

The Foundling:

A Tragedy

Composed and written betwixt my sixteenth and eighteenth year

Anonymous

Edited for Performance by M. Earl Smith

Dramatis Personae

Sir John the Generous

Belville, Sir John's nephew

Henry, Belville's friend

Medicum, a physician

Servants

Edwin & Conrad, two peasants

Matilda, the Foundling

Julia, Sir John's niece and Belville's sister

Maria

Act One, Scene One

A Garden

Enter Sir John the Generous

Sir John: How sweet and pleasant is this morning scene!
High in the heavens the tuneful lark doth soar,
and with her notes delights the enraptured ear.
The whole feathered choir chants their morning songs
to the all-bountiful heaven that preserves them.
Fair Aurora has dispelled the dark clouds
of obscure night, and the resplendent sun
is just rising from yonder eastern slay,
to give light unto an ungrateful world
who, thankless for the many gifts of heaven,
live unconscious of their intrinsic worth.
The peasant, refreshed from yesterday's toil
by the sweet balmy influence of sleep,
and with a heart devoid of care, rises.
Mirth, fresh vigor, to renew his labors.
These flowers and shrubs, decked in so-gay attire,
send forth so sweet, and so fragrant, her fumes
unknown to the pampered sons of luxury.
To whom, then, should thanks be returned but to heaven?
To thee! A governor of the universe,
would I humbly present my grateful thanks,
for all these blessings, which thou hast bestowed.

Enter Julia

Julia: Forgive me, Sir, if unreasonably
I've intruded on your meditations.

Sir John: Oh, no, Julia!
Your company is pleasant at all times.
But why have you left your bed so soon?

Julia: I arose to enjoy this fine morning,
and to contemplate the works of nature
What beauty, what harmony reigns around!

Sir John: Your enthusiasm is commendable
in admiring the gay works of nature.
The mind is insensibly led to adore
the wisdom and goodness of that being
who preserves them with his tenderly care.

Julia: Oh! 'Tis delightful to view these blessed scenes.
The river wimpling o'er its pebbly bed,
and with its hollow murmurs delights the ear.
The gentle willow, springing by its side,
affords a shelter to the feathered tribe
who, in gratitude, exercise their throats
in chanting forth sweet and melodious songs,
which charm the peasant at his daily toil.
The prospect, all around, is fine and clear
save where the smoke of some neighboring cottage
in dark columns ascend into the skies.
There, the busy housewife, with unsparing hand
prepares the rustic peasants plenteous meal,
whilst all around her children frisk about
in rural sports, emblems of innocence.

Sir John: Aye, how long will you dwell on this subject?

Julia: Oh, all the livelong day I could discourse
on this loved theme, this enchanting subject.
To the weak body it adds health and strength,
and cheerfulness to the sad, drooping heart.
It fills the soul with the highest ideas;
of the sublimity of the deity.
It raises the soul as 'twere to the heavens,
fixed in wonder, astonishment, and awe.

Sir John: Oh, my child, what pleasure does it give me
to see my much-loved brother live in you.

Sir John: There are few pleasures so great, so pure,
as to trace, in a rising offspring, the
many virtues which adorned their parents.
To behold in their youthful hearts fair virtue,
deep-rooted, growing with their increasing years.
Your worthy parents (peace be with their names)
passed every generous feeling, every
benevolent thought that can ennoble the soul.
The whole country felt the effects of their
generosity and now mourn their loss.
Never, never! Were such two noble souls
united in the most endearing ties
of husband and wife, lover, parent, friend.
They bore love and goodwill to everyone,
and expected the same return from them.
But, Alas! How often they were deceived.
They oft met a base and ungrateful return.
Such, my Julia, is this degenerate world,
whilst the fickle dame fortune smiles on us
we will find many, many, professed friends
will buoy us up with their cringing flattery.
But, when adversity, with his pale hand,
has thrown his iron mantle around us,
then will our pretend friends desert us,
and leave us only cold pity to soothe
our sorrows and relieve our needful wants.
Such, my Julia, lived your worthy parents,
till relentless death deprived you of them.

Julia: Forbear to renew such a tender scene;
the remembrance of my dear loved parents
fills me with unfounded grief for their loss.
Cruel fate, to rob me of such a gift!

Sir John: Oh, my Julia.
Murmur not at the just decrees of heaven.
Oft, from apparent ills, our blessings spring.
They are happy, happier far than we!
No worldly cares disturbed by their peaceful rest,
so coinciding thoughts ever does them annoy.
But love and harmony alone doth reign.

Julia: Forgive me, Sir.
I meant not to arraign heaven's just decrees.
But the remembrance of their dying scene
will never be erased from my memory.
When pale and languid stretched on their deathbed
They bade Belville and me a long farewell
whilst we stood viewing the sad spectacle.
Our eyes bedewed with filial tears, our hearts
seemingly burst in twain, our mother thus spoke:
"My children, I leave you in a dangerous world;
a world where vice abounds with luring snares.
Where virtue cannot safely rear its head.
Where deceit often speaks through friendship's name.
Where hypocrisy oft wears virtue's mask,
to hide their crimes and follies from mankind.
In such a world, then: O, be on your guard!
Be virtuous, so shall you be happy.
Although now we part, yet again we'll meet
to part no more."

Enter Servant

Servant: Sir, a letter.

Exit Servant

Sir John: Ah, by the hand it should be from Belville.

Julia: Is it from my brothers?

Sir John: It is, Julia.

Julia: For this time I am denied the pleasure
of reading his affectionate letters.
Dare I take the liberty to ask you
if he is well?

Sir John: Take it, my child.
He intends to be here in a few days
with his much esteemed and loved friend Henry.

Julia: And after six months' absence shall we meet!
Shall I clasp him to my fond heart with all
the transport of a sister's affection?
Matilda, too, shall join our mutual joy,
and all together happy, happy be.

Sir John: I hope thy words will be prophetic, but
I fear joy will never reach Matilda's heart,
For, (with grief) of late I have observed her;
always melancholy and reserved, she
oft strays in the garden's most lonely parts.
Where, when alone, I have oft seen her weep,
as if some weighty load of grief depressed
Her heart. Can you divine the cause, Julia?

Julia: Indeed, I can't.
I, too, have marked the same and asked the cause.
But still, she evades my friendly question
by complaining of indisposition.
I have not urged her further, but left to
time and friendship to discover the cause.

Sir John: This melancholy must not be indulged.
Leave no fair means untried, to know the cause
yet, with all delicacy bear yourself.

Sir John: Let it not be a harsh and rude command,
but as the solicitude of a friend.
Thus, by love and friendship, you may win her.

Julia: Once more, I'll try.
Lost to every tie of gratitude, lost
to the endearing voice of friendship, she must be,
if she denies compliance with my request.

Exit Julia

Sir John: He has aligned no cause for his return.
What should induce him to quit the army
and the pleasures of the gay bustling world,
which are so congenial to youthful hearts,
to be buried here in obscurity?
I much suspect that it is some love affair
That hurries him so unexpectedly home.
Love, which reigns with such ardor in youth, may
but seldom, or ever, be fully extinguished,
till time and prudence join their mutual strength,
and reason gain the victory at length.

Exit Sir John

Act One, Scene Two
An unfrequented part of the garden

Enter Matilda

Matilda: All hail ye lonely groves, remote from noise;
ye gloomy shades, where peace and silence dwell.
Inspire the soul with melancholy awe.
Hail solitude, grief of assuaging virtue.
Thou can't calm the wild and turbulent passions,
but sure, no where can I a cure obtain,
to calm the tumults of a guilty soul.
Descend, O night, with thy pale, sable clouds,
and hide me, if possible, from myself.
Vain thought, what darkness can conceal the soul,
from conscience's unnerving sting? What clouds can
hide Matilda from the fangs of remorse?
Cease ye little warbles, your joyful strains!
You mock my despairing soul with your notes.
I once could have mixed with the tuneful throng,
and joined in all the happy rural sports.
Now nature's beauties have no chance for me,
but forever like the troubled ocean,
that, with the howling tempest, loud by roars,
and dashes the soon-distressed mariner
amongst its stormy billows, to and fro.
Even so, 'tis with me, sorrow and shame
continually haunt my tortured soul.
O Belville, thou hast ruined me forever!
Ere I knew thee, I was indeed happy.
Conscience strings had then no power over me,
but all was innocence and all was peace
Wretched Matilda! How art thou fallen?
Fallen indeed, from the highest pinnacle
of earthly happiness, and headlong plunged
into a dismal pit of misery.
Yet, O heaven if a wretch weighed down with guilt
does presume to approach thy hallowed shrine,
preserve my Belville from every mischief.
Though my seducer, still my heart loves him.

Matilda: Send him safe to my long expecting arms,
free from all the dangers of dead by wars.

But why do I thus mock heaven with my prayers?
Mercy can ne'er reach the soul without its
attendant penitence, and where can that rest?
Then the means of sin and guilt are still to be loved.
But O, should he prove false I am undone.
My fate is sure to be expelled from my
benefactor's house, with a helpless child
to maintain, exposed to all the rigors
of the various changeable seasons,
unhoused, friendless, and forlorn, to wander
through the inhospitable world, annoyed
by the bitter invectives of malice,
and haunted by the keen pangs of remorse.

Enter Julia

Julia: My Dear Matilda! Have I at last found you?
These two long hours have I been seeking thee;
and now I have found you, all bathed in tears.
Where is now that one cheerful countenance?
Where's the pleasing smile that adorned thy face?
All are fled, and in their stead, poignant grief
and fuming discontent have taken place.
Indeed, I cannot bear to see you thus:
Thus objected, thus melancholy, and
without any seeming, apparent cause.
There must be something more than usual
that always depresses your spirits thus.
Repose, then, all your grief in my bosom.
There you will find a secure, easy hum

Julia: for your sorrow. Oh, give it vent then, and let
me know the reason that it thus gives you pain.
My friendly counsel may restore your peace -
if it does not quite alleviate it -
'twill ease your heart by the part that I bear.

Matilda: What love could do for friendship, you might do;
but here, even that is impossible.
For such is the nature of my grief that
'tis only increased by being observed.

Julia: Unkind Matilda! Most ungrateful maid!
Is it thus you repay all my friendship?
have you forgot our innocent childhood?
School days, the happy hours that we have spent
when we have chide the hasty footed time
for parting us. Oh, is all now forgot
that night too? When, by the beams of the moon
we strayed to yonder wood and sat us down
beneath the branches of a majestic oak;
told our tale of love and vowed eternal
friendship? The tender, fragrant woodbine too!
Whose branches, with the poplar were, interwoven;
clung to it for support from the stormy blasts.
You said "Julia, even so, my heart clings to thee.
Nor place, nor time's destroying sway can even
divide my undivided heart from thee."
Wilt thou rend our ancient love asunder
and indulge yourself in melancholy?
It is not friendly, 'tis not virtuously.
Have I a thought or wish concealed from you?
Do I ask too much, then, to share your grief?

Julia: Nay! 'Tis so I find that all the love you
professed for me is but merely outward.

Matilda: Oh, do not kill me with these cruel words.
They drive a pang to my afflicted heart,
more poignant than the fatal dagger's point.

Julia: Then let me have the privilege to share
your sorrow and mingle tears with thine.

Matilda: Oh why do you say, rather forget,
a miserable wretch who is not worthy
of thy friendship.

Julia: When I forget thee, may heaven forget me!
Since I can't dispel those clouds of sorrow
let me but see one cheering, pleasant smile.
Adorn that sweet expressive countenance
and I'll be content.

Matilda: Oh, you dear bewitching creature! Though hard,
the task yet I'll endeavor to comply.

Julia: Oh, never let me see you but thus - and now,
let me have another of the same nature
when I have the pleasure to inform you
that Belville and his worthy friend Henry
are daily expected at the castle.

Matilda: Belville, returning? Then heaven is still just!
Oh, thou disposer of human events;
receive most sincere and grateful thanks
for this inestimable blessing this,
cordial to my long despairing soul.
And safe may he return, with heart unchanged;
with love sincere, and affection mutual.
Oh, let me anticipate, with fond hope
such a charming, such a pleasing idea.

Julia: Will these wild, rapturous strains never cease?
Your ambitions fancy will soon lead you
to think you are an aerial being
and forget you are an earthly mortal.

Matilda: When the mind is intent on one subject,
and when absorbed in deep reflective thought,
the soul will sometimes take a flight to heaven
and, fixed there, forget this sublunary world;
but to have done with these wild chimeras.
The joy of Belville, so returning,
which must be pleasing to you, his sister
and likewise, to me, as a youthful friend,
transported to my thoughts so far from myself,
that every other idea
was banished from my mind as trivial.

Julia: Does Matilda, then, love Belville as much
as Julia? Enchanting, charming thought!
In this embrace, be both our souls united;
united in bonds that death alone can break.
Nor even then, for, in heaven again we'll meet!
Oh, Belville! Didst thou but know how much thou
art beloved on the wings of impatience?
Wouldst thou fly and join the mutual concord?
But, let us hence, for Sir John waits for us.
*And may heaven, which is always just and kind,
restore you to your wonted peace of mind.*

Act One, Scene Three

A room in Sir John's

Enter Sir John, meeting Matilda & Julia

Matilda: Health and many happy days await Sir John!

Julia: May his declining years flow on in an
uninterrupted harmony of bliss.

Matilda: Long may he live, the friend of the friendless,
the orphan's guardian, as he's been to me.

Sir John: To what purpose do these fine speeches tend?

Matilda: Gratitude, Sir, though a silent passion,
will sometimes break out in an ecstasy
towards its benefactor. When a child,
my cruel parents deserted me; an
orphan, an outcast from society.
Helpless and forlorn, for faults not my own.
Abandoned, then, by all the world; no eye
to pity, no generous hand to save me,
I was laid down at your paternal door.
Exposed to the fury of every blast,
and the rage of th' inconstant elements
You took me in and supplied all my wants,
and have ever acted the duty of
an affectionate parent towards me.
Receive then my grateful and unfeigned thanks,
for poor thanks is all I have to return.

Julia: For let me be silent; one Death surprised
my dear parents and one grave received them.
All that they left to Belville and me was
but their name and honor, which we received,
unsullied and unstained, from a long descent
of illustrious ancestors. When dying

Julia: they bequeathed us to your fraternal care.
which duty you have fulfilled like a father.
You have instilled into our youthful minds
every virtue that can adorn the soul.
In thee, we but lost the name of parents.
If departed spirits are ere allowed
to revisit this terrestrial globe:
Look down, dear saints, from the mansions above
and see your daughter Julia happy!
What thanks, then, ought I not you in return,
the source of all my joy and happiness?

Sir John: Truce with your thanks!
If I've done my duty, and you happy,
'tis the only return that I wish for.
Your happiness is mine, and the inward
joy arising from a virtuous action
fully compensates me for what I've done.
How blest the man, when his poor endeavors
are to render those around him happy!
Julia will you go and see that all things
are in proper order for their welcome?
And let plenty flow in every corner!

Exit Julia

Matilda: Of late I have observed you,
always melancholy, never joyful.
The smiles that wantonly played on thy face
are fled, and in their stead, unceasing grief
and black-clouded sorrow have taken place.
If I've failed in my duty, speak freely;
that I may repair the wrongs I've done you.

Matilda: Forgive me, Sir.
My sorrow arises not from any
failure on your part, yet I spare my tongue
the disagreeable office which my
heart has such a reluctance to reveal.
Yet, be assured, that whatever pains it may
cost me to conceal it from you Sir, still,
your commands shall be always my duty.

Sir John: Well, be it so, but trust me, Matilda
‘twas no curious motives which induced me
to pry into the secrets of your soul.
I wished, if possible, to comfort you.
But if, as you say, it will give you pain,
far be it from me to wound thy heart by
ill-timed questions.

Matilda: Generous man.
I feel your kindness, in its full extent,
and oh, would to heaven I could repay you,
but that, I fear, would never be in my power

Sir John: If anyone, then, has wronged you, I hope
to me you will first sue for redress, and if
I can bring ease to thy heart, point but the way;
and, on my best services, shall not be wanting.

Exit Sir John

Matilda: Wretch! To impose on such a generous man.
Oh, but what a painful task ‘tis to deceive.
Sure, such unbounded generosity
was never equaled, such ingratitude
never heard of. Quiet generates double guilt,
and one imprudent step may for ever
condemn the wretch to eternal misery.
The mask of virtue I do falsely wear.
How base my heart yet seemingly so fair.
My ruin now approaches on apace,
that will forever plunge me in disgrace

Act Two Scene One
A Room in Sir John's

Enter Sir John, speaking to a servant

Sir John: See that due preparation is made for
my noble guests, and wait my farther order.
Soon shall I clasp my boy in an embrace!
Soon shall I see the semblance of my dear
departed brother in his worthy son!

Enter Belville and Henry

Welcome, welcome, thrice welcome my dear friends!
Welcome, from all the toils of deadly war,
to this peaceful and sequestered retreat.

Belville: We thank you, sir,
and, with your leave, intend to remain here
in this blessed abode for winter quarters.

Sir John: Aye, forever!
To you, my friends, compliments are needless.
So, whatever I have, you shall be welcome,
this unexpected but welcome visit.
I hope the military discipline
has not as yet damped your martial spirits.

Belville: Oh, no, quite the reverse; the army is
the only school for youth where idleness
Is banished, and pampered luxury dare not
shew his head. There, true valor is preferred,
and honor always meets its full reward.
The loud roaring of the deadly cannon;
the hoarse sounding of the warlike trumpet,
with the piteous cries of fallen enemies,
are the only charms grateful to my soul.

Sir John: Bravo! Let me embrace thee, my dear boy.
Thou inherited all thy father's bravery.
Such was my brother and I in our youth;
our hearts were joined in strict bonds of friendship.
Both shared an equal fate: We loved, we fought,
and we bled together till death parted us.
Although, 'tis now twenty years since I wielded
a sword, and my limbs may be somewhat stiff
with creeping old age, yet when my country
calls for my poor service to defend it
I'll fight with glory, or die with honor.

Belville: Thou hast fired my soul with ambitious zeal!
To emulate you, my only pattern;
and, if possible, even to surpass
the ancient Greek and Roman patriots,
whose heroism and brave discipline in war
will stand unrivalled to succeeding times.

Henry: I grant you, 'twas patriotism alone
the induced the Romans to undergo,
With heroic fortitude, all the dangers
which their martial bravery exposed them to.
Then honest merit had its full reward.
But the army nowadays is composed
of base-born cowards who value not their
native country's welfare, but so far as
'tis conducive to their menial interest,
and those who have any gaudy title
to adorn their name will get the preference
to valor because clad in poverty.

Belville: Yet, my dear friend,
how pleasing 'tis to an old veteran,

Belville: when he has past the prime of his life in
defense of his King and native country.
Recounting the dangers he has overcome,
the battles he's fought, the wounds he's received,
the victories he's won, and glory gained
Whilst old age and all its cares seems to have
stole away, and youth refound its place.

Henry: Aye, and perhaps, in want and misery,
wounded in his country's cause and retired
with a scanty pittance, scarcely sufficient
to sustain the many wants of old age,
lives and dies in want, regarded by few.
Whilst those favorites of dame fortune who
preside over the affairs of the nation
and bear not the least burden of the day
live in a magnificent affluence.
Had I but a moderate competence,
and an amiable partner to share it,
I would live, retired, far from courts and camps
and spend my days in a domestic bliss.

Belville: What, has not the name of a brave hero
so charmed to wean your soul from idleness?
What, leave the glorious conquests of war,
and the pursuit of military fame
to bury yourself in oblivion?

Henry: Yes, my friend, but though I quit the army,
should ever a proud, ambitious, hostile foe
dare to intrude on Britannia's right,
I would spill the last of my blood to
revenge, with tenfold, fury the daring deed.

Belville: And with these thoughts, canst thou forsake the world,
with all its gay pleasures, for retirement?

Henry: Yes, my dear friend.
Retirement refines and improves the mind
to the service of heaven, and the good of man.
Whilst some are ambitious to gain a name
in a military capacity,
and seek for laurels in the fields of Mars,
my highest wish is to obtain the thanks
of the widows, and orphan's gratitude.
When secluded from the busy bustling world,
a stranger to its deceit, an enemy
to its vices and follies, the soul can
then, and only then, enjoy happiness.

Belville: Pshaw! Surely thou art mad! Retirement is only
fit for cowardly knaves who...

Henry: Coward, sayst thou?
That I'm no coward my sword has often proved!
On the destruction of mine enemies
has not this little arm and this sword cut
through the embattled ranks of hostile foes?
When the battle raged with bloody fury,
when, hand in hand, together we have fought
and forced our way through the unnumbered hosts
of opposing enemies till, at last,
victory crowned our efforts with success.
And have I not preserved thy life, great sir?
Say, even at the hazard of my own?

Henry: When the uplifted stroke was to fall upon thee,
did I not rush between you, and gave back
the death Which was designed for you? And now,
this is my reward; base ingratitude.
I now find that friendship is but a name,
an empty sound that lulls the mind to sleep.
But now I think that mine is somewhat waked.
Were it not gratitude to this good man,
my sword should avenge me, but I scorn to
chastise thee, sir.

Belville: Scorn to chastise me? Speak that word again
and my sword shall...

Henry: Then draw, Sir!

Sir John interposes

Sir John: For shame, my friends!
Will you thus break the bonds of amity
and friendship which has long subsisted
betwixt you, and who have befriended each
other in the time of necessity?
Belville, thou art in the wrong; ask his pardon
and Henry, I expect, will forgive you.
This day I had set apart for pleasure;
and do you disturb it with your quarrels?

Henry: Far be it from me to disturb your mirth,
but when my honor is called in question,
friendship, love, gratitude must all give way.
I can forget and forgive, but never,
until the first owns he is in the wrong.

Belville: Unkind Henry!
Didst thou think I meant to call in question
thy martial bravery, which oft I've witnessed,
or ascribe a base coward's name to you?

Belville: Nay, I would rather die a thousand deaths,
ere I gave offence to my dear loved friend,
and never will I quit you until thou
has pronounced my pardon.

Henry: In this embrace be all our strife cancelled

Sir John: Quickly provoked, and quickly appeased. Such
conduct, my dear friends, is commendable.
For when passion once gets a vent 'twill burst,
if not quickly checked, into a greater flame.

Enter Matilda and Julia.

Belville and Julia run and embrace each other.

Belville: My dear sisters!

Julia: My dear brother!

Once more do I clasp you to my bosom.

Oh, never may we be parted again!

See, your loved Matilda also greets you!

Matilda: Words would but ill express what I now feel,
to see you safe returned from deadly war.

My poor heart, therefore, bids you welcome, sir.

Belville: I thank you Matilda...my friend Henry
also claims a kind reception from you both.

Julia: The title of your friend requires no more,
to make him welcome.

Enter a servant, who speaks to Sir John.

Servant: Sir, a messenger without requests leave
to speak with you on important business.

Sir John: On business of importance, sayst thou?
Servant: Yes, Sir, and apparently in great haste!
For thrice he has asked leave to wait on you.
Sir John: I'll wait on him.

Exit Servant

Belville: Will you excuse me for a few moments?
Certainly, Sir.

Exit Sir John

Julia: Will you but walk in the garden, Henry,
and kill the time until dinner is ready?
Henry: If you please madam...Belville will you...?
Belville: I'll follow you.

Julia & Henry Exeant

Moment Belville & Matilda

Oh, Matilda, as I once more see you,
and view that fair form on which my heart dotes.
Mournful, indeed, was our last parting, when
in yonder wood that rears its lofty pines,
I bade thee a long, long farewell, and there,
oft to the moon, I've told my tale of love.
Methought my heart would have burst with the weight
of grief with which it was overloaded.
But now, my dear Matilda, I'm returned.
Stop, quick paced time, for ages if thou wilt.
Let me fly into thine arms, clasp thee to
my throbbing heart and pour out all my soul.
But why thus sorrowful when my fond heart
is thus divided betwixt love and joy?
Why dost thou shun me? Why that hanging head,
this dejected look, and that mournful sigh?
By night, have I seen thee in gentle dreams,
and feasted my eyes on thy fancied charms,

Belville: till the illusion fled, and morning cares
awaked me to new troubles and dangers.
Have I displeased thee? Or must I attribute
the cause to the usual coyness of your sex?

Matilda: Oh...Oh...
Don't speak, unkind, ungenerous Matilda.
Never has my heart severed from you, but still
fixed on the dear object that charmed my soul.
Has anyone been so base, so wrong? You
speak freely, that I may avenge your wrongs.
Oh, my poor heart.

Belville: Bid me unarmed go fight ravenous tigers
that always haunt and prowl for human prey,
or, naked, walk through Mount Vesuvius,
whose burning flames reach to the clouded skies!
I'll do it, rather than thus endure this
torturing silence, for 'tis worse than death.

Matilda: Have mercy, heaven.

Belville: If any villain then has basely wronged thee,
here in the sight of heaven, I solemnly swear
never shall sleep close my wearied eyelids
until I have wrecked vengeance on...

Matilda: Stop thy rash oath!
Lest their performance prove like all the rest.

Belville: What means, my love?

Matilda: Belville is the villain that had wronged me!
Ney, let not astonishment seize you,
for by heaven I swear 'tis no one else.

Belville: How, how can I have wronged Matilda?
Matilda: Ask your own heart.
If that fails, let conscience do its office.
Belville: I entreat, I conjure you, Matilda,
by the bonds of our once mutual love,
and my unalterable affection,
to develop this dreadful mystery.
Say, oh say, in what respect I have erred?
Matilda: Oh, 'tis impossible!
Belville: Drive me not mad with this dreadful suspense.
Matilda: Belville, you have indeed ruined me,
and on my once spotless fame cast a blot
which time can henceforth ne'er eradicate!
Our guilty love will soon be brought to light.
Belville: How can that be?
Matilda: Oh, that my tongue should ever pronounce what
my heart has such reluctance to reveal.
But since it must be so, with horror hear
I now wear the marks of our guilty love.
which will soon be published to all the world.
Belville: Oh, is that all?
Why should such a trifling circumstance
so change and transform thy usual temper?
Matilda: Trifling, sayst thou?
Is the loss of virtue such a trifle,
that with thy base principals bears no sway,
when I am outcast from society?
The mock and scorn of every honored maid,
Shunned and despised by all, and you the cause!

Belville: That must not be.
Some expedient, more agreeable
to our mutual wishes must be contrived.
It must be hid from the censorious world.

Matilda: That cannot be.
My shame will soon be known by all mankind,
and I involved in ruin and disgrace.
Whilst libertine man, still fondly carest,
unheeded, goes free from shame or remorse.
But poor woman, in solitude, must hide
her guilty shame; the mock and scorn of all.

Belville: Ha! A sudden thought has struck me, which, if
Matilda to my proposal consents,
will obviate all these difficulties,
and preserve thy fame, clear as the new-day.

Matilda: Whatever it is, it matters not to me.
Everything is alike indifferent.
My fame, once lost, what else is valuable?

Belville: Be comforted, thou source of all my joys.
Oh, banish hence this wayward sorrow, and
in its stead let hope and love triumphant reign.
In a small village, some twenty miles hence,
a woman lives, who nursed my infant years
to her tender care, will I confide you
till the work of nature is accomplished.
There, your name and story will be unknown.
Often will I come to enquire for you,
until, time permit, your return again.

Matilda: It would become thee better to fulfill
thy vows than forming schemes to evade them.
But I despise, Sir, thy mean artifice.
Nay, I would rather wander through the world,
exposed to all its censorious insults,

Matilda: Thou belyst him!
He's all pity, compassion, and goodness.
His ear is still open to the wretched.
To him, the miserable never sued in vain.
But, I plainly see thy mean intention,
and that I have given my heart, my honor,
and every other sacred title of
a once-honored maid to a base villain.
Lost Matilda! What will become of thee?
How art thou ruined now! Fair hope is fled.
Dark, gloomy despair now stares me in the face,
and my seducer, too, has overturned the
only remaining hope on which I built
my happiness. *Swoons.*

Belville: Base monster that I am, thus to abuse
her whom I have betrayed. Oh, let me fly,
raise her in my arms, and support, with care,
that hanging head on my ungrateful breast.
Cruel villain! What hast thou done robbed her
of honor, virtue and now, of life? There,
a lifeless corpse she lies, and I the cause.
Awake...Awake, Matilda...Oh, awake!
Belville calls thee...alas, she hears me not.
She's gone...Oh, torture, insupportable!
But now she revives! Oh, blessed moment!
Ah, how frightful she still looks, and stares me
in the face, as if she would say "Villain,
this is thy work."

Matilda: Do I still live?
And breathe again, in this detested world?
Oh, Death, why did I not sleep forever,

Matilda: and not awaked again to misery?
I thought my soul had winged its flight to the blest
mansions above, where the good alone doth dwell.
But yet, it is still united to this
mass of corruption. Ah, what do I see?
You, on your knees, supporting me. How couldst thou
thus, demean thyself to touch an orphan,
unless 'twere to undo her? Off, let me go!
Away, be gone!

Belville: Oh, do not torture me with these cruel
reflections. See, see me now! Penitent,
on my bended knees, imploring pardon.
Oh, forgive me!

Matilda: Oh, nature, why didst thou form my heart soft,
tender, and so easily bended; which
has, alas, proved my ruin even now? My
heart, half relenting, would pronounce forgiveness,
yet forbid it pride. As thou hereafter
shall demean thyself, expect my pardon.

Belville: I find thy reasoning, Matilda, just,
and entirely acquiesce to thy will.
This instant will I fly to my uncle;
implore his pardon, and ask his consent
to bless our union. How happy, how blest
will be, when, joined in the holy bonds
of wedlock, our days will then glide away
in undisturbed sunshine of happiness.
***No fears or cares our bliss will ever destroy
But all our days be spent in love and joy***
Exit Belville

Matilda: Heaven grant thee speed!
But why do I use that sacred title?
Heaven protects the virtuous, but the guilty
are considered unworthy of its care.

Enter Julia

Matilda: Which way, now, can I hide my grief from her?
I fear she will observe my confusion,
but I must not endeavor to dissemble
still more guilt in dissembling to a friend.

Julia: What, all alone?
As I entered, methought I heard a voice
like my brother's.

Matilda: Ha! Am I then betrayed? Is my secret,
which I vainly endeavored to hide from
the censorious world, then known to thee?

Julia: It is, but to one whose friendship, for you,
would sacrifice all that is dear to her.
By chance I overheard you and Belville when
I returned from the garden; but let not
that discourage thee. I will be your friend,
and yet Matilda disregards my love.

Matilda: Oh, my, Julia!
My heart has been so oft oppressed with grief
that thy endearing offices of love,
I have ever lost. I, but pray, forgive me.

Julia: No more, Matilda; all that I request
is a mutual return of friendship,
and now I would ask thy friendly counsel
in an affair that much concerns my peace.

Matilda: No misfortune, I hope, has befallen thee.
Kind heaven, avert every ill from my friend.

Julia: Spare your prayers.
When alone with Henry in the garden,
and as arm in arm we walked together,
admiring the wondrous works of nature,
and descanting on their sublime beauties,
on a sudden, he stopped and seized my hand,
pressed it with transport to his throbbing heart;
then stared me in the face and gave a sigh.
Frightened at such unaccustomed conduct,
trembling in haste, I fled to thee, my friend,
in the hopes that thy friendly counsel might
solve me in this dubious perplexity.

Matilda: 'Tis love, Julia.
But beware: For men will flatter
and feign a passion which they never felt.

Julia: But yet, sure Henry can be none of those?

Matilda: Let not that delude thee; trust none of them.
For like the hyena, that, with her moans,
lures to her den the hurrying travelers,
and then devours.

Julia: I thank you, Matilda, and in return,
if my poor services can oblige you,
you may, at all times, freely command me.

Matilda: I know thy fidelity, and perhaps
your seconding thy brothers motion
may have some weight with my dear benefactor.

Julia: Disappointment often attends the best.
Sir John went away in seeming great haste.

Julia: Scarce had he time to bid me an adieu,
but in a moment, was lost to my sight.

Matilda: Gone? When went he?

Julia: Not an hour since

Matilda: Then I am lost.

Julia: Oh, say not so!
Sir John may soon return, and all be well.
Should he not, a private union may
make you happy.

Matilda: No, happiness is now banished from me.
None will I find on this side of the grave.
But still, there is a merciful heaven.
I'll go seek some unfrequented cavern,
where human foot never trod, and, in it,
end the remainder of my wretched days
in penitence, sorrow, and contrition.
Far from a deceitful world and faithless men.
For mercy is promised from heaven above
to those who sincerely repent their deeds.
Then, at the hour of death, will I look forward
for happiness in the blest mansions above.

Julia: Rack not your brain with these wild chimeras!
You still may hope for happiness on earth.
This instant will I fly to my brother;
all that reason or eloquence can do,
or a mild, persuasive tongue can perform,
no fair means will I leave untried
until I have accomplished my purpose.

Matilda: Does Julia, then, undertake my cause?
Can such unmerited goodness exist?
How, how can I ever repay all this love?
Oh, teach my grateful heart how to unload
this weighty burden of love and goodness.

Julia: Oh, cease thy thanks,
and let the success of my errand be
my sole reward

Exit Julia

Matilda: Adieu, my friend.
*Sad doubts and baneful fears pervade my breast.
Now raised by hope, and then by fear repress.
Hope holds to my view, bliss without alloy,
but dark despair dispels each gleam of joy.
A slave to terror, anguish, and dismay.*

Act Three Scene One
A room in Medicum's
Medicum Solus

Medicum: What can this be? This something, so strange to every passion that ever I endured.
I have heard say that there is a disease ranked amongst the incurables, and which neither reason nor philosophy can conquer, and they call that same disease love.
For since I saw that divine beauty, that perfection of purity and goodness, I can neither think nor act as usual.
When sleep, with its soporific virtues, has quieted the functions of the mind, even then her dear image was before me.
It must be so, 'tis love that distracts me!
That sensation of pleasure and pain, that state of celestial bliss and direful torment;
Oh! It is, it is that state of madness, which drives every other thought from the mind as trivial and unnecessary,
Beauteous Matilda, angelic maid!
Could I win thee to listen to my love?
My happiness on earth could never be equaled.
What is it that makes me so fond and doting?
Is it because she is beautiful? Yes!
Her fine, sparkling eye would pierce any heart, were it as hard as adamantine rocks.
Her golden locks flow on her snowy neck; teeth as white as ivory, lips like coral, which pronounce pleasure to everyone but me.
But why do I still add fuel, increase a hopeless passion, which may one day ruin me?
So, I will be a man again, aid me,

Medicum: reason, to overcome this childish love.
 But yet I find that is impossible.
 Long have I, in secret, sighed, and told my
 tale to these walls, who only echoed back
 in responsive notes to my plaintive voice.
 I'll to Matilda, and declare my love.
 Sure she will not, nay, cannot refuse me.
 Let me not think of that, else 'twill drive me mad!
 Raised to a pitch of bliss, which tongue can't tell,
 or sunk into a state that's worse than Hell.

Act Three, Scene Two
A room in Sir John's
Enter Belville and Henry

Henry: Indeed, I am sorry we are deprived
of Sir John's company so suddenly.

Belville: Why, indeed? 'Tis rather unexpected.
But hast thou seen my sister Julia?
Of who, in our campaign, thou talkest so much,
and with your all-prevailing entreaties,
we have left the fields of devastation,
and now thou art here to woo my sister

Henry: Yes, but fruitless is my errand, and vain.
All my love and passion is rejected,
and I, too, treated with contempt and scorn.
I embraced the opportunity when
in the garden to declare my passion.
On a sudden, she started from me, like
the frightened stag when he hears the howling
of the bloody hounds in search of their prey.
So, precipitately, she left me alone
to vent my disappointment to the winds

Belville: Poor swain! I doubt not but thy passion is
mutually returned. The arts of their sex
will not allow them to confess the truth,
else the conquest would be easily won,
and, therefore lose half its charms. So in war,
when we have encountered many dangers,
and fought with dreadful fury, w, at last
with more joy grasp the palm of victory.

Henry: Oh, Belville, thou hast oft professed, my friend.
Wouldst thou but plead my case to Julia?
But why do I say so, when I scarcely
know what I am?

Belville: In all our youthful sallies and foibles,
all the enterprises in which we have
been engaged, and the firm friendship that has
subsisted between us, thou hast never
told me of what family thou art born.

Henry: All I can say is - when an infant,
I was placed under the care of an uncle,

Sir Henry Davenport, whose name I bear.
In France, I received my education,
but, as I am told, England claims my birth.
Often, with filial tenderness, have I
enquired the history of my parents,
but always, for reasons unknown to me,
he checked me, and more I could never learn.
My utmost ambition is now to form
an alliance with your family.

It meets my friend Belville's approbation.

Belville: Canst thou entertain a doubt on that head?
With pleasure, will I exchange the name of
friend for brother. Our hearts are already
joined in the bond of friendship. They will be
closer-knit in the endearing ties of love.

Henry: I owe you many thanks. Wilt thou, then, plead
my cause of love as if it was thy own?

Belville: Doubt not but I'll play my part with a grace.
My grateful heart will teach me to repay
you in some measure for saving my life,
when it was in such imminent danger.

Henry: Oh, name not that,
but see. the conqueror comes. I'll leave you.

Belville: Thou, who hast never turned thy back to an
enemy wilt thou now fly from a woman?

Henry: Oh, I dare not trust myself with her, for
the vivacity of her sparkling eye
is more fatal to me than ten thousand
hostile armies!

Exit Henry

Belville: With what tyrannical power, love's over man!
Henry, once as brave a man as ever wore
a sword, now dwindled into a woman's slave.

Enter Julia

My dear sister! I congratulate you
on your conquest.

Julia: Would Belville speak in such terms as I might understand him?

Belville: My friend Henry loves you to distraction, and unless thou canst bestow some pity on him, I doubt not it will be his death. Even now, as we parted, he begged me to use every effort in my power to soften thy virtuous but obdurate heart.

Julia: Happily met, since I come also on the same errand. Matilda has likewise appointed me as her representative against you. The only difference is you come to offer love; I come to retort love.

Belville: What means my sister?

Julia: Has not conscience, which was placed in thy bosom to stimulate you to virtuous action, and check thee in the course of vice, no power over a seducer's base, libertine heart? Quiet! What cowards dost thou make of bad men? Where's the boasted hero now, when he shrinks from a woman?

Belville: Oh, have mercy!

Julia: Nay, I will not! For thou hadst none when you robbed Matilda of all she possessed; all that cruel fate had left her to bless some generous man which thou, like a midnight thief, came and stole.

Belville: Julia, I know I have greatly erred, and my misfortune is I cannot repair it.

Julia: Then misery is thy lot forever!

Belville: Oh, say not so! For trust me, I love her, and would sacrifice my life to restore her mind to its usual tranquility.

Julia: A less sacrifice will atone thy guilt:
The fulfillment of the vows which thou madest.
Need I paint the scene of domestic bliss,
which thou wilt enjoy with her, whom thou lovest?
Blest with a good wife, a moderate fortune,
a few friends and a sweet offspring,
lisp[ing] out the dear names of father and mother,
Matilda, striving by every little art
to retain her husband's affections... What man
in this world could wish to be happier?
Reverse the scene, perhaps, driven by despair
to do a deed at the bane name of which
even nature itself recoils with horror.
Behold you, then, wondering like a maniac
from place to place with the tortures of an
awakened conscience, sorrow thy sister,
despair and remorse thy only brothers.
When, on thy soft pillow thou seekest repose,
Even then her injured ghost will haunt thy soul!
Should sleep ever close thy wearied eyelids,
frightful dreams and horrible images
will rack thy tortured imagination.

Belville: Oh, Julia! is thy heart steeled against me?
Hast thou no pity to bestow on a wretch?

Julia: To the unfortunate, I have, but to the
vicious...none!

Belville: Oh, my sister, recall that dire sentence!

Julia: Sister? I renounce all kindred to thee!
For thy villainous deeds forfeit all claim
to a sister's duty, love, or friendship.

Belville: But would it not then dishonor our name,
and not our family of its ancient
splendor and repute? Marry a foundling!
I wonder how you could be so urgent.

Julia: Dishonor our family? Aye, by vice,
but never by a virtuous action.
What is family but a gaudy title?
Given us, like toys to children, to amuse men.
Besides, are we not all formed of one dust,
and did not the same God create us all?
Where's the difference, then, between the prince
seated on a throne, and the poor peasant
who earns his bread with the sweat of his brow?
The same blood that flows in a King also
warms the heart of the meanest mechanic.
Then boast no more of birth and pedigree;
For 'tis virtue alone creates a name,
which, unsullied and unstained, will descend
to latest ages of prosperity.

Belville: But I cannot afford to marry her.
An orphan, and without any fortune!

Julia: Though you cannot afford to marry her
without a fortune; yet you can afford
to ruin her without any fortune.
Is she not good, beautiful, and virtuous?
Hadst not thou, villain, made her otherwise?
Besides, Matilda brings a fortune which
even monarchs would envy; a good conscience.
Having that and a calm, contented mind,
your happiness on earth will know no bounds.
When stern adversity frowns upon us,
and imaginary friends forsake us,
that will afford, then, you more comfort than
all the vast golden mines of Mexico.
That heavenly charm, a self-approving
conscience, having virtue and honor for
its basis, will never, never leave you.

Julia: 'Tis the fair star that, never descending into
the main of vice guides us safe through stormy life.

Belville: But yet, Julia, the world would despise me!

Julia: Some, but those whose libertine principals
are similar to thy own; whose censure
or praise none will value. Nay, good men will
approve thy choice, and heaven reward the deed.

Belville: But...

Julia: Seek not for more excuses to palliate
thy villainy, for I'll hear none of them!
Heaven, why didst thou bind me with a sister's
love to this base and ungrateful monster?
But her wrongs will cry to heaven for vengeance,
when you invoked the heavenly powers
to ratify your solemn engagements.
That being which heard you, then sees you now,
and will avenge the villainous deed.
Now, monster, I leave thee ... but not alone:
For a guilty conscience will one day speak
In language too horrible to express.
Farewell... forever

Exit Julia

Belville: Julia? Julia?

Oh, why did I not consent? Julia!
She's gone, and left me a prey to remorse.
Stop, conscience, now tear my heart asunder!
Why dost thou torment me so? By heaven, I'll
endure it no longer; 'tis worse than death!
What is there so frightful in death, which oft
I have witnessed in the field of battle?
'Tis but to fall asleep, and be no more.
'Tis only to repose in the bed of
oblivion, unknowing and unknown.

Belville: To quit all the gay busy scenes of life,
and be annihilated forever.
Aye, but there is a state after death, which
startles me and unnerves my arm...but sure,
were hell and all its horrors as terrific
as priests do paint them, it would be a heaven
to what I now endure. Come, trusty sword.
Oft hast thou been drenched in the blood of mine
enemies, soon, shalt thou drink thy masters, too.
Draws his sword and attempts to kill himself.
Enter Henry, who prevents him.

Henry: Hold thy hand! What means this frantic rage?

Belville: Off, let me go,
or by heaven, thy life shall pay the forfeit.

Henry: Aye, strike! Plunge it into thy friend's bosom!
Without a groan, will I expire, and with
my dying lips bless the hand that gave the blow.

Belville: Ha! My friend Henry... Oh, canst thou forgive me?
That, in my rage and madness, I would have
slain thee. From what a frightful precipice
has ever-kind providence preserved me.

Henry: Oh, no more! But, may I ask what impulse
of passion thus bereft you of reason?

Belville: Oh, Henry thou hast told me all thy heart,
and entrusted me with all thy regrets;
But, ungrateful wretch that I am, have
disdained thy friendship. For it can never
be sincere when it is not mutual.
You know Matilda, the beautiful foundling
whom Sir John found one day exposed at his door?

Belville: We passed our day of childhood together,
formed to please, our love increased with our years.
Ere I went away to my last campaign,
one night inflamed with the luscious grape,
unperceived, I entered Matilda's chambers.
There, I found the gentle maid half attired.
At first, she repulsed me with honest scorn.
I urged my love with such force that, at last,
worn out with my entreaties, she complied,
and made me happy.

Henry: That was a lucky opportunity!

Belville: I have often since thought otherwise, but,
be that as it may, the result now is
she is pregnant.

Henry: And what plan do you intend to pursue?

Belville: In that I would ask thy friendly counsel;
to advise me what method would be best.

Henry: One question first... does thou really love her?

Belville: Canst thou coldly ask me that question; when
the perturbation of my mind, the wild
despair that rankles in my heart plainly
indicate the rage of ungoverned love?

Henry: What other method canst thou propose, but
by marriage?

Belville: Anything but that hated word marriage!
'Tis a situation I never could endure.
What be a woman's slave for life? Oh, no!
I will never lose one inch of my freedom
for any petticoat in Christendom!
A fond, doting husband, with a pair of
gilded horns to grace my brow...a cuckold!

May not the same easy, yielding temper,
which gave to me all she had to bestow,
make some other man happy in her charms.

Henry: Canst thou, for a moment, entertain
so mean a thought of one whom thou say you love?

Belville: Mean, sayst thou? It may be so. but 'tis true.

Henry: Poor woman! Into what a dismal gulf
does one false, imprudent step plunge you; whilst
man, lawless man, first betrays to ruin
and then despises her credibility.

Belville: 'Twas advice I asked, not reproaches.

Henry: There is another way, but 'tis dreadful.

Belville: Speak, say what it is! I'll do anything
to be only freed from this dilemma.

Henry: It must not be, for 'tis so horrible
and heinous in its nature that I fear
it will be attended with bad effects.

Belville: Set a hungry man down to a rich feast,
then remove the table from before him.
So you would place happiness in my view,
and then deprive me of the blessed prize.

Henry: Canst thou shut thine ears against nature's cries?
Couldst thou murder the innocent?

Belville: To what purpose does all this prologue tend?

Henry: I know it is in the power of medicine
that a potion might be administered,
by which, an abortion could be effected,
yet, not in any way, injure the woman.

Belville: Could I find anyone who is possessed
of that invaluable art? It would
be a happiness, indeed!

Henry: Down in yonder cottage, beside the wood,
I think such a one lives. You can but try.

Henry: If that fails, some other expedient
must be contrived. I know 'tis dreadful, but
desperate cases, desperate cures require.

Belville: Thanks, thee, for thy counsel, but I can
never think of consenting to thy plan.

Henry: I'm sorry I should be so unhappy,
to propose what you will not accede to;
and trust me, 'twas friendship for you alone
which induced me to propose the horrid scheme.
But your hatred of marriage, and Matilda's
unhappy situation all conspire
to say there is no intermediate way.
By this means, her reputation would be
preserved, and all be well... but yet, thou art
at liberty, to reject or select,
whatever part you may think improper.

Belville: Since then there's no alternative left me,
let me fly to this last resource, but: Oh!
It can never relieve me from the stings
of conscience, which upbraids me for my deeds.
Come, let us go.

Exeunt

Act Three, Scene Three

A room in Sir John's

Enter Matilda

Matilda: Why, oh why thou haunt me, this remorse?
Wilt thou never cease tormenting me? Oh,
I deserve it all! Wherever I fly,
Conscience is my tormenter, and despair
my only attendant. When will it be night?
That I may bury my shame in oblivion,
and enjoy a short respite from remorse.
When, oh when shall I mix with kindred dust,
and contract a friendship with mother earth?
But whither does my fancy fly? Even then,
dost thou think to be happy? Oh, no, no!
My heart tells me, in whatever state I am,
happiness will never rest with Matilda.

Enter a Servant.

Servant: Madam, a gentleman requests liberty
to speak with you.

Matilda: Dost thou know him?

Servant: His name is Medicum, a physician,
and lives in yonder house beside the wood.

Matilda: Send him up

Exit Servant.

What can occasion this visit;
from one to whom I am an entire stranger?

Enter Medicum

Medicum: Permit me, madam, lowly on my knee,
to crave your pardon for this intrusion.

Matilda: Rise, sir: That reverence is due to none
but the governor of the universe.

Medicum: For that cause, madam, I paid you homage.
In thee there is something more than mortal,
to which praise itself cannot do justice.

Matilda: Flattery from you, Sir, to whom I am
a stranger, to me seems inconsistent;
that woman must profess a mean soul indeed,
who can listen to flattery's delusive tale.

Medicum: Trust me, madam, I spoke it from my heart;
for when beauty is conjoined with virtue,

when every perfection is found in one,
they give us a faint idea of those
blessed spirits that reign above, and who instill
into the human soul their acts of love.

Matilda: But who is worthy to receive that gift?

Medicum: Who could be more worthy than you, madam?
Heav'n has bestowed on you every perfection,
every virtue that can adorn the soul,
that you are, in duty, bound to diffuse
amongst mankind.

Matilda: The small lot providence has assigned me,
to others I would willingly bestow,
could I know how that might be affected.

Medicum: The first ingredient necessary
towards that is pity and compassion.
Pity begets friendship; friendship often
ripens into love, love which binds nature
in all its tender and endearing ties,
softens the hard and rugged breast of man,
makes smooth the contracted brow of anger,
and dissipates the clouds of anxious care.

Matilda: I love all mankind; hatred to none I bear,
and the promotion of others happiness,
if in my power, is my constant study.

Medicum: Then I am blest forever! Oh, madam!
You have transported me from death to life;
raised me from the abyss of dark despair,
and placed me in a state of hope beyond
all expression.

Matilda: What means all this?

Medicum: Oh, Matilda! Long have I adored thee.
Long have I nourished a fruitless passion,
which I have often endeavored to check;
but it is always recoiled with increased force,
and at last burst into a flame so great
that all my reason could never conquer.
Thus, am I come, a humble suppliant.

Oh, reject not lady my humble suit.

Matilda: How you could ever have thought of me is more
than my imagination can conceive!

Therefore, I advise you, ambitious Sir
to check the presumptuous thoughts of thy heart,
lest they one day meet a more powerful
opposition, for thy aspiring hopes
are unpardonable.

Medicum: Oh, Matilda, canst thou leave me thus, without
one single cheering ray of hope? Illume
the impenetrable darkness of despair.
Hast thou no pity for a wretch who lives
for thee alone?

Matilda: Believe me, sir, my heart is not my own;
for it is already pledged to another,
and our mutual vows are recorded in heaven.
After then, this undisguised confession,
sure, you cannot blame me, if abruptly,
I leave the room.

Medicum: By heaven, you shall not, for here, I'll hold you,
and all the powers on earth shall never part us!

Matilda: Vile slave, be gone!
Off, thy unhallowed hands, and dread my power,
for ere tomorrow's sun has reposed in
yonder western sky, this shall be revenged.

Exit Matilda

Medicum: Rail on, proud beauty and dread my power, too!
Curse on my mean and groveling spirit,
that could thus cringe and fawn to a woman.
Rise, proud heart, superior to this meanness,
and nobly conquer this childish passion.
But my heart denies its wanted courage,
and love wildly rages in my heart again.
Since it must be so, come, black revenge, with
all thy horrors, from the abyss of hell,
and aid me in this intricate design.

*Since mine with honor she will not agree,
I swear with dishonor shall she be,
In amorous dalliance, folded in her arms,
I'll triumph over proud Matilda's charms.*

Act Four, Scene One
A room in Medicum's
Medicum *Solus*

Medicum: How long, oh love, shall I wear thy fetters?
How long shall I, a vile captive, be held
and when shall I regain my liberty?
When shall I triumph over my hated rival,
Who, as Matilda says, does possess her heart?

Enter Edwin and Conrad

Well, have you considered my proposal?
Edwin: We have... but may we ask your intention?
Medicum: Oh, never disturb yourselves about that!
All that is required of you to do is this:
About the twilight gloom, a lady often strays
into the middle of this forest there.
In an old arbor, overgrown with ivy,
lonely she sits, and seems to mourn her fate.
That lady I would have you bring hither.

Edwin: And her name is?

Medicum: Is Matilda.

Edwin: The fair foundling at the Castle?

Medicum: The same.

Edwin: Here, take that poison of the mind again.
Never shall my hand do the accursed deed!
Since I was attacked with a dire fever,
on one hand, disease stared me in the face;
on the other, a wretched family in want.
Matilda, like an angel sent from heaven,
came and relieved my wants...disease then fled,
and rosy health again renewed my frame.

Edwin: And shall I do this atrocious act?
No! For thy intentions cannot be good.

Medicum: Why didst thou ever propose to do it,
and now retract?

Edwin: 'Twas that enemy to virtue, poverty,
which tempted me, but that noblest passion
of the soul, gratitude bids me desist.
Ye heavenly powers above, that guard the just;
preserve Matilda from every ill, and
guard her against the machinations of
base designing men.

Exit Edwin

Medicum: So, master moralist, farewell! Conrad:
Can I depend on thy fidelity?

Conrad: Doubt me not, Sir.

Medicum: Here, then take this purse, and not this alone,
but double that sum shall be thy reward.
Fly, then, lest Edwin mar our purpose
by informing Matilda of our design.
Haste, and bring her here, but use her gently;
then Matilda, spite of fate, shall be mine.

Exeunt severally

Act Four, Scene Two

A Wood

Enter Julia

Julia: How calm and serene is this evening scene!
Scarcely a breath of wind disturbs the leaves,
but all is hushed in harmonic order.
The setting sun now gilds the mountains tops,
and, for a while, bids the world adieu, the
tranquility of the scene is only
interrupted by lonely Philomel,
who sits on yonder spray, sweetly chanting forth
a Requiem to the departing day.
The fineness of the evening invites me
to stray, thus far, into the forest, where,
unmolested amidst its shady boughs
I can unload the weighty burden which
oppresses my heart. Oh, Henry, Henry!
Couldst thou but know how I love thee? But why
is there anything so criminal in love?
That women should blush to confess their passion?
But 'tis growing late; I must retire.

As she is going, Enter Conrad from the wood, who seizes and carries her off.

Enter Henry.

Henry: Surely the cries of distress assails mine ears!
Set me fly, for distress should never want
a protection to redress its grievances.

Henry exeunt.

Dastardly coward! What means this rudeness?
Let go thy hold!

Enter Julia.

Julia: Oh, kind heaven, protect him from every ill!
Grant that the sword of justice may prevail;
to prove that virtue is thy sole regard.

Enter Henry

Henry: What, Julia?

Julia: And Henry too!

Henry: Heaven, I thank thee!

Julia: To heaven, and Henry, I return my thanks.
But art thou safe? Hast thou received no harm?
My foreboding heart dreads, lest in my defense,

thou mayst have received any dangerous wound.

Henry: This anxiety overplays all my danger,
 but I have done no more than my duty.
 ‘Tis a soldier’s office to defend virtue
 with the same boldness, as to fight the battles
 of his country.

Julia: Generous Henry!
 My guardian angel! What do I not owe
 for this unexpected deliverance? I
 teach my heart how to express its gratitude.

Henry: Oh, wouldst thou but change that word gratitude
 to love, my bliss on earth could never be equaled.
 Having that, I would not envy pomp nor power;
 deceitful courts I’d leave to cringing knaves,
 and, with my Julia, taste domestic bliss.

Julia: Dare I trust you?
 Or must I rate you amongst the number
 of those men who gild their words with such art
 that their flattering compliments are often
 mistaken for the sincerity of their hearts;
 so, by their insinuating address,
 they gain the hearts of credulous women,
 who, fondly believing their passions real,
 expect a mutual interchange, but,
 when, alas, too late, repent their folly.

Henry: By my sword, my honor, I swear!

Julia: Nay, do not swear!
 I will even take thy word. The formal
 coyness of my sex I now lay aside,
 if my hand can add to your happiness,
 I give it freely. My heart has long been thine.

Henry: Transporting words!
 Listening angels catch the angelic sounds,
 and bear to heaven the gladsome tidings
 to be professed of thy heart. ‘Tis heaven itself!
 Why didst thou delay my happiness so long?

Julia: ‘Twas to prove thee.

Henry: And has the result proved congenial
 to thy wishes?

Julia: To deny that were to say an untruth.

Henry: This undisguised confession makes thee still
more dear to my heart. Come, let's to the priest!
At the holy altar, we will exchange
our mutual vows, and be blest forever.

Julia: So, Henry that must not be! My uncle's
consent must be first obtained; without which
mine is of no value. But let us hope
Sir John possesses a liberal heart,
so happiness can he ever enjoy
when others around him are miserable.

Henry: But when will he return?

Julia: 'Twill not be long; let us, with patience, wait
until that blessed period shall arrive.

Henry: Oh, talk not of patience! Each tedious hour
will I think a day, and each day a year,
until the time arrives when I shall call you
by the tender and endearing name of wife.

Julia: Let us be gone!
All night we would prattle here together.
The sun is now reposed in the western sky,
and darkness begins to cloud the face of the earth.
See, with hasty steps, the humble peasant,
returning home from his daily labor;
where his wife and children, with homely fare,
greet his return. Come, Henry, let us go!

Henry: ***Oh, tedious time! Swift as my wishes fly:
Till then, bound heart with joy and ecstasy***

Exeunt

Act Four, Scene Three
A room in Medicum's
Medicum Solus

Medicum: What can occasion Conrad's long delay?
I fear he has not succeeded; if so
I shall be ruined beyond redemption!
Be propitious, oh heaven, to my design.
Heaven, said I? Oh, no, rather, say Hell.
For heaven has naught to do with villainy,
but, he comes, he comes.

Enter Conrad

Well where's Matilda?

Conrad: At the castle.

Medicum: What, hast thou turned a second Edwin, too?

Conrad: Entertain not, so mean a thought of me!
In the middle of the wood I seized her,
and had nearly effected my purpose, when,
from the wood rushed a soldier, armed, and
bore her from me.

Medicum: Armed, sayst thou?

Conrad: Aye, armed! Had I not begged, in luteous terms,
to spare my life, he would have taken that, too!

Medicum: Death to my hopes! I am undone; all my schemes
are frustrated, and ruin will next ensue.
My love, dost thou, with imperious sway,
reign over my heart and blindly drive me to
gain by arts from which virtue recoils and
rises in a superior degree
when it is contrasted with villainy?
Oh, conscience, why dost thou not stop its course,
ere thy power be totally usurped?
But, 'tis in vain to obstruct the torrent.
'Twill have its way in spite of all my efforts.
Be it so, then. Conrad, is there no plan,
no stratagem thou thinkest thyself of,
by which we may yet affect our purpose?

Conrad: At present, I know of none, but time may,
at some future period, disclose means
by which we may hope for better success.

Medicum: The man who lays extended on a sick bed
may still hope something from time, but I am doomed;
a slave, to love, fear, despair, and revenge.

Conrad: Who would live a slave when he can regain
his freedom? Break the chains which confine you,
and show yourself a man by despising
the woman whom you can never obtain.

Medicum: Ah, Conrad! You've never loved, never felt
love's power, or imperious tyranny.

Conrad: From love's fatal power, kind heaven preserve me.
But, see who comes...

Medicum: In! In! We must not be seen together.

Exit Conrad

Methinks it is Belville, Sir John's nephew.
Come, no doubt, to revenge Matilda's wrongs.

Enter Belville

Medicum: The honour, Sir, conferred on me in this
visit is beyond expression; therefore,
receive my thanks.

Belville: No ceremony, Sir, 'tis disgusting
to a soldier. Is your name Medicum?

Medicum: I bear that name.

Belville: To you then, Sir, I would communicate
a secret which lays heavy at my heart,
and request thine assistance to aid me.

Medicum: Command me, sir.
If in anything I can oblige you,
my best services shall not be wanting

Belville: Should I trust thee? Couldst thou keep a secret?
Canst thou, when occasion requires, be dumb?

Medicum: If the dead can be silent, I can too.

Belville: Well, then, I'll trust you. I am told thou art skilled in all the various arts of physics; to cull each simple, and mix each compound, is a knowledge deemed peculiar to you. Amongst the rest, fame reports you posses a useful and invaluable secret. I mean, by administering a potion to pregnant women, by which an abortion may be effected without injury to the woman...that potion I would have.

Medicum: 'Tis true, I am possessed of that secret, but 'tis often dangerous in its nature, and the crime so heinous that 'tis punished with the most rigorous severity.

Belville: Thou are apt to promise, yet slow to perform; but betwixt you and all danger I will stand thy safety.

Medicum: But first, I must be acquainted with the name. Who is the unfortunate woman, and who the seducer, for which I presume he is?

Belville: Of what importance is that to you, pray?

Medicum: Of the greatest, Sir. There are many who have oft befriended me in time of need, and should I thus repay my gratitude. Should I, for so many favors received, aid a libertine villain in his designs, and involve a family in ruin, and distress, perhaps, her parents, bending under the weight of declining old age, and shall I bring their grey hairs with sorrow to the grave? No, Medicum, perish first, ere thy hands should do a deed so base and villainous.

Belville: These sentiments are mighty fine, indeed,
and would become a hero of romance;
to adorn some empty-headed poet's tale.
But as we live not in an ideal world,
and to silence all thy scruples, I tell thee:
She has no parents, she is an orphan,
perhaps some beggar's child, found at the door
of a hospitable man, whose goodness
has protected and fostered as his own.

Medicum: And wilt thou thwart heavens intentions? Wilt thou,
in one moment, destroy all this good man's
generosity, and blast all his hopes,
perhaps destined by her benefactor
to make some honest man happy? Oh, heaven,
protect with thy fostering care the orphan!
Shield her from the arts of libertine men,
and guide her in the path of rectitude.

Belville: His words upbraid me.
Sir...Sir, my case is indeed singular,
but circumstances will not, at present,
permit me to wed her, being dependent
on an uncle whose will I must hold sacred.
Nay, I would sacrifice my own happiness,
ere I give offence to the best of men.

Medicum: Sure 'tis Matilda! Oh, it must be so!
May I ask your beauteous orphan's name?

Belville: Her name is Matilda.

Medicum: Matilda...good heavens...and this, my rival!

Belville: What astonishment has seized you, and why
dost thou thus wrap yourself in dubious thought,
as if some great enterprise lay brooding
in thy heart, pregnant and full with event?
But hast thou considered my request? this
purse, and its contents, shall be thy reward.

Medicum: Why am I driven, by the excess of passion,
to such a barbarous deed? Then be it so!
Let revenge take possession of my soul.
Away, thou soft delusive passion, for
never shalt thou triumph over me again.
The liberality of your offer
has so far converted me that I am
entirely devoted to your service.
A moment, patience, and I'll attend you.

Exit Medicum

Belville: Of what wondrous potency is this trash?
This man was proof against all my entreaties,
yet when the golden temptation was offered,
his virtue fled, and conscience fell asleep.
For this dirt, his ears were shut, and his heart steeled,
against the tender cries of humanity.

Enter Medicum

Medicum: This phial contains a liquid composed
of poisonous drugs, but intermixed with
specifics to thwart their deadly powers.
This, being swallowed at night, will not fail
to have the desired effect. Now, my purse.

Belville: There is poison has destroyed more men
than ever your drugs did, but I thank you,
and if I can further oblige, my
recommendation shall not be wanting.
Farewell.

Exit Belville

Medicum: What have I done?
Oh, Matilda, my heart yet bleeds for thee,
but 'twas thy cruelty, which, in despair
tempted me to do the barbarous deed.
My proud rival too meanly thinks it is
his gold which has tempted me foolish thought.
Away, thou bane of every good and source
of evil; for thou art the price of blood

Exit Medicum

Act Four, Scene Four
A room in Sir John's
Matilda & Julia

Julia: Compose yourself, my dear Matilda, and
let not the tidings which I bear depress
your once cheerful heart; now forever gone.
Think on the many happy days we've spent,
and anticipate, with hopeful pleasure,
each coming day which shall unfold new hopes,
new prospects of domestic happiness.

Matilda: Oh, no, my friend!
These thoughts are all delusive. Long have I
been buoyed up with their flattering hopes.
The wretch, who lies, extended in a goal,
pale and emaciated, the cold earth
his bed, and simple water, his drink, may
expect something from that heavenly blessing;
but peace, with my innocence, forever fled.
All that is now left me is my Julia,
my friend, all that my soul on earth holds dear.

Julia: Oh Matilda, my dear friend! Would to heaven
I could again reinstate you in that
state of happiness from which thou art fallen.

Matilda: A secret foreboding, Julia whispers,
to my heart. I can never be happy.
If misfortunes assail us in this life,
As they often will do, even to the best;
but if our life has been virtuous, that
will support us amidst all our trials.
But, when our sorrows take their rise from guilt,
that heart never can enjoy felicity,
itself being its own judge and tormentor.

Julia: Forbear these melancholy reflections!
May I ask your attention for a while,
whilst I unburden my overflowing heart?

Julia: This evening, as I wandered in the wood
where together we have both often strayed,
suddenly, I was seized, and forced away.
At that moment Henry rushed from the wood,
and save me by his timely assistance.
Whilst I was returning thanks, and pouring
out the effusions of my grateful heart,
he offered his love with such tenderness
that, in the fullness of my gratitude,
I pledged my word to be his forever.

Matilda: May all earthly happiness attend you,
and may all conjugal felicity,
ever be the lot of my friend Julia!
But didst thou not say something of Belville?

Julia: Oh, my dear friend:
Forbear to question me on that subject,
for it would only augment the sorrow,
and make thee, if possible, more wretched.
But see, he comes! Let a sense of thy wrongs
stimulate you to tax him with his crimes.
Spare him not, for he deserves it...Adieu.

Exit Julia

Enter Belville

Matilda: What anxious thought labors in thy breast?
Why this sullen silence, as if thy looks
could interpret what thy heart would reveal?
Say on what errand you come thus
in reflection. Hast thou invented some
new stratagem to storm a citadel,
or rather, art thou devising methods
to ruin some other innocent maid?

Belville: Oh, Matilda! Think not so meanly of me.
Couldst thou imagine I would be so base
as to desert thee, whom alone I love?
The joy which we anticipated in
our coming union is for the present,
interrupted by mine uncle's absence.
But let us not despair; the period
which shall unite us in wedlock's holy bands,
I sincerely hope, is at no great distance.

Matilda: But ere that period arrives, Matilda
will be exposed to all the world's censure.

Belville: In this juncture, I know not how to act,
But against that dilemma I have
Provided an expedient, which, if
Matilda really loves me, will surely
Have no objections to my proposal.

Matilda: Canst thou entertain a doubt on that point?
To you, have I not sacrificed my honour?
Oh, so I live whilst I speak the horrid words,
and now my seducer suspects my love!
But 'twas my too-easy yielding temper,
my inexperience of the arts of men,
and too great confidence in thy honour,
which betrayed me to ruin and misery.
But well might I have been assured that love
and vice are incompatible! Never
can love lodge in the same breast wherein vice
has the least root; not having its guardian
virtue to rear and cherish its noble fruit.
But thou spoke of expedients; what are they?
Fallen, fallen indeed, must that woman be;
lost to every sense of shame, devoid of
all principles of virtue and honour,
when she meanly descends to subterfuges.
They are the last resource of villainy,
and despised by every good and virtuous man.

Belville: Her just reflections pierce me to the heart.
Aid me, pride, to overcome this weakness,
lest I too, from her, catch the infection,
and be dissolved in weak, feminine tears.
Where is all my magnanimity now?
Fled before the voice of insulted justice,
and the piteous cries of wounded conscience.

Matilda: What makes thee pause?
Art thou dumb? Whatever thy purpose is...speak!

Belville: Matilda, take this vial; 'tis all I
have to give thee.

Matilda: For what purpose is it? What is its nature?

Belville: It contains a liquid composed of drugs,
culled, with peculiar art, from certain plants,
the contents of which, being taken at night,
will cause an abortion, by which means thy fame
will be preserved, unsullied as the noonday,

Matilda: Never! So help me heaven! What, murder
the innocent babe for thy crimes, villain,
and make me the instrument of thy guilt?
Rather, take my life, which now you despise.
See, Matilda kneels for death; sues to you
her betrayer, her seducer, for death.
Nay, pause not! Oh, have pity upon me!
If ever thou wouldst shew mercy in thy life,
oh, ease a wretch from all her sufferings.

Belville: No, Matilda!
I would never be so cruel; never
could I form a design so base and barbarous.

Matilda: Oh, name not cruelty, for 'tis mercy!
'Tis all the happiness I wish on earth!
Strike, oh strike for mercy's sake, and with my
dying lips, I'll bless that hand that gave the blow.

Belville: Oh, teach me reason how to overcome
these tumultuous passions. The conflict
which rages in my breast 'twixt love and duty

Belville: I dread will expel reason from its seat.
Love bids me raise her to my arms, but duty
compels me, implicitly to obey.

Matilda: Hast thou no pity to bestow on me?
Think not I'll cowardly shrink from my fate,
but with my hands, I bare my breast and teach
thee how to act.

Belville: Stop thy rashness!
For ere I scar that fair bosom of thine,
in my own I would give the deadly wound.
But, if death is requisite, 'tis I who am
the aggressor, and should, therefore be the sacrifice.

Matilda: Hold, hold! Give me the vial! I'll take it,
ere aught of mischief befall my Belville.

Belville: Now, thou art kind, indeed! Oh, banish hence these
clouds of sorrow which overhang thy beauteous face.
Dispel from thy heart all grievous cares, and
let love and hope resume their wonted place.
But why, my love, why dost thou tremble so?

Matilda: Oh, that vial I fear it is poison.
Is it not so?

Belville: Poison? Oh, no.
Why wilt thou take such pains to disturb thyself?
I had it from an eminent physician,
famed for his wondrous skill in these arts,
with full assurance that 'twas innocent.
Then let not these baneful fears distract you,
for they are needless, and void of reasons.

Matilda: Well, be it so.
*But still something strikes my foreboding heart,
that in this vial poison bears a part.
Should my heart speak truth, happy I will be,
when freed from earth, and all its misery*

Act Five, Scene One
Enter Sir John & Julia

Julia: Welcome home again, my dearest uncle!
You cannot conceive the loss we all felt,
for being deprived of your company
But now, your presence will revive us all,
and make time steal imperceptibly away.

Sir John: The pleasure I derive to see all around
me happy is beyond all expression,
but has no misfortune occurred since last
we parted? My foreboding heart dreads lest,
in my absence, some unknown accident
may have interrupted your happiness.

Julia: Why, with such energy, dost thou ask that question?

Sir John: I'll tell thee how:
The first night of my departure from hence,
being tired and fatigued with my journey,
I remained at a hospitable inn.
After having recommended my soul to
the all disposing heaven, as my usual custom,
I retired early to my bed, when sleep,
which never denies its balmy sweets
unto the truly good and virtuous,
suddenly threw me into a slumber.
Anon, my fancy led me home again,
where a dismal sight presented to my view.
Methought I saw Belville and Matilda,
extended on the earth in deep sorrow.
Matilda seemed to weep; by turns, Belville,
frantic, seemed to rave, then dissolved in tears.
By and by Henry came and joined them. You
seemed to mourn over their unhappy fate.
Then, a voice seemed to arrest me, as if thy friends
from heaven, with these words, haste to save.
I awoke, pleased that it was but a dream,
and suddenly fell asleep again, but
still, the same horrid image racked my soul.
Again, I woke, and once more fell asleep.
The third time still, the same dreadful prospect
was before me, and still these dubious words:

“Haste to save thy friends” three times refuted.
Unable to withstand the contest longer,
and dreading a repetition of the same,
I instantly arose, and hasted hither.
But still, the words seemed to vibrate in mine ears:
“Haste to save thy friends.” What thinkest thou, Julia?
For sure there must be something ominous
in this strange and wonderful vision.

Julia: ‘Tis strange, indeed!
But dreams will often delude the fancy,
to those objects which the heart holds most dear.
The ambitious man dreams of naught but wars,
dire devastations and conquered kingdoms.
The lover fondly dreams he is beloved
by the most beautiful woman on earth.
The merchant dreams of naught but vessels, load
with richest merchandise from foreign climes.
With pleasure, he counts the numberless gains
he will derive from this rich adventure.
Awake, and see ‘twas a foolish dream!
The miser, whose heart is intent on gold,
sees, or thinks he sees, some treacherous knave,
about to steal his rusty bags of gold,
affrighted, starts and runs to his treasure,
finds all safe, and gladly sees ‘twas but a dream.
Those thoughts which occupy the heart by day
will also intrude into the mind by night.
So ‘tis with you, your heart being fixed on home.

Sir John: But yet, Julia, there must be something
foreboding in this strange and wondrous dream.

Julia: If there be, I hope it is the prelude
to our happiness. Oh, my dear uncle!
You’ve been a father to me from my youth,
and studied every means to make me happy.
You will still add another by granting
a singular request, which I have to make.

Sir John: Whatever it is, if consistent with honour,
Julia need have no doubts for my consent.

Julia: Your goodness Sir overpowers, but my heart
towards thee with gratitude, overflows.

Henry, whom thou knowest as my brother's friend,
says he loves me... and...

Sir John: And you love him likewise - is it not so?

Julia: Yes! I must confess; his generous worth
has won my virgin heart, and your consent
is only wanting to make us happy.

Sir John: Be happy, then, my girl!

Julia: Thanks, thanks, a thousand thanks! May heaven show down
unnumbered blessings on this generous man!

Sir John: No, thanks, my girl.

If you are happy, I am so too; but
I am fatigued with my journey, and must
get some repose. Adieu, my Julia.

Exit Sir John.

Julia: Adieu, and may all blessings attend thee!

I'll to Matilda with the joyful news.

How will her heart exult with boundless joy,
when all her sorrows shall be chased away,
And long-wished for happiness begin to dawn.

***When she and Belville, joined in wedlock's bands,
shall vow obedience to its commands,***

Cupid and Hymen, shall their powers combine,

***Henry and Julia too, their bliss will join,
each lovely pair. How happy, then, how blest?***

Sorrow, nor care, our joy will ever molest.

***When Hymen shall light up his radiant beam,
then love alone shall be our constant theme.***

Exit Julia

Act Five, Scene Two
A bedroom, with a bed

Enter Julia

Julia: What, hast thou not left thy bed yet? This is not thy usual practice... Rise, Matilda! Love bids thee rise, whilst I relate to you tidings which will revive thy drooping heart, rekindle in thy breast each latent spark of joy, which has so long remained dormant. Why dost thou not speak? Art thou still asleep? I must wake her ... Matilda? Matilda? Alas, she breathes not! Awake, Matilda! Oh, she's dead! Help! Help!

Enter a Maid.

Maid: What means these grievous cries, my lady?
Julia: Oh, see? See there?
Maid: Oh, Matilda! Dead, my dear lady, gone!
Oh, doleful day! Most lamentable mourn!
Julia: Cruel death, to blast so fair a flower;
but hie thee unto my brother Belville,
and to him impart these woeful tidings.
Maid: Oh, my lady... unfortunate Matilda!

Exit maid.

Enter Belville.

Belville: What sounds of sorrow were those assailed mine ears?
Julia: Oh, my brother!
See here, the unhappy cause of all our grief.
Belville: Gracious heaven! Oh, Matilda, Matilda!
'Twas I who first ruined thee, and oh, 'twas I that killed thee.
Julia: Thou killed her? Speak! Develop that mystery!
Belville: Oh, Julia, I cannot speak. But I am,
oh, horrid words, Matilda's murderer.
Julia: Matilda's murderer? No, you cannot be so depraved, so lost to all that is good!
Though thou have been guilty of some crimes; yet thy soul could never do such a barbarous deed.
But I fear that love and despair have met in direful contest with ancient reason,
and expelled him from his long-settled seat.

I'll call some aid.

Exit Julia

Belville: Would, to heaven, thy words were true, oh that I could forget my crimes! But they will still live, and be my torment forever. Oh, what is Hell, when compared to these torments?

Enter Henry

Henry, Henry! See that dismal sight?
The fairest flower that ever adorned this earth is fallen, a victim to death's fatal power, and a hapless sacrifice for my crimes.

Henry: Knowest thou any cause for this dire event?

Belville: Too well I know; 'twas I who murdered her!
'Twas I who gave her the deadly liquid.

Henry: What liquid, pray?

Belville: Concordant with thy advice, I purchased, from Medicum the famous physician, a liquid composed of drugs unknown to me, for the same purpose, I mentioned unto thee, with full assurance that 'twas innocent, certain, and effectual for my purpose. But this? Oh, this is its fatal effect!

Henry: I suspect that, in mixing the compound, he has infused too great a quantity of the poisonous deadly drugs, whether through ignorance or some direful intent that we shall presently know. Who waits there?

Enter a Servant.

Hie, thee, with all possible speed unto Medicum's, the physician near the wood, and request his immediate presence here. If he denies compliance with thy commands, seize him, by force, and bring him hither.

Exit Servant.

Bel: Is this all that remains of Matilda?
Oh, death! Man's greatest foe, enemy to all. Oft have I seen thee in the fields of Mars, exercising thy tyrannical powers. There, myriads of corpses, who once were men, confess thy power and add new trophies

to thy sovereignty. But oh! Was there ever
such a pitiful, heart-rending sight as this?

Enter Sir John

Sir John: Where is the viper I nursed within
my bosom, who I fondly called my own,
and who, witness heaven, I loved even as myself?
But now that venomed serpent has stung my peace,
and embittered all my declining years.
Hast thou any plea to urge in thy defense?
But why do I ask that question? Where can guilt
find any refuge but in confusion?

Belville: Far be it from me, my honored parent,
to aggravate my many crimes with falsehood.
I stand before thee conscious of my guilt.
which were I to deny, my conscience would
contradict, and reveal those painful tortures
which gnaw my soul with anguish and dire despair.
To the base crime of seduction, I have
added perjury, and to complete the
catalogue of my sins, horrid murder
stands the last, the greatest, and the worst of all.

Sir John: What, wert thou privy to Matilda's death?

Belville: I was. To preserve Matilda's good name,
I have her a potion, by which means an
abortion might be effected, until you,
on your return, should consent to our union.
Fearful of your long stay, we adopted
this measure, which, by some mischance, has failed.

Sir John: Ill-fated pair!
With joy, I saw their youthful affections,
and blest the day I found her at my door.
Still, with pleasure, I saw their love increase
with their rising years, and, in idea,
anticipated how happy Belville
would be in having such a virtuous wife.
Alas, my flattering hopes are now blasted,
and my aged years are doomed to misery.
As for thee, young man, thou needest not any
reproaches of mine to augment your grief.
Thy guilty heart is punishment enough.

Belville: This is too much, indeed! Do not kill me with this goodness, for I deserve it not. Here comes that villain Medicum. Villain, I fear, he is.

Enter Medicum

Medicum: For what purpose was I summoned hither? Dost thou require another poisonous draught to finish the sufferings of some wretch who has fallen a victim to thy lusts?

Henry: What base reason could induce thee to be the perpetrator of such an atrocious deed?

Medicum: Or, rather say, why did nature form my heart so susceptible of love and did not endow me with reason to check its force? I love Matilda; loved her more than life, but she rejected my passion with scorn. I had then sown a few seeds of revenge when, anon, comes Belville, with a piteous tale, and told me his Matilda was pregnant. Then, revenge for Matilda's cold disdain prompted me to give a poison draught.

Sir John: Villain! Knowest thou the first punishment which awaits thy crime?

Medicum: Full well I know that rigorous justice will doom me to the most severe tortures. Yet all that inventive malice can inflict will never shake my soul with cowardly fear.

Sir John: That much heroism would become thee in a better cause.

Medicum: My cause is good! I die a martyr to love's sovereignty. Fear not, old man, that I'll shrink from danger. I defy all thy rack and tortures! If ever thou wouldst shew mercy on thy life, grant me but this boon and I'll die content: Let me, once more, see my loved Matilda, gaze on that form fair it, still must be. Though my harbinger, death, has cropped its bloom, 'twill afford me strength in my dying hour, to join Matilda in the heavens above.

Henry: Villain! In heaven, the fairest, she will sit,
whilst thou, in deepest hell, shall howling linge.

Enter a Servant.

Servant: Sir, a poor woman who lives in the village
humbly requests an immediate interview.
A secret, which lays heavy at her heart,
to you, and you alone, she will impart.

Sir John: A secret, sayst thou? What can that be? But,
I'll wait on her.

Exit Sir John

Servant: If convenient, sir, my lady Julia
requests the favor of your company,
To condole with her on this sad event.

Henry: Sad, indeed, it is! Although I cannot
bring any comfort, yet I will come.

Henry and Servant Exeunt

Belville: Oh, Matilda! Once angelic maid, once
the best and fairest of heaven's creation.
once the lovely paragon of thy sex
the wonder and admiration of ours!
Alas, how art thou changed. Where are those smiles
which wantonly played on thy lovely face,
diffusing ineffable joy to all?

Medicum: Aye, more than thy feeble tongue can express!
If thou wouldst paint her, resolve, in thy mind
all the fabled tales of beauteous Venus,
and the godlike Pallas came for wisdom.
Or, fair Helen! The guardian dame whom Paris,
Priam's son, stole from her husband, and for which,
the Greeks revenged by a ten long years' war.
Yet they must yield the prize to Matilda.

Belville: What words were these,
that sounded like sweet music to mine ears,
and allowed me some intermission from grief,
but only to make me still more wretched?
Say, what art thou?

Medicum: Knowest thou him not?
To whom, once, thou came craving a cordial
for that fair, but unfortunate woman?
Her gift of beauty, she owed to heaven,

her misery, villain, she owed to thee,
and her happiness, now, she owes to me.

Belville: What power hast thou to create happiness?
That being the attribute of heaven alone,
which no earthly mortal can ever enjoy.

Medicum: Therefore, I sent her to the bless abodes,
before nature had half fulfilled her time.
Ere, she was scarce arrived at womanhood,
yet at that early age, grief weighed her down,
sorrow and cares depressed her joyous heart.
But I relieved her from the cumbrous load,
and sent her where sighing, nor sorrow, grief,
fears, nor corroding cares are ever heard,
where peace and joy are eternally abounded,
where love doth reign, such as I faintly feel,
for faint indeed must be all earthly love.

Belville: Did thou ever love?

Medicum: Aye, I loved, loved the beauteous Matilda.
Whilst an unspotted maid I adored her,
but when she was, by thee, dishonored and
her rejecting my misplaced affection
impelled me to substitute a poison
in place of the potion which thou requires.

Belville: Wert thou the villain which robbed me of the gift,
sent by bounteous heaven, to bless my future years?
Thou specious, canting, dissembling villain!
Take the just punishment due to thy crimes!

Medicum: Thou hast indeed acted a cowardly part,
to slay a man, unarmed and unprepared.
I know that stern justice would have doomed me
to undergo the most severe tortures
Yet...yet with a soul unappalled by fear,
I'd braved their malice with malignant scorn.
But thus, oh heaven to have received my death
at a coward's hand...and my rival, too!
Oh, heaven! Revenge my death upon his head,
And, if possible, let my angry ghost
haunt him every night. Oh, revenge...revenge!

Belville: Coward, said he?
Slave! If thou dost not recant that word coward,

my vengeance shall add new tortures to thy death!
But he's dead... and I have still that vile name
of a base coward, yet. I'll have revenge,
although, in hell, the dismal scene should be
there. Our hateful ghosts shall meet in contest,
and force him to confess that I'm no coward.
Yet ere I quit this sublunary world,
let me take one last look of this fair corpse.
Farewell, a long farewell to happiness!
Image of my once-lovely Matilda,
farewell, farewell, oh! Forever farewell.
Thy soul has now joined the blest saints above.
Thou art now happy, whilst I am miserable,
and oh! I fear my misery will never end!
My crimes are of such a heinous nature
that mercy can never expiate their guilt.
For me, mercy has no cheering ray hope;
has no delusive charms. Fill me, my soul!
If I take a retrospect of my deeds,
seduction, perjury, double murder
all conspire to rack my soul with torture.
If I look forward to futurity
then, hated and despised by all mankind,
branded with a barbarous murderer's name,
a slave to the strings of tyrant conscience,
Hell's greatest misery could never atone
for such black and complicated guilt, then. Since
suicide must finish the sad catalogue,
come, trust sword, do thy dismal office,
and plunge me into eternity at once!

Enter Henry.

Henry: Merciful heaven!
My friend Belville! Speak! How is this? If yet
strength remains, tell me who occasioned this?
Say if thou art mortally wounded, or
shall I fly for someone to dress thy wounds?

Belville: Oh, no Henry, the few remaining sands
of my vicious life will soon be expired.
'Tis I who have been the perpetrator
of all these deathful scenes...yet ere we part,

oh, never more to meet, protect my sister,
commend me to mine uncle, and oh, pray
for the peace of my departing soul... Oh!

Henry: Is it thus, oh, gracious heaven, that we part?
Is it thus that our friendship is severed?
Cold and lifeless now he lies, sad emblem
of passions, uncontrolled and of luring vice.

Enter Sir John and Julia.

Here's still more woe to rend the melting heart!
Come, and join your tears with mine; let them flow
on torrents, copious as the blood which
has here been shed.

Julia: My brother, dead? Gracious heaven! How is this?

Sir John: Where, where, oh heaven, will this misery end?
But if thou hast more vengeance yet in store,
Grant me fortitude to support thy will.

Enter Maria

Maria: Hold off! I must, and will, see Matilda.
Oh, my child, my child, my loved Matilda!
Thou who, till now, was heaven's peculiar care,
who preserved thee when a lifeless infant,
who snatched thee from the hands of barbarous men,
and who provided a guardian for thee!
Why wert thou deserted in the evil hour?
Why wert thou left to thyself, oh, to fall?
And why am I left to mourn thy loss?

Sir John: Art thou her mother?

Maria: Pardon me, Sir.
I cannot boast of bearing that dear name,
but the love I bore to her, when living,
Is greater than ever a mother felt.
Dare I crave your patience, to hear my tale,
a wondrous tale of sorrow and distress?

Sir John: I have oft made enquiry concerning
the villainous parents of Matilda,
but to no effect; if therefore, thou hast
ought to say concerning her birth, unfold.
Lost to every feeling they must have been,
devoid of every tie which binds nature,
and profess of hearts hard as adamant.

Maria:

When thou hast heard my dismal tale of woe,
I doubt not but you will recant those words,
and with me exclaim "Never was sorrow
like unto their sorrow, nor fate like theirs."
In Caledonia's fair and ancient land,
she drew her breath, near where Tweed takes its rise,
between two mountains, whose snow-covered tops
seem to reach even to the azure skies.
There stands an ancient and lofty castle.
That, and its wide domains, have been possessed
by Wallaces for many century past.
Sir Thomas Wallace, its last possessor,
descended from the patriot of that name,
married, when young, to a lady of equal rank.
Heaven blessed their union with two lovely children,
one of either sex. A few years after,
a civil war broke forth, in contention
for the regal government. Sir Thomas
summoned all his vassals and joined Prince Charles.
With him, he fought, and oh, sad remembrance!
In his cause, he fell. Anon, these tidings
reached his lady's ears, who, frantic with grief,
was hardly withheld from sharing his fate.
Sometime after, a party of soldiers
besieged our castle and took it by force.
My lady and I, with Matilda, who
was then but an infant, fled for our lives,
until we reached a neighboring cottage,
where we found an asylum from our foes.
Matilda, for that was my lady's name,
unable to combat such heart-rending woe,
lingered awhile, then expired within mine arms.
Ere she took leave of this world of sorrows,
she called me to her bedside... "Maria,"
said she, "I have long Known thy fidelity.
Be a mother to my child when I am gone.
Bear her far from hence. Never let her know
her unfortunate parent's dismal fate."
When I had paid the last sad offices,
I fled with my child scarce, knowing whither

heaven directed my footsteps to your house.
Having heard of your generosity,
I laid her at your door...the rest you know.
Meanwhile, Sir Thomas's brother, having heard
the sad catastrophe fled, with Henry, his
nephew, and godson to France; he also,
having espoused the same cause but, as I
have since been told, he changed his name to Davenport.

Henry: Davenport, saidst thou?

Maria: I think it was.

Henry: Then I am Henry, if thy tale be true.

Maria: If thou are Henry, there is imprinted,
on thy right wrist, a beauteous strawberry.

Henry: The same I bear!

Maria: It is, it is!

I now read, in thy face, every feature
of thy worthy sire, my honored master.

Julia: Oh, fatal day!

Which hast bereaved me of a brother and
a friend: Be witness, all ye hosts of heaven,
to whom all my secrets thoughts stand revealed.
I loved her with a sister's affection,
all-cold, the hand that soothed woe's weary head,
closed, oh forever, are those eyes on which
oft have I seen the sympathetic tear
drop down her lovely cheeks, when any tale
of misery was painted to her mind.

Sir John: Such, my children, is the fatal effects
of deviating from virtue's fair paths.

Henry, I now feel death approaching with
rapid strides. These dismal scenes have, no doubt,
accelerated the tyrant's progress.

And when I am gone, be a guardian,
and a good husband to my Julia.

All my fortune shall devolve on you and,
hope flatters me, you will both be happy.

What say you, Julia?

Julia: This is not a time, Sir, to talk of love.

These dear friends now claim all my attention.

Henry: And shall not I also bear a share with you?

Our loss is equal; our grief shall be the same.
Each day we will mourn over their ill-timed graves,
and vie with each other in our sorrows.

Julia: On these terms, then, and these alone, I am yours.

Sir John: And may all bounteous heaven make you happy.

To the memory of these unhappy friends
will I erect a superb monument.

*And shew to future times, the tragic end,
which the base seducer's crime does attend.*

*The perjured lover also here may see,
that these base crimes are of no common die.*

*For heaven, unpunished, will not let them go,
retribution is sure, though sometimes slow.*

Exeunt Omnes