toil, And compassing the wide world round about To seek our sister, to seek fair Delia forth, Yet cannot we so much as hear of her.

SECOND BROTHER

O fortune cruel, cruel and unkind, Unkind in that we cannot find our sister, Our sister hapless in her cruel chance -- Soft! Who have we here?

*Enter the OLD MAN at the cross, stooping to gather.*

FIRST BROTHER

Now father, God be your speed. What do you gather there?

OLD MAN

Hips and haws, and sticks and straws, and things that I gather on the ground, my son.

FIRST BROTHER

Hips and haws, and sticks and straws! Why, is that all your food, father?

OLD MAN

Yea, son.

SECOND BROTHER

Father, here is an alms-penny for me, and if I speed in that I go for, I will give thee as good a gown of grey as ever thou didst wear.

FIRST BROTHER

And father, here is another alms-penny for me, and if I speed in my journey, I will give thee a palmer's staff of ivory and a scallop shell of beaten gold.

OLD MAN

Was she fair?

SECOND BROTHER

Ay, the fairest for white and the purest for red, as the blood of the deer or the driven snow.

OLD MAN

Then hark well and mark well my old spell:  
Be not afraid of every stranger,  
Start not aside at every danger;  
Things that seem are not the same.  
Blow a blast at every flame;  
For when one flame of fire goes out,  
Then comes your wishes well about.  
If any ask who told you this good,  
Say the White Bear of England's wood.

FIRST BROTHER

Brother, heard you not what the old man said?  
'Be not afraid of every stranger,  
Start not aside for every danger;  
Things that seem are not the same.  
Blow a blast at every flame;  
For when one flame of fire goes out,  
Then comes your wishes well about.  
If any ask who told you this good,  
Say the White Bear of England's wood.'

SECOND BROTHER

Well, if this do us any good,  
Well fare the White Bear of England's wood!

*Exeunt the TWO BROTHERS.*

OLD MAN

Now sit thee here and tell a heavy tale.  
Sad in thy mood and sober in thy cheer,  
Here sit thee now and to thyself relate  
The hard mishap of thy most wretched state.  
In Thessaly I lived in sweet content,  
Until that Fortune wrought my overthrow;  
For there I wedded was unto a dame  
That lived in honour, virtue, love and fame.  
But Sacrapant, that cursed sorcerer,  
Being besotted with my beauteous love,  
My dearest love, my true betrothed wife,  
Did seek the means to rid me of my life.  
But worse than this, he with his chanting spells  
Did turn me straight into a ugly bear;  
And when the sun doth settle in the west,  
Then I begin to don my ugly hide.  
And all the day I sit as now you see,  
And speak in riddles, all inspired with rage,  
Seeming an old and miserable man,  
And yet I am in April of my age.

*(Enter VENELIA his lady, mad; and goes in again)*

See where Venelia, my betrothed love,  
Runs madding all enraged about the woods,  
All by his cursed and enchanting spells.

*(Enter LAMPRISCUS with a pot of honey)*

But here comes Lampriscus, my discontented neighbour. -- How  
now, neighbour? You look toward the ground as well as I. You  
muse on something.

LAMPRISCUS

Neighbour, on nothing but on the matter I so often moved to  
you. If you do anything for charity, help me; if for  
neighbourhood or brotherhood, help me. Never was one so  
cumbered as is poor Lampriscus. And to begin, I pray, receive  
this pot of honey to mend your fare.

OLD MAN

Thanks, neighbour, set it down.

*(Aside)*

Honey is always welcome to the bear. -- And now, neighbour,  
let me hear the cause of your coming.

LAMPRISCUS

I am, as you know, neighbour, a man unmarried, and lived so unquietly with my two wives that I keep every year holy the day wherein I buried them both. The first was on Saint Andrew's Day, the other on Saint Luke's.

OLD MAN

And now, neighbour, you of this country say, your custom is out. But on with your tale, neighbour.

LAMPRISCUS

By my first wife, whose tongue wearied me alive, and sounded in my ears like the clapper of a great bell, whose talk was a continual torment to all that dwelt by her or lived nigh her, you have heard me say I had a handsome daughter.

OLD MAN

True, neighbour.

LAMPRISCUS

She it is that afflicts me with her continual clamours and hangs on me like a bur. Poor she is, and proud she is; as poor as a sheep new-shorn, and as proud of her hopes as a peacock of her tail well-grown.

OLD MAN

Well said, Lampriscus! You speak it like an Englishman.

LAMPRISCUS

As curst as a wasp, and as froward as a child new-taken from the mother's teat. She is to my age as smoke to the eyes, or as vinegar to the teeth.

OLD MAN

Holily praised, neighbour. As much for the next.

LAMPRISCUS

By my other wife I had a daughter, so hard-favoured, so foul and ill-faced, that I think a grove full of golden trees, and the leaves of rubies and diamonds, would not be a dowry answerable to her deformity.

OLD MAN

Well, neighbour, now you have spoke, hear me speak. Send them to the well for the water of life; there shall they find their fortunes unlooked for. Neighbour, farewell.

*(Withdraws)*

LAMPRISCUS

Farewell and a thousand! And now goeth poor Lampriscus to put in execution this excellent counsel.

*(Exit)*

FROLIC

Why, this goes round without a fiddling stick. But do you hear, gammer, was this the man that was a bear in the night and a man in the day?

MADGE

Ay, this is he; and this man that came to him was a beggar and dwelt upon a green. But soft, who comes here? O, these are the harvest-men. Ten to one, they sing a song of mowing.

*Enter the HARVEST-MEN a-singing, with this song double repeated.*

HARVEST-MEN

All ye that lovely lovers be, pray you for me.  
Lo, here we come a-sowing, a-sowing,  
And sow sweet fruits of love:  
In your sweethearts well may it prove.

*Exeunt HARVEST-MEN.*

#### SCENE FOUR

*Enter HUANEBANGO with his two-hand sword, and BOOBY the Clown.*

FANTASTIC

Gammer, what is he?

MADGE

O, this is one that is going to the conjurer. Let him alone; hear what he says.

HUANEBANGO

Now by Mars and Mercury, Jupiter and Janus, Sol and Saturnus, Venus and Vesta, Pallas and Proserpina, and by the honour of my house Polimackeroeplacidus, it is a wonder to see what this love will make silly fellows adventure, even in the wane of their wits and infancy of their discretion. Alas, my friend, what fortune calls thee forth to seek thy fortune among brazen gates, enchanted towers, fire and brimstone, thunder and lightning? Beauty, I tell thee, is peerless, and

(MORE)

HUANEBANGO (CONT'D)

she precious whom thou affectest. Do off these desires, good countryman; good friend, run away from thyself, and so soon as thou canst, forget her whom none must inherit but he that can monsters tame, labours achieve, riddles absolve, loose enchantments, murder magic, and kill conjuring -- and that is the great and mighty Huanebango!

BOOBY

Hark you, sir, hark you. First, know I have here the flirting feather, and have given the parish the start for the long stock. Now, sir, if it be no more but running through a little lightning and thunder, and 'Riddle me, riddle me, what's this?', I'll have the wench from the conjurer if he were ten conjurers.

HUANEBANGO

I have abandoned the court and honourable company, to do my devoir against this sore sorcerer and mighty magician. If this lady be so fair as she is said to be, she is mine, she is mine! *Meus, mea, meum, in contemptum omnium grammaticorum.*

BOOBY

*O falsum Latinum!* The fair maid is *minum, cum apurtinantibus gibletes* and all.

HUANEBANGO

If she be mine, as I assure myself the heavens will do somewhat to reward my worthiness, she shall be allied to none of the meanest gods, but be invested in the most famous stock of Huanebango Polimackeroeplacidus, my grand-father; my father, Pergopolineo; my mother, Dionora de Sardinia, famously descended --

BOOBY

Do you hear, sir? Had not you a cousin that was called Gusteceridis?

HUANEBANGO

Indeed I had a cousin that sometime followed the court infortunately, and his name, Bustegusteceridis.

BOOBY

O Lord, I know him well! He is the Knight of the Neat's Feet.

HUANEBANGO

O, he loved no capon better. He hath oftentimes deceived his boy of his dinner. That was his fault, good Bustegusteceridis.

BOOBY

Come, shall we go along?

*(Sees OLD MAN)*

Soft, here is an old man at the cross. Let us ask him the way thither. -- Ho you, gaffer! I pray you tell where the wise man, the conjurer, dwells.

HUANEBANGO

Where that earthly goddess keepeth her abode, the commander of my thoughts, and fair mistress of my heart.

OLD MAN

Fair enough, and far enough from thy fingering, son.

HUANEBANGO

I will follow my fortune after mine own fancy, and do according to mine own discretion.

OLD MAN

Yet give something to an old man before you go.

HUANEBANGO

Father, methinks a piece of this cake might serve your turn.

OLD MAN

Yea, son.

HUANEBANGO

Huanebango giveth no cakes for alms; ask of them that give gifts for poor beggars. -- Fair lady, if thou wert once shrined in this bosom, I would buckler thee! Haratantara!

*(Exit)*

BOOBY

Father, do you see this man? You little think he'll run a mile or two for such a cake, or pass for a pudding. I tell you, father, he has kept such a begging of me for a piece of this cake! Whoo! He comes upon me with a 'superfantial substance and the foison of the earth', that I know not what he means. If he came to me thus, and said Thy friend Booby' or so, why I could spare him a piece, with all my heart. But when he tells me how God hath enriched me above other fellows with a cake, why, he makes me blind and deaf at once! Yet, father, here is a piece of cake for you, as hard as the world goes.

OLD MAN

Thanks, son, but list to me:  
He shall be deaf when thou shalt not see.  
Farewell, my son; things may so hit,  
Thou mayst have wealth to mend thy wit.

BOOBY

Farewell, father, farewell, for I must make haste after my  
two-hand sword that is gone before.

*Exeunt.*

SCENE FIVE

*Enter SACRAPANT in his study.*

SACRAPANT

The day is clear, the welkin bright and gray,  
The lark is merry and records her notes;  
Each thing rejoiceth underneath the sky,  
But only I whom heaven hath in hate,  
Wretched and miserable Sacrapant.  
In Thessaly was I born and brought up;  
My mother Meroe hight, a famous witch,  
And by her cunning I of her did learn  
To change and alter shapes of mortal men.  
There did I turn myself into a dragon,  
And stole away the daughter to the king,  
Fair Delia, the mistress of my heart,  
And brought her hither to revive the man  
That seemeth young and pleasant to behold,  
And yet is aged, crooked, weak and numb.  
Thus by enchanting spells I do deceive  
Those that behold and look upon my face;  
But well may I bid youthful years adieu.

*(Enter DELIA with a pot in her hand)*

See where she comes from whence my sorrows grow. --  
How now, fair Delia, where have you been?

DELIA

At the foot of the rock for running water, and gathering  
roots for your dinner, sir.

SACRAPANT

Ah, Delia, fairer art thou than the running water, yet harder  
far than steel or adamant.

DELIA

Will it please you to sit down, sir?

SACRAPANT

Ay, Delia, sit and ask me what thou wilt. Thou shalt have it brought into thy lap.

DELIA

Then I pray you, sir, let me have the best meat from the king of England's table, and the best wine in all France, brought in by the veriest knave in all Spain.

SACRAPANT

Delia, I am glad to see you so pleasant. Well, sit thee down. Spread, table, spread; meat, drink and bread. Ever may I have what I ever crave, When I am spread, for meat for my black cock, And meat for my red.

*(Enter a FRIAR with a chine of beef and a pot of wine)*

Here, Delia; will ye fall to?

DELIA

Is this the best meat in England?

SACRAPANT

Yea.

DELIA

What is it?

SACRAPANT

A chine of English beef, meat for a king and a king's followers.

DELIA

Is this the best wine in France?

SACRAPANT

Yea.

DELIA

What wine is it?

SACRAPANT

A cup of neat wine of Orleans, that never came near the brewers in England.

DELIA

Is this the veriest knave in all Spain?

SACRAPANT

Yea.

DELIA

What is he? A friar?

SACRAPANT

Yea, a friar indefinite and a knave infinite.

DELIA

Then I pray ye, sir friar, tell me before you go: which is the most greediest Englishman?

FRIAR

The miserable and most covetous usurer.

SACRAPANT

Hold thee there, friar!

*(Exit FRIAR)*

But soft, who have we here? Delia, away, begone!

*(Enter the TWO BROTHERS)*

Delia, away, for beset are we!

But heaven or hell shall rescue her for me!

*Exeunt SACRAPANT and DELIA.*

FIRST BROTHER

Brother, was not that Delia did appear?

Or was it but her shadow that was here?

SECOND BROTHER

Sister, where art thou? Delia, come again!

He calls, that of thy absence doth complain.

Call out, Calypha, that she may hear,

And cry aloud, for Delia is near.

SACRAPANT'S VOICE AS ECHO

Near.

FIRST BROTHER

Near! Oh. where? Hast thou any tidings?

SACRAPANT'S VOICE AS ECHO

Tidings.

SECOND BROTHER

Which way is Delia then? Or that, or this?

SACRAPANT'S VOICE AS ECHO

This.

SECOND BROTHER

And may we safely come where Delia is?

SACRAPANT'S VOICE AS ECHO

Yes.

SECOND BROTHER

Brother, remember you the White Bear of England's wood:  
'Start not aside for every danger,  
Be not afeared of every stranger;  
Things that seem are not the same.'

FIRST BROTHER

Brother, why do we not then courageously enter?

SECOND BROTHER

Then, brother, draw thy sword and follow me.

*Enter SACRAPANT; it lightens and thunders. The  
SECOND BROTHER falls down.*

FIRST BROTHER

What, brother, dost thou fall?

SACRAPANT

Ay, and thou too, Calypha.

*(Fall FIRST BROTHER. Enter TWO FURIES)*

*Adeste Daemones!* Away with them!

Go carry them straight to Sacrapanto's cell,  
There in despair and torture for to dwell.

*(Exeunt FURIES with the TWO BROTHERS)*

These are Thenore's sons of Thessaly,  
That come to seek Delia their sister forth.  
But with a potion I to her have given,  
My arts hath made her to forget herself.

*(He removes a turf, and shows a light in a glass)*

See here the thing which doth prolong my life.

With this enchantment I do anything.

And till this fade, my skill shall still endure;

And never none shall break this little glass,

But she that's neither wife, widow nor maid.

Then cheer thyself; this is thy destiny,

(MORE)

SACRAPANT (CONT'D)

Never to die but by a dead man's hand.

*(Exit)*

**SCENE SIX**

*Enter EUMENIDES, the Wandering Knight, and the OLD MAN.*

EUMENIDES

Tell me, Time, tell me, just Time,  
When shall I Delia see?  
When shall I see the lodestar of my life?  
When shall my wandering course end with her sight,  
Or I but view my hope, my heart's delight? --

*(Sees OLD MAN)*

Father, God speed! If you tell fortunes, I pray, good father,  
tell me mine.

OLD MAN

Son, I do see in thy face  
Thy blessed fortune work apace.  
I do perceive that thou hast wit;  
Beg of thy fate to govern it,  
For wisdom governed by advice  
Makes many fortunate and wise.  
Bestow thy alms, give more than all,  
Till dead men's bones come at thy call.  
Farewell, my son; dream of no rest,  
Till thou repent that thou didst best.

*(Exit)*

EUMENIDES

This man hath left me in a labyrinth:  
He biddeth me give more than all,  
'Till dead men's bones come at thy call'.  
He biddeth me dream of no rest,  
Till I repent that I do best.

*(Lies down and sleeps)*

**SCENE SEVEN**

*Enter WIGGEN, COREBUS, CHURCHWARDEN and SEXTON.*

WIGGEN

You may be ashamed, you whoreson scald sexton and  
churchwarden, if you had any shame in those shameless faces  
of yours, to let a poor man lie so long above ground

(MORE)

WIGGEN (CONT'D)

unburied! A rot on you all, that have no more compassion of a good fellow when he is gone!

CHURCHWARDEN

What, would you have us to bury him, and to answer it ourselves to the parish?

SEXTON

Parish me no parishes! Pay me my fees and let the rest run on in the quarter's accounts, and put it down for one of your good deeds, a' God's name, for I am not one that curiously stands upon merits.

COREBUS

You whoreson sodden-headed sheep's face! Shall a good fellow do less service and more honesty to the parish, and will you not when he is dead let him have Christmas burial?

WIGGEN

Peace, Corebus! As sure as Jack was Jack, the frolic'st franion amongst you, and I, Wiggen, his sweet sworn brother, Jack shall have his funerals, or some of them shall lie on God's dear earth for it, that's once!

CHURCHWARDEN

Wiggen, I hope thou wilt do no more than thou darest answer.

WIGGEN

*(beats CHURCHWARDEN)*

Sir, sir, dare or dare not, more or less, answer or not answer, do this, or have this!

SEXTON

Help, help, help! Wiggen sets upon the parish with a pikestaff!

*EUMENIDES awakes and comes to them.*

EUMENIDES

*(to WIGGEN)*

Hold thy hands, good fellow.

COREBUS

Can you blame him, sit, if he take Jack's part against this shake-rotten parish that will not bury Jack?

EUMENIDES

Why, what was that Jack?

COREBUS

Who, Jack, sir? Who, our Jack, sir? As good a fellow as ever trod upon neat's leather.

WIGGEN

Look you, sit: he gave fourscore and nineteen mourning gowns to the parish when he died, and because he would not make them up a full hundred they would not bury him. Was this not good dealing?

CHURCHWARDEN

O Lord, sir, how he ties! He was not worth a halfpenny, and drunk out every penny; and now his fellows, his drunken companions, would have us to bury him at the charge of the parish. And we make many such matches, we may pull down the steeple, sell the bells, and thatch the chancel. He shall lie above ground till he dance a galliard about the churchyard, for Steven Loach!

WIGGEN

*Sic argumentaris, domine Loach:* 'And we make many such matches, we may pull down the steeple, sell the bells, and thatch the chancel.' In good time, sir, and hang yourselves in the bell-ropes when you have done! *Domine, opponens praepono tibi hanc questionem:* whether will you have the ground broken or your pates broken first? For one of them shall be done presently, and to begin mine, I'll seal it upon your coxcomb!

EUMENIDES

Hold thy hands! I pray thee, good fellow, be not too hasty.

COREBUS

(to CHURCHWARDEN)

You capon's face! We shall have you turned out of the parish one of these days with never a tatter to your arse. Then you are in worse taking than Jack.

EUMENIDES

Faith, and he is bad enough.

(to CHURCHWARDEN and SEXTON)

This fellow does but the part of a friend, to seek to bury his friend. How much will bury him?

WIGGEN

Faith, about some fifteen or sixteen shillings will bestow him honestly.

SEXTON

Ay, even thereabouts, sir.

EUMENIDES

Here, hold it then.

*(Aside)*

And I have left me but one poor three half-pence. Now do I remember the words the old man spake at the cross: 'Bestow all thou hast' -- and this is all -- 'till dead men's bones comes at thy call'. -- Here, hold it, and so farewell.

*(Exit)*

WIGGEN

God and all good be with you, sir. -- Nay, you cormorants, I'll bestow one peal of Jack at mine own proper costs and charges.

COREBUS

You may thank God the long staff and the bilbo-blade crossed not your coxcomb. Well, we'll to the church stile and have a pot and so, trill-lill.

BOTH

Come, let's go.

*Exeunt.*

FANTASTIC

But, hark you, gammer, methinks this Jack bore a great sway in the parish.

MADGE

O, this Jack was a marvellous fellow! He was but a poor man, but very well beloved. You shall see anon what this Jack will come to.

*Enter the HARVEST-MEN singing, with WOMEN in their hands.*

FROLIC

Soft, who have we here? Our amorous harvesters.

FANTASTIC

Ay, ay; let us sit still and let them alone.

*Here they begin to sing, the song doubled.*

HARVEST-MEN AND WOMEN

Lo, here we come a-reaping, a-reaping,  
To reap our harvest fruit;  
And thus we pass the year so long,  
And never be we mute.

*Exeunt the HARVEST-MEN and WOMEN.*

SCENE EIGHT

*Enter HUANEBANGO*

FROLIC

Soft, who have we here?

MADGE

O, this is a choleric gentleman! All you that love your  
lives, keep out of the smell of his two-hand sword. Now goes  
he to the conjurer.

FANTASTIC

Methinks the conjurer should put the fool into a juggling  
box.

HUANEBANGO

Fee, fa, fum!  
Here is the Englishman --  
Conquer him that can --  
Came for his lady bright,  
To prove himself a knight,  
And win her love in fight.

*Enter BOOBY the Clown.*

BOOBY

Hoo-haw, Master Bango, are you here? Hear you, you had best  
sit down here and beg an alms with me.

HUANEBANGO

Hence, base cullion! Here is he that commandeth ingress and  
egress with his weapon, and will enter at his voluntary,  
whosoever saith no.

*A voice and flame of fire. HUANEBANGO falleth down*

SACRAPANT'S VOICE

No.

MADGE

So with that they kissed, and spoiled the edge of as good a two-hand sword as ever God put life in. Now goes Booby in, spite of the conjurer.

*Enter SACRAPANT and TWO FURIES.*

SACRAPANT

Away with him into the open fields  
To be a ravening prey to crows and kites.

*(Exeunt FURIES with HUANE BANGO)*

And for this villain, let him wander up and down,  
In nought but darkness and eternal night.

*(Strikes BOOBY blind)*

BOOBY

Here hast thou slain Huan, a slashing knight,  
And robbed poor Booby of his sight!

SACRAPANT

Hence, villain, hence!

*(Exit BOOBY)*

Now I have unto Delia  
Given a potion of forgetfulness,  
That when she comes she shall not know her brothers.  
Lo, where they labour like to country slaves,  
With spade and mattock on this enchanted ground.  
Now will I call her by another name,  
For never shall she know herself again  
Until that Sacrapant hath breathed his last.  
See where she comes.

*(Enter DELIA)*

Come hither, Delia; take this goad. Here hard  
At hand two slaves do work and dig for gold.  
Gore them with this and thou shalt have enough.

*He gives her a goad.*

DELIA

Good sir, I know not what you mean.

SACRAPANT

*(aside)*

She hath forgotten to be Delia,  
But not forgot the same she should forget.  
But I will change her name. --  
Fair Berecynthia (so this country calls you),  
Go ply these strangers, wench; they dig for gold.

*Exit SACRAPANT.*

DELIA

O heavens! How am I beholding to this fair young man!  
But I must ply these strangers to their work.  
See where they come.

*Enter the TWO BROTHERS in their shirts, with  
spades, digging.*

FIRST BROTHER

O brother, see where Delia is!

SECOND BROTHER

O Delia, happy are we to see thee here!

DELIA

What tell you me of Delia, prating swains?  
I know no Delia, nor know I what you mean.  
Ply you your work or else you are like to smart!

FIRST BROTHER

Why, Delia, know'st thou not thy brothers here?  
We come from Thessaly to seek thee forth;  
And thou deceivest thyself, for thou art Delia.

DELIA

Yet more of Delia? Then take this and smart!  
*(Pricks them with the goad)*  
What, feign you shifts for to defer your labour?  
Work, villains, work! It is for gold you dig.

SECOND BROTHER

Peace, brother, peace; this vile enchanter  
Hath ravished Delia of her senses clean,  
And she forgets that she is Delia.

FIRST BROTHER

*(to DELIA)*  
Leave, cruel thou, to hurt the miserable. --  
Dig, brother, dig, for she is hard as steel.

*They dig and descry the light under a little hill.*

SECOND BROTHER

Stay, brother, what hast thou descried?

DELIA

Away and touch it not! It is something that my lord hath hidden there.

*(She covers it again)*

*Enter SACRAPANT.*

SACRAPANT

Well said! Thou plyest these pioneers well. -- Go, get you in, you labouring slaves!

Come, Berecynthia, let us in likewise,  
And hear the nightingale record her notes.

*Exeunt.*

SCENE NINE

*Enter ZANTIPPA, the Curst Daughter, to the well, with a pot in her hand.*

ZANTIPPA

Now for a husband, house and home! God send a good one or none, I pray God! My father hath sent me to the well for the water of life, and tells me if I give fair words I shall have a husband.

*(Enter CELANTA, the Foul Wench, to the well for water, with a pot in her hand)*

But here comes Celanta, my sweet sister. I'll stand by and hear what she says.

*(Withdraws)*

CELANTA

My father hath sent me to the well for water, and he tells me if I speak fair, I shall have a husband and none of the worst. Well, though I am black I am sure all the world will not forsake me; and as the old proverb is, 'Though I am black, I am not the devil'.

ZANTIPPA

*(approaching)*

Marry gup, with a murrain! I know wherefore thou speakest that, but go thy ways home as wise as thou cam'st, or I'll set thee home with a wanion!

*Here she strikes her pitcher against her sister's, and breaks them both and goes her way.*

CELANTA

I think this be the curstest quean in the world! You see what she is -- a little fair but as proud as the devil, and the veriest vixen that lives upon God's earth. Well, I'll let her alone, and go home and get another pitcher, and for all this, get me to the well for water.

*(Exit)*

*Enter TWO FURIES out of Sacrapant's cell and lay HUANE BANGO by the well of life, then exeunt.*

*Enter ZANTIPPA with a pitcher to the well.*

ZANTIPPA

Once again for a husband, and in faith, Celanta, I have got the start of you! Belike husbands grow by the well-side. Now my father says I must rule my tongue. Why, alas, what am I then? A woman without a tongue is as a soldier without his weapon. But I'll have my water and be gone.

*Here she offers to dip her pitcher in, and a VOICE speaks in the well.*

VOICE

Gently dip, but not too deep,  
For fear you make the golden beard to weep.

*(A HEAD comes up with ears of corn)*

Fair maiden, white and red,  
Comb me smooth, and stroke my head,  
And thou shalt have some cockle-bread.

ZANTIPPA

What is this?

'Fair maiden, white and red,  
Comb me smooth and stroke my head,  
And thou shalt have some cockle-bread.'  
'Cockle' callest thou it, boy? Faith, I'll give you  
cocklebread!

*She breaks her pitcher upon the HEAD; it descends.  
Then it thunders and lightens, and HUANE BANGO rises  
up. HUANE BANGO is deaf and cannot hear.*

HUANE BANGO

Phylyda phylerydos, Pamphylyda floryda flortos,  
'Dub-dub-a-dub, bounce!' quoth the guns, with a sulphurous  
huff-snuff!

Waked with a wench, pretty peat, pretty love, and my sweet  
(MORE)

HUANEBANGO (CONT'D)

pretty pigsnie.  
Just by thy side shall sit surnamed great Huanebango;  
Safe in my arms will I keep thee, threat Mars or thunder  
Olympus!

ZANTIPPA

*(aside)*  
Foh! What greasy groom have we here? He looks as though he  
crept out of the backside of the well, and speaks like a drum  
perished at the west end!

HUANEBANGO

O that I might -- but I may not, woe to my destiny  
therefore! --  
Kiss that I clasp, but I cannot! Tell me, my destiny,  
wherefore?

ZANTIPPA

*(aside)*  
Whoop! Now I have my dream! Did you never hear so great a  
wonder as this? -- Three blue beans in a blue bladder:  
rattle, bladder, rattle!

HUANEBANGO

*(aside)*  
I'll now set my countenance and to her in prose. It may be  
this 'rim, ram, ruff' is too rude an encounter. -- Let me,  
fair lady, if you be at leisure, revel with your sweetness,  
and rail upon that cowardly conjurer that hath cast me, or  
congealed me rather, into an unkind sleep and polluted my  
carcass.

ZANTIPPA

*(aside)*  
Laugh, laugh, Zantippa! Thou hast thy fortune -- a fool and a  
husband under one!

HUANEBANGO

Truly, sweetheart, as I seem: about some twenty years, the  
very April of mine age.

ZANTIPPA

*(aside)*  
Why, what a prating ass is this!

HUANEBANGO

Her coral lips, her crimson chin,  
Her silver teeth so white within,  
Her golden locks, her rolling eye,  
(MORE)

HUANEBANGO (CONT'D)

Her pretty parts -- let them go by --  
Heigh-ho, hath wounded me,  
That I must die this day to see.

ZANTIPPA

By Gog's bones, thou art a flouting knave! 'Her coral lips,  
her crimson chin'- ka, wilshaw!

HUANEBANGO

True, my own, and my own because mine, and mine because  
mine -- ha, ha! Above a thousand pounds in possibility, and  
things fitting thy desire in possession.

ZANTIPPA

*(aside)*

Me sot thinks I ask of his lands. Lob be your comfort and  
cuckold be your destiny! -- Hear you, sir: and if you will  
have us, you had best say so betime.

HUANEBANGO

True, sweetheart, and will royalize thy progeny with my  
pedigree.

*Exeunt.*

SCENE TEN

*Enter EUMENIDES.*

EUMENIDES

Wretched Eumenides, still unfortunate,  
Envied by Fortune, and forlorn by Fate;  
Here pine and die, wretched Eumenides.  
Die in the spring, the April of my age?  
Here sit thee down; repent what thou hast done.  
I would to God that it were ne'er begun!

*Enter JACK.*

JACK

You are well overtaken, sir.

EUMENIDES

Who's that?

JACK

You are heartily well met, sir.

EUMENIDES

Forbear, I say! Who is that which pincheth me?

JACK

Trusting in God, good Master Eumenides, that you are in so good health as all your friends were at the making hereof God give you good morrow, sir. Lack you not a neat, handsome and cleanly young lad, about the age of fifteen or sixteen years, that can run by your horse, and for a need, make your mastership's shoes as black as ink? How say you, sir?

EUMENIDES

Alas, pretty lad, I know not how to keep myself, and much less a servant, my pretty boy, my state is so bad.

JACK

Content yourself, you shall not be so ill a master but I'll be as bad a servant. Tut, sir, I know you though you know not me. Are not you the man, sir -- deny it if you can, sir -- that came from a strange place in the land of Catita, where Jackanapes flies with his tail in his mouth, to seek out a lady as white as snow and as red as blood? Ha, ha! Have I touched you now?

EUMENIDES

I think this boy be a spirit! -- How know'st thou all this?

JACK

Tut, are not you the man, sir -- deny it if you can, sir -- that gave all the money you had to the burying of a poor man, and but one three half-pence left in your purse? Content you, sir, I'll serve you, that is flat.

EUMENIDES

Well, my lad, since thou art so importunate, I am content to entertain thee, not as a servant, but a copartner in my journey. But whither shall we go? For I have not any money more than one bare three half-pence.

JACK

Well, master, content yourself, for if my divination be not out, that shall be spent at the next inn or alehouse we come to, for, master, I know you are passing hungry; therefore I'll go before and provide dinner until that you come. No doubt but you'll come fair and softly after.

EUMENIDES

Aye, go before; I'll follow thee.

JACK

But do you hear, master? Do you know my name?

EUMENIDES

No, I promise thee, not yet.

JACK

Why, I am Jack.

*(Exit)*

EUMENIDES

Jack. Why, be it so then.

**SCENE ELEVEN**

*Enter the HOSTESS and JACK, setting meat on the table, and Fiddlers come to play. EUMENIDES walketh up and down, and will eat no meat.*

HOSTESS

How say you, sir? Do you please to sit down?

EUMENIDES

Hostess, I thank you, I have no great stomach.

HOSTESS

*(to JACK)*

Pray, sir, what is the reason your master is so strange? Doth not this meat please him?

JACK

Yes, hostess, but it is my master's fashion to pay before he eats; therefore, a reckoning, good hostess.

HOSTESS

Marry, shall you, sir, presently.

*(Exit)*

EUMENIDES

Why, Jack what dost thou mean? Thou knowest I have not any money. Therefore, sweet Jack, tell me, what shall I do?

JACK

Well, master, look in your purse.

EUMENIDES

Why, faith, it is a folly, for I have no money.

JACK

Why, look you, master, do so much for me.

EUMENIDES

Alas, Jack, my purse is full of money!

JACK

'Alas', master? Does that word belong to this accident? Why, methinks I should have seen you cast away your cloak and in a bravado dance a galliard round about the chamber. Why, master, your man can teach you more wit than this. -- Come, hostess, cheer up my master.

*Enter HOSTESS.*

HOSTESS

You are heartily welcome. And if it please you to eat of a fat capon, a fairer bird, a finer bird, a sweeter bird, a crisper bird, a neater bird your worship never eat of.

EUMENIDES

Thanks my fine, eloquent hostess.

JACK

But, hear you, master, one word by the way. Are you content I shall be halves in all you get in your journey?

EUMENIDES

I am, Jack; here is my hand.

JACK

Enough, master. I ask no more.

EUMENIDES

Come, hostess, receive your money, and I thank you for my good entertainment.

HOSTESS

You are heartily welcome, sir.

EUMENIDES

Come, Jack, whither go we now?

JACK

Marry, master, to the conjurer's presently.

EUMENIDES

Content, Jack. Hostess, farewell.

*Exeunt.*

**SCENE TWELVE**

*Enter BOOBY and CELANTA to the well for water.*

BOOBY

Come, my duck, come. -- I have now got a wife. -- Thou art fair, art thou not?

CELANTA

My Booby, the fairest alive, make no doubt of that.

BOOBY

Come, wench, are we almost at the well?

CELANTA

Ay, Booby, we are almost at the well now. I'll go fetch some water; sit down while I dip my pitcher in.

*She dips her pitcher in the well.*

VOICE

Gently dip, but not too deep,  
For fear you make the golden beard to weep.

*(A HEAD comes up with ears of corn)*

Fair maiden, white and red,  
Comb me smooth, and stroke my head,  
And thou shalt have some cockle- bread.

*(She combs the corn into her lap. The HEAD descends)*

Gently dip, but not too deep,  
For fear thou make the golden beard to weep.

*(CELANTA dips her pitcher again. A HEAD comes up full of gold)*

Fair maiden, white and red,  
Comb me smooth, and stroke my head,  
And every hair a sheaf shall be,  
And every sheaf a golden tree.

*She combs the gold into her lap. The HEAD descends.*

CELANTA

O see, Booby, I have combed a great deal of gold into my lap and a great deal of corn.

BOOBY

Well said, wench! Now we shall have toast enough. God send us coiners to coin our gold. But come, shall we go home, sweetheart?

CELANTA

Nay, come, Booby, I will lead you.

BOOBY

So, Booby, things have well hit;  
Thou hast gotten wealth to mend thy wit.

*Exeunt.*

SCENE THIRTEEN

*Enter JACK and EUMENIDES.*

JACK

Come away, master, come.

EUMENIDES

Go along, Jack, I'll follow thee. Jack, they say it is good to go cross-legged and say his prayers backward. How sayest thou?

JACK

Tut, never fear, master; let me alone. Here sit you still; speak not a word. And because you shall not be enticed with his enchanting speeches, with this same wool I'll stop your ears.

*(Puts wool into Eumenides' ears)*

And so, master, sit still, for I must to the conjurer.

*Exit JACK.*

*Enter SACRAPANT to EUMENIDES.*

SACRAPANT

How now! What man art thou that sits so sad?  
Why dost thou gaze upon these stately trees  
Without the leave and will of Sacrapant?  
What, not a word but mum?

Then, Sacrapant, thou art betrayed!

*(Enter JACK, invisible, and taketh off Sacrapant's wreath from his head, and his sword out of his hand)*

(MORE)

SACRAPANT (CONT'D)

What hand invades the head of Sacrapant?  
What hateful fury doth envy my happy state?  
Then, Sacrapant, these are thy latest days.  
Alas, my veins are numbed, my sinews shrink,  
My blood is pierced, my breath fleeting away,  
And now my timeless date is come to end.  
He in whose life his actions hath been so foul,  
Now in his death to hell descends his soul.

*He dieth and his body is removed.*

JACK

O sir, are you gone? Now I hope we shall have some other  
coil. Now, master, how like you this? 'Me conjurer, he is  
dead, and vows never to trouble us more. Now get you to your  
fair lady, and see what you can do with her. -- Alas, he  
heareth me not all this while. But I will help that.

*He pulls the wool out of Eumenides' ears.*

EUMENIDES

How now, Jack! What news?

JACK

Here, master, take this sword and dig with it at the foot of  
this hill.

*He digs and spies a light.*

EUMENIDES

How now, Jack! What is this?

JACK

Master, without this the conjurer could do nothing, and so  
long as this light lasts, so long doth his art endure, and  
this being out, then doth his art decay.

EUMENIDES

Why then, Jack, I will soon put out this light.

JACK

Ay, master, how?

EUMENIDES

Why, with a stone I'll break the glass, and then blow it out.

JACK

No, master, you may as soon break the smith's anvil as this  
little vial, nor the biggest blast that ever Boreas blew

(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)

cannot blow out this little light; but she that is neither maid, wife nor widow. Master, wind this horn, and see what will happen.

*(He winds the horn. Here enters VENELIA and breaks the glass, and blows out the light, and goeth in again)*

So master, how like you this? This is she that ran madding in the woods, his betrothed love that keeps the cross; and now this light being out, all are restored to their former liberty. And now, master, to the lady that you have so long looked for.

*He draweth a curtain, and there DELIA sitteth asleep.*

EUMENIDES

God speed, fair maid, sitting alone: there is once.  
God speed, fair maid, sitting alone: there is twice.  
God speed, fair maid, sitting alone: there is thrice.

DELIA

Not so, good sir, for you are by.

JACK

Enough, master; she hath spoke. Now I will leave her with you.

*(Exit)*

EUMENIDES

Thou fairest flower of these western parts,  
Whose beauty so reflecteth in my sight  
As doth a crystal mirror in the sun,  
For thy sweet sake I have crossed the frozen Rhine;  
Leaving fair Po, I sailed up Danuby  
As far as Saba, whose enhancing streams  
Cuts 'twixt the Tartars and the Russians.  
These have I crossed for thee, fair Delia:  
Then grant me that which I have sued for long.

DELIA

Thou gentle knight, whose fortune is so good  
To find me out, and set my brothers free,  
My faith, my heart, my hand I give to thee.

EUMENIDES

Thanks, gentle madam. But here comes Jack. Thank him, for he is the best friend that we have.

*(Enter JACK with a head in his hand)*

How now, Jack! What hast thou there?

JACK

Marry, master, the head of the conjurer.

EUMENIDES

Why, Jack, that is impossible -- he was a young man!

JACK

Ah, master, so he deceived them that beheld him. But he was a miserable, old and crooked man, though to each man's eye he seemed young and fresh. For, master, this conjurer took the shape of the old man that kept the cross, and that old man was in the likeness of the conjurer. But now, master, wind your horn.

*(He winds his horn)*

*Enter VENELIA, the TWO BROTHERS, and the OLD MAN.*

EUMENIDES

Welcome, Erestus! Welcome, fair Venelia!  
Welcome, Thelea and Calypha both! Now have I her that I so long have sought;  
So saith fair Delia, if we have your consent.

FIRST BROTHER

Valiant Eumenides, thou well deservest  
To have our favours; so let us rejoice  
That by thy means we are at liberty.  
Here may we joy each in other's sight,  
And this fair lady have her wandering knight.

JACK

So, master, now ye think you have done. But I must have a saying to you. You know you and I were partners, I to have half in all you got.

EUMENIDES

Why, so thou shalt, Jack.

JACK

Why then, master, draw your sword, part your lady, let me have half of her presently.

EUMENIDES

Why, I hope, Jack, thou dost but jest! I promised thee half I got, but not half my lady.

JACK

But what else, master? Have you not gotten her? Therefore divide her straight, for I will have half There is no remedy.

EUMENIDES

Well, ere I will falsify my word unto My friend, take her all. Here, Jack, I'll give her thee.

JACK

Nay, neither more nor less, master, but even just half

EUMENIDES

Before I will falsify my faith unto my friend, I will divide her. Jack, thou shalt have half

FIRST BROTHER

Be not so cruel unto our sister, gentle knight!

SECOND BROTHER

O, spare fair Delia! She deserves no death!

EUMENIDES

Content yourselves; my word is passed to him. Therefore prepare thyself, Delia, for thou must die.

DELIA

Then farewell, world! Adieu, Eumenides!

*He offers to strike and JACK stays him.*

JACK

Stay, master! It is sufficient I have tried your constancy. Do you now remember since you paid for the burying of a poor fellow?

EUMENIDES

Ay, very well, Jack.

JACK

Then, master, thank that good deed for this good turn. And so, God be with you all!

*JACK leaps down in the ground.*

EUMENIDES

Jack! What, art thou gone? Then farewell, Jack. Come, brothers and my beauteous Delia,

(MORE)

EUMENIDES (CONT'D)

Erestus and thy dear Venelia;  
We will to Thessaly with joyful hearts.

ALL

Agreed! We follow thee and Delia.

*Exeunt.*

FANTASTIC

What, gammer, asleep?

MADGE

By the mass, son, 'tis almost day, and my windows shut at the  
cock's crow!

FROLIC

Do you hear, gammer? Methinks this Jack bore a great sway  
amongst them.

MADGE

O, man, this was the ghost of the poor man that they kept  
such a coil to bury, and that makes him to help the wandering  
knight so much. But come, let us in. We will have a cup of  
ale and a toast this morning, and so depart.

FANTASTIC

'Men you have made an end of your tale, gammer?

MADGE

Yes, faith. When this was done I took a piece of bread and  
cheese, and came my way, and so shall you have too before you  
go, to your breakfast.

*Exeunt.*

**FINIS**