ElizabethanDrama.org presents
the Annotated Popular Edition of

A KING and NO KING
by Francis Beaumont
amd John Fletcher
c. 1611

Featuring complete and easy-to-read annotations.

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A KING AND NO KING
by Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher
c. 1611

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

The Iberians:

Arbaces, King of Iberia.
Arane, the Queen-Mother.
   Panthea, her daughter.
Gobrias, Lord-Protector.
Bacurius, a Lord.
Mardonius, a Captain.
Bessus, a Captain.

Two Sword-Men.
Three Shop-Men.
Citizens’ Wives, &c.
Philip, a servant.

The Armenians:

Tigranes, King of Armenia.
Lygones, a Lord
   Spaconia, daughter of Lygones.

Gentlemen, Attendants, &c.

SCENE:
During the First Act the Frontiers of Armenia;
Afterwards the Metropolis of Iberia.

AUTHORSHIP

E.H.C. Oliphant (The Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1927), in his study of the collaborations of Beaumont and Fletcher, assigns to our two authors the following scenes:

Fletcher: Act IV, scenes 1, 2 and 3; Act V, scenes 1 and 3.

INTRODUCTION to the PLAY

A King and No King is a fine tragicomedy featuring one of Elizabethan literature's funniest characters, the cowardly and obsequious Captain Bessus. More notably, this play is one of several of the era to explore the controversial subject of incest. Our plot is driven primarily by the outrageous mood-swings of the King of Iberia, Arbaces.

OUR PLAY’S SOURCE

The text of the play is taken from Beaumont and Fletcher, a collection of plays presented as part of the Mermaid series, cited at #3 below, with some emendations made based on the original 1619 quarto.

NOTES on the ANNOTATIONS

Mentions made in the annotations of Dyce, Bond, and Weber refer to the commentary of these scholars in their editions of our play.

The most commonly cited sources are listed in the footnotes immediately below. The complete list of footnotes appears at the end of this play.

1. Oxford English Dictionary (OED) online.
ACT I.

SCENE I.
The Camp of Arbaces, on the Frontiers of Armenia.

Enter Mardonius and Bessus.

Mar. Bessus, the king has made a fair hand on't; he has ended the wars at a blow. Would my sword had a close basket hilt, to hold wine, and the blade would make knives! for we shall have nothing but eating and drinking.

Bes. We that are commanders shall do well enough.

Mar. Faith, Bessus, such commanders as thou may:

I had as lieve set thee perdu for a pudding i' the dark as Alexander the Great.

Bes. I love these jests exceedingly.

Mar. I think thou lovest 'em better than quarrelling, Bessus; I'll say so much in thy behalf. And yet thou art valiant enough upon a retreat: I think thou wouldst kill any man that stopt thee, an thou couldst.

Bes. But was not this a brave combat, Mardonius?

Mar. Why, didst thou see 't?

Bes. You stood with me.

Mar. I did so; but methought thou winkedst every blow they strake.

Bes. Well, I believe there are better soldiers than I, that never saw two princes fight in lists.
Mar.  By my troth, I think so too, Bessus, — many a thousand: but, certainly, all that are worse than thou have seen as much.

Bes. ‘Twas bravely done of our king.

Mar. Yes, if he had not ended the wars. I’m glad thou darest talk of such dangerous businesses.

Bes. To take a prince prisoner in the heart of his own country, in single combat!

Mar. See how thy blood cruddles at this! I think thou couldst be contented to be beaten i’ this passion.

Bes. Shall I tell you truly?

Mar. Ay.

Bes. I could willingly venture for ‘t.

Mar. Hum; no venture neither, good Bessus.

Bes. Let me not live, if I do not think it is a braver piece of service than that I’m so famed for.

Mar. Why, art thou famed for any valour?

Bes. Famed! Ay, I warrant you.

Mar. I’m e’en very heartily glad on’t: I have been with thee ever since thou camest to the wars, and this is the first word that ever I heard on’t. Prithee, who fames thee?

Bes. The Christian world.

Mar. ‘Tis heathenishly done of ’em; in my conscience, thou deservest it not.

Bes. Yes, I ha’ done good service.

Mar. I do not know how thou may’st wait of a man in’s chamber, or thy agility in shifting a trencher; but otherwise no service, good Bessus.
Bes. You saw me do the service yourself.

Mar. Not so hasty, sweet Bessus: where was it? is the place vanished?

Bes. At Bessus' Desperate Redemption.

Mar. At Bessus' Desperate Redemption! where's that?

Bes. There, where I redeemed the day; the place bears my name.

Mar. Prithee, who christened it?

Bes. The soldier.

Mar. If I were not a very merrily disposed man, what would become of thee? One that had but a grain of choler in the whole composition of his body would send thee of an errand to the worms for putting thy name upon that field: did not I beat thee there, i' th' head o' the troops, with a truncheon, because thou wouldst needs run away with thy company, when we should charge the enemy?

Bes. True; but I did not run.

Mar. Right, Bessus: I beat thee out on't.

Bes. But came not I up when the day was gone, and redeemed all?

Mar. Thou knowest, and so do I, thou meanedst to fly, and thy fear making thee mistake, thou rannest upon the enemy; and a hot charge thou gavest; as, I'll do thee right, thou art furious in running away; and I think we owe thy fear for our victory. If I were the king, and were sure thou wouldst mistake always, and run away upon the enemy, thou shouldst be general, by this light.

Bes. You'll never leave this till I fall foul.

Mar. No more such words, dear Bessus; for though I have ever known thee a coward, and therefore durst never strike thee, yet if thou proceedest, I will allow thee valiant, and beat thee.

Bes. Come, come, our king's a brave fellow.

Mar. He is so, Bessus; I wonder how thou camest to any good service of any kind, my dear Bessus."

of (line 74) = on.
	trencher (line 75) = a wooden plate.

83: Bessus humorously gives the location of his great feat a name; redemption = rescue.²

= "please tell me".

= soldiers.

= ie. "any man who had even just".

= bad temper.

= humorous for "kill thee"; of = on.

= military baton or club.

= wanted to or felt compelled to.

105: the beating Mardonius administered to Bessus kept him from running away.

= run away.

= "caused you to make a mistake".

111-2: thou rannest...gavest = while thinking he was running away from the battle, Bessus was so panicked he ended up frenziedly charging the enemy!

112-3: I'll do thee right = "I'll give you credit".

= a common oath.

= let go of this topic. = "get into an argument with you."

= dared.

= "if you continue on like this".

= "grant you are"; in this speech, Mardonius has changed tacks: he would never beat Bessus if he were a coward; he would only thrash him if he were to be considered brave.

= Bessus tries to change the subject!
know it. But, if thou wert a man of understanding, I
would tell thee, he is vain-glorious and humble, and
angry and patient, and merry and dull, and joyful and
sorrowful, in extremities, in an hour. Do not think me
thy friend for this; for if I cared who knew it, thou
shouldst not hear it, Bessus. Here he is, with the
prey in his foot.

Enter Arbaces, Tigranes,
two Gentlemen, and Attendants.

Arb. Thy sadness, brave Tigranes, takes away
From my full victory: am I become
Of so small fame, that any man should grieve
When I o'ercome him? They that placed me here
Intended it an honour, large enough
For the most valiant living, but to dare
Oppose me single, though he lost the day.
What should afflict you? You are free as I;
To be my prisoner, is to be more free
Than you were formerly: and never think,
The man I held worthy to combat me
Shall be used servilely. Thy ransom is,
To take my only sister to thy wife;
A heavy one, Tigranes; for she is
A lady, that the neighbor-princes send
Blanks to fetch home. I have been too unkind
To her, Tigranes: she's but nine years old,
I left her, and ne'er saw her since; your wars
Have held me long, and taught me, though a youth,
The way to victory. She was a pretty child;
Then, I was little better; but now fame
Cries loudly on her, and my messengers
Make me believe she is a miracle.
She'll make you shrink, as I did, with a stroke
But of her eye, Tigranes.
Tigr. Is't the course of

Iberia to use their prisoners thus?
Had fortune thrown my name above Arbaces',
I should not thus have talked; for in Armenia
We hold it base. You should have kept your temper
Till you saw saw home again, where 'tis the fashion, Perhaps, to brag.

Arb. Be you my witness, earth,
Need I to brag? Doth not this captive prince
Speak me sufficiently, and all the acts
That I have wrought upon his suffering land?
Should I, then, boast? Where lies that foot of ground
Within his whole realm, that I have not passed
Fighting and conquering? Far, then, from me
Be ostentation. I could tell the world
How I have laid his kingdom desolate,
By this sole arm, propt by divinity;
Stript him out of his glories; and have sent
The pride of all his youth to people graves;
And made his virgins languish for their loves;

If I would brag. Should I, that have the power
To teach the neighbor-world humility,
Mix with vain-glory?

Mar. [Aside] Indeed, this is none!

Arb. Tigranes, no: did I but take delight
To stretch my deeds as others do, on words,
I could amaze my hearers.


Arb. But he shall wrong his and my modesty,
That thinks me apt to boast: after an act

Fit for a god to do upon his foe,
A little glory in a soldier's mouth
Is well-becoming; be it far from vain.

Mar. [Aside]
'Tis pity, that valour should be thus drunk.

165-171: the exasperated Tigranes berates Arbaces for boasting of his defeating Tigranes in Tigranes' own country.
= treat.
167: ie. "had I been able to defeat you".
169: ie. "we consider it bad form."
174-5: Need I...sufficiently = "why would I need to brag when the fact that the king I defeated is sitting here as my prisoner says it all?"
= speak for.
= worked, ie. brought.

182: "and caused the maidens of Armenia to mourn for their slaughtered men."

= supported by God or Providence.
= populate, fill.
185: "and caused the maidens of Armenia to mourn for their slaughtered men."

= this clause concludes the sentence begun in line 180; the sentence is a typically complex Elizabethan one, in which the premise appears at the end of the sentence, the conclusion at the beginning, and a list of various claims Arbaces asserts he could have made appear in between them (separated here by semi-colons, which actually makes this sentence easier to read: the clauses were all originally separated only by commas): "if I wanted to brag, I could tell all of these things to the world: how, etc..."

= ie. not bragging; Mardonius frequently provides humorous and ironic commentary for the audience.
= "if I did take delight".
= exaggerate.

198-9: But he...boast = "any man who thinks I am apt to brag is unfair to or demonstrates injustice with respect to my, as well as his own, good or temperate character (modesty)."

201-2: "it is acceptable, indeed proper, for a soldier to exult a bit when he can - it is not vain at all."

= ie. inebriated, and therefore more prone to a loosening of the tongue.
Arb. I offer you my sister: and you answer, I do insult: a lady that no suit, Nor treasure, nor thy crown, could purchase thee, But that thou fought'st with me.

Tigr. Though this be worse Than that you spoke before, it strikes me not; But that you think to overgrace me with The marriage of your sister troubles me. I would give worlds for ransoms, were they mine, Rather than have her.

Arb. See, if I insult, That am the conqueror, and for a ransom Offer rich treasure to the conquerèd, Which he refuses, and I bear his scorn! It cannot be self-flattery to say, The daughters of your country, set by her, Would see their shame, run home, and blush to death At their own foulness. Yet she is not fair, Nor beautiful, those words express her not: They say, her looks have something excellent, That wants a name. Yet were she odious, Her birth deserves the empire of the world: Sister to such a brother, that hath ta'en Victory prisoner, and throughout the earth Carries her bound, and should he let her loose, She durst not leave him. Nature did her wrong, To print continual conquest on her cheeks, And make no man worthy for her to take, But me, that am too near her; and as strangely She did for me; but you will think I brag.

Mar. [Aside] I do, I’ll be sworn. Thy valour and thy passions severed would have made two excellent fellows in their kinds. I know not whether I should be sorry thou art so valiant, or so passionate: would one of ’em were away!

Tigr. Do I refuse her, that I doubt her worth? Were she as virtuous as she would be thought; So perfect, that no one of her own sex Could find a want; had she so tempting fair.

208: I do insult = "that I insult you".
208-210: a lady...with me = "this is a woman that you only could have gotten by being courageous enough to fight with me; otherwise, no amount of wooing, nor wealth, nor even a crown, would have won her."

= Bond suggests "affects", a term from astrology.

= "he says I am insulting him".
= ie. "I, who am".
= ie. "and yet I am required to".
= set in comparison to.
= ugliness.¹
= do not describe her well enough.
= Victory is personified.
= ie. Victory.
= dares. = now Arbaces refers to his sister; Elizabethan playwrights used an abundance of pronouns, rendering some of the passages tricky to interpret.

234: ie. she conquers in love all who meet her.
236-7: And make...near her = a strange line: the only man worthy of marrying Arbaces' sister is Arbaces, who is too close to her in kinship (too near her) to do so.
237-8: and as...for me = a cryptic line; perhaps "and Nature (She) did the same for me", ie. "no woman is as worthy for me to take as a wife as my sister is."
strangely = wonderfully.¹

240-4: in this aside, Mardonius, apostrophizing to the king, uses "thee" to signal his contempt.
240-2: Thy valour...their kinds = the king's twin characteristics of courage and unbridled emotionalism (passions) are, could they be separated (severed), substantial enough to comprise two separate individuals.
in their kinds = in their own natures.¹

243-4: would one...away = "I wish one of the two qualities would disappear!"

247-250: the beginning of another lengthy and complex sentence; these lines comprise a list: "(1) were your sister as virtuous as she wants everyone to think she is; (2) were
9

That she could wish it off, for damning souls;

I would pay any ransom, twenty lives.
Rather than meet her married in my bed.

Perhaps I have a love, where I have fixed

Mine eyes, not to be moved, and she on me;
I am not fickle.

Arb. Is that all the cause?

Think you, you can so knit yourself in love
To any other, that her searching sight

Cannot dissolve it? So, before you tried,
You thought yourself a match for me in fight.

Trust me, Tigranes, she can do as much
In peace as I in war; she'll conquer too:

You shall see, if you have the power to stand
The force of her swift looks. If you dislike,
I'll send you home with love, and name your ransom
Some other way; but if she be your choice,
She frees you. To Iberia you must.

Tigr. Sir, I have learned a prisoner's sufferance,
And will obey. But give me leave to talk
In private with some friends before I go.

Arb. Some two await him forth, and see him safe;
And none dare to disturb his conference;
I will not have him know what bondage is,
Till he be free from me.

[Exit Tigranes with Attendants.]

This prince, Mardonius,
Is full of wisdom, valour, all the graces
Man can receive.

And yet you conquered him.

Arb. And yet I conquered him, and could have done't
Had'st thou joined with him, though thy name in arms
Be great. Must all men that are virtuous
Think suddenly to match themselves with me?
I conquered him, and bravely; did I not?
Bes. An please your majesty, I was afraid at first —

Mar. When wert thou other?

Arb. Of what?

Bes. That you would not have spied your best

advantages; for your majesty, in my opinion, lay too high; methinks, under favour, you should have lain thus.

Mar. Like a tailor at a wake.

Bes. And then, if't please your majesty to remember, at one time — by my troth, I wished myself wi' you.

Arb. What to do?

Bes. To put your majesty in mind of an occasion: you lay thus, and Tigranes falsified a blow at your leg, which you, by doing thus, avoided; but, if you had whipped up your leg thus, and reached him on the ear, you had made the blood-royal run about his head.

Mar. What country fence-school didst thou learn that at?

Arb. Puff! did not I take him nobly?

Mar. Why, you did
And you have talked enough on't.

Arb. Talked enough!

Will you confine my words? By Heaven and earth,

I were much better be a king of beasts
Than such a people! If I had not patience
Above a god, I should be called a tyrant
Throughout the world: they will offend to death
Each minute. Let me hear thee speak again,
And thou art earth again. Why, this is like
Tigranes' speech, that needs would say I bragged.
Bessus, he said I bragged.

Bes. Ha, ha, ha!

Arb. Why dost thou laugh?

By all the world, I'm grown ridiculous
To my own subjects. Tie me to a chair,
And jest at me! But I shall make a start.
And punish some, that others may take heed
How they are haughty. Who will answer me?
He said I boasted: speak, Mardonius,
Did I? – He will not answer. Oh, my temper!
I give you thanks above, that taught my heart
Patience; I can endure his silence. What, will none
Vouchsafe to give me answer? Am I grown
To such a poor respect? or do you mean
To break my wind? Speak, speak, some one of you
Or else, by Heaven –

1st Gent.     So please your –

Arb.         Monstrous!
I cannot be heard out; they cut me off,
As if I were too saucy. I will live
In woods, and talk to trees; they will allow me
To end what I begin. The meanest subject
Can find a freedom to discharge his soul,
And not I. Now it is a time to speak;
I hearken.

1st Gent.     May it please –

Arb.         I mean not you;
Did not I stop you once? But I am grown
To talk but idly: let another speak.

2nd Gent.     I hope your majesty –

Arb.         Thou drawl'st thy words,
That I must wait an hour, where other men
Can hear in instants: throw your words away
Quick and to purpose; I have told you this.

Bes.  An't please your majesty –

Arb. Wilt thou devour me? This is such a rudeness
As yet you never showed me: and I want
Power to command too; else, Mardonius
Would speak at my request. – Were you my king,
I would have answered at your word, Mardonius:
I pray you, speak, and truly; did I boast?

Mar.     Truth will offend you.
Arb. You take all great care
What will offend me, when you dare to utter
Such things as these.

Mar. You told Tigranes, you had won his land
With that sole arm, propped by divinity:
Was not that bragging, and a wrong to us.
That daily ventured lives?

Arb. O, that thy name
Were great as mine! 'would I had paid my wealth
It were as great, as I might combat thee!

I would, through all the regions habitable,
Search thee, and, having found thee, with my sword
Drive thee about the world, till I had met
Some place that yet man's curiosity
Had missed of; there, there would I strike thee dead:
Forgotten of mankind, such funeral rites
As beasts would give thee, thou shouldst have.

Bes. The king
Rages extremely: shall we slink away?
He'll strike us.

2nd Gent. Content.

Arb. There I would make you know, 'twas this sole arm.
I grant, you were my instruments, and did

As I commanded you; but 'twas this arm
Moved you like wheels; it moved you as it pleased.

Whither slip you now? What, are you too good
To wait on me? Puff! I had need have temper.

That rule such people; I have nothing left
At my own choice: I would I might be private!
Mean men enjoy themselves; but 'tis our curse
To have a tumult, that, out of their loves,
Will wait on us, whether we will or no.
Go, get you gone! Why, here they stand like death;
My words move nothing.

1st Gent. Must we go?

Bes. I know not.

Arb. I pray you, leave me, sirs. I'm proud of this,
That you will be entreated from my sight.

[Exeunt two Gentlemen, Bessus, and Attendants. Mardonius is going out.]

Why, now they leave me all! – Mardonius!

Mar. Sir?

Arb. Will you leave me quite alone? methinks,
Civility should teach you more than this,
If I were but your friend. Stay here, and wait.

Mar. Sir, shall I speak?

Arb. Why, you would now think much
To be denied; but I can scarce entreat
What I would have. Do, speak.

Mar. But will you hear me out?

Arb. With me you article, to talk thus. Well,
I will hear you out.

Mar. [Kneels.] Sir, that I have ever loved you,
My sword hath spoken for me: that I do,
If it be doubted, I dare call an oath,
A great one, to my witness; and were

You not my king, from amongst men I should
Have chose you out, to love above the rest:
Nor can this challenge thanks; for my own sake
I should have done it, because I would have loved
The most deserving man, for so you are.

Arb. [Raising him.] Alas, Mardonius, rise! you shall not kneel:
We all are soldiers, and all venture lives;
And where there is no difference in men's worths,
Titles are jests. Who can outvalue thee?

Mardonius, thou hast loved me, and hast wrong:
Thy love is not rewarded; but believe
It shall be better; more than friend in arms,
My father and my tutor, good Mardonius!

Mar. Sir, you did promise you would hear me out.

Arb. And so I will: speak freely, for from thee
Nothing can come, but worthy things and true.
Though you have all this worth, you hold some qualities 
That do eclipse your virtues.

Eclipse my virtues!

Your passions, which are so manifold, that they appear even in this: when I commend you, 
You hug me for that truth; when I speak of your faults, 
You make a start, and fly the hearing. But −

When you commend me! Oh, that I should live 
To need such commendations! If my deeds

Blew not my praise themselves about the earth, 
I were most wretched! Spare your idle praise:

My deeds should make 'em modest. When you praise,

I hug you! 'tis so false, that, wert thou worthy, 
Thou shouldst receive a death, a glorious death, 
From me. But thou shalt understand thy lies;

Leave me enthroned, I would despise thee though 
As much as now, which is as much as dust,

Because I see thy envy.

However you will use me after, yet, 
For your own promise sake, hear me the rest.

I will, and after call unto the winds,

For they shall lend as large an ear as I 
To what you utter. Speak.

Would you but leave 
These nasty tempers, which I do not say 
Take from you all your worth, but darken 'em,

Then you would shine indeed.

Well.

Yet I would have 
You keep some passions, lest men should take you 
For a god, your virtues are such.

Why, now you flatter.

I never understood the word. Were you 
No king, and free from these wild moods, should I 
Choose a companion for wit and pleasure. 
It should be you; or for honesty to interchange 
My bosom with, it should be you; or wisdom
To give me counsel, I would pick out you;
Or valour to defend my reputation,
Still I would find out you, for you are fit
To fight for all the world, if it could come
In quest. Now I have spoke: consider
To yourself, find out a use; if so, then what
Shall fall to me is not material.

Arb. Is not material? more than ten such lives
As mine, Mardonius. It was nobly said;
Thou hast spoke truth, and boldly such a truth
As might offend another. I have been
Too passionate and idle; thou shalt see
A swift amendment. But I want those parts
You praise me for: I fight for all the world!
Give thee a sword, and thou wilt go as far
Beyond me as thou art beyond in years;
I know thou dar'st and wilt. It troubles me
That I should use so rough a phrase to thee:
Impute it to my folly, what thou wilt,
So thou wilt pardon me. That thou and I
Should differ thus!


Arb. 'Faith, but it is: but thou dost ever take
All things I do thus patiently; for which
I never can requite thee but with love,
And that thou shalt be sure of. Thou and I
Have not been merry lately: pray thee, tell me,
Where hadst thou that same jewel in thine ear?

Mar. Wen! They respect not me;
I'm old and rough, and every limb about me,
But that which should, grows stiffer. I' those businesses,
I may swear I am truly honest; for I pay
Justly for what I take, and would be glad
To be at a certainty.
Arb. Why, do the wenches encroach upon thee?

Mar. Ay, by this light, do they.

Arb. Didst thou sit at an old rent with 'em?

Mar. Yes, faith.

Arb. And do they improve themselves?

Mar. Ay, ten shillings to me, every new young fellow they come acquainted with.

Arb. How canst live on't?

Mar. Yes, faith.

Arb. And do they improve themselves?

Mar. Ay, ten shillings to me, every new young fellow they come acquainted with.

Arb. Thou shalt take 'em up at my price.

Mar. That may be more than I'm worth.

1st Gent. Is he not merry now?

2nd Gent. I think not.

Bes. He is, he is: We'll show ourselves.

Arb. Bessus! I thought you had been in Iberia by this; I bade you haste; Gobrias will want entertainment for me.

Bes. An't please your majesty, I have a suit.

Arb. Is't not lousy, Bessus? what is't?

Bes. I am to carry a lady with me −

Arb. Then thou hast two suits.

Bes. And if I can prefer her to the lady Panthea, your majesty's sister, to learn fashions, as her friends term it, it will be worth something to me.

Enter two Gentlemen and Bessus.

Mar. Your price!

Arb. Ay, at the king's price.

Mar. That may be more than I'm worth.

1st Gent. Is he not merry now?

2nd Gent. I think not.

Bes. He is, he is: We'll show ourselves.

Arb. Bessus! I thought you had been in Iberia by this; I bade you haste; Gobrias will want entertainment for me.

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613: in Iberia = Arbaces has apparently ordered Bessus to return to Iberia ahead of him to bring news and instructions back to Gobrias, the Lord Protector.

this = this time.

= lack; the sense is, if Bessus doesn't return early enough to inform Gobrias that the king is returning, he won't have time to prepare an appropriate reception for him.

= request, petition.

= filled with lice; the king now is truly in a merry mood, taking Bessus' use of suit to mean a suit of clothing!

= bring along.

622: one for the king - his current request, which he has yet to enunciate - and one for the lady, in the sense of wooing.

= recommend; we remember that earlier in the scene, Tigranes had requested permission from Arbaces to confer with one or another individuals; one of them turns out to be Bessus, whom Tigranes has asked a favour: would he
petition the king for permission to place a lady-acquaintance
of his with Arbaces' sister Panthea as a servant?

627: Arbaces suggests that Bessus will receive as many
sexual favors from the lady as the number of days and
nights it will take for them to return to Iberia.

630: "I am only aware of the fact that I will be rewarded (by
Tigranes) with some gold for doing him this favour."

632: "tell Panthea that I wish for her to take on this woman
you speak of as a servant".

633: "if you will tell me just one thing."

= matter open to debate.

= intellect.

= ie. "the question is".

= slandered.

653: back-biter = slanderers; this still-current term actually
dates back to the early 13th century. eat it to a knife = literally to chew the sword down
till it is the size of a knife.

= "then you can say I am a coward."

= Gobrias is the Lord Protector, meaning that he has been
running the state during the king's long absence.

677: there is a pause here as the king reads the message;
he reacts in an obviously stunned manner.
Mar.

His blood goes back as fast.

2nd Gent. And now it comes again.

Mar. He alters strangely.

Arb. The hand of Heaven is on me: be it far From me to struggle! If my secret sins
Have pulled this curse upon me, lend me tears
Enow to wash me white, that I may feel
A child-like innocence within my breast:
Which once performed, oh, gives me leave to stand
As fixed as Constancy herself: my eyes
Set here unmoved, regardless of the world,
Though thousand miseries encompass me!

Mar. This is strange! — Sir, how do you?

Arb. Mardonius, my mother —

Mar. Is she dead?

Arb. Alas, she's not so happy! Thou dost know
How she hath laboured, since my father died,
To take by treason hence this loathed life,
That would but be to serve her. I have pardoned,
And pardoned, and by that have made her fit
To practise new sins, not repent the old.
She now had hired a slave to come from thence,
And strike me here; whom Gobrias, sifting out,
Took, and condemned, and executed there,
The carefulst servant! Heaven, let me but live
To pay that man! Nature is poor to me,
That will not let me have as many deaths
As are the times that he hath saved my life,
That I might die 'em over all for him.

Mar. Sir, let her bear her sins on her own head;
Vex not yourself.

Arb. What will the world
Conceive of me? with what unnatural sins
Will they suppose me laden, when my life
Is sought by her that gave it to the world?
But yet he writes me comfort here: my sister,
He says, is grown in beauty and in grace,
In all the innocent virtues that become
A tender spotless maid: she stains her cheeks
With mourning tears, to purge her mother's ill;

And 'mongst that sacred dew she mingles prayers,
Her pure oblations, for my safe return. —
If I have lost the duty of a son,
If any pomp or vanity of state
Made me forget my natural offices,
Nay, further, if I have not every night
Expostulated with my wandering thoughts,
If aught unto my parent they have erred,
And called 'em back; do you direct her arm
Unto this foul dissembling heart of mine:
But if I have been just to her, send out
Your power to compass me, and hold me safe
From searching treason! I will use no means
But prayer: for, rather suffer me to see
From mine own veins issue a deadly flood.

Mar. I ne'er saw such sudden extremities.

ACT I, SCENE II.
Another part of the Camp.

Enter Tigranes And Spaonia.

Tigr. Why, wilt thou have me fly, Spaonia?
What should I do?

Spa. Nay, let me stay alone;
And when you see Armenia again,
You shall behold a tomb more worth than I:
Some friend, that ever loves me or my cause,
Will build me something to distinguish me
From other women; many a weeping verse
He will lay on, and much lament those maids
That place their loves unfortunately high,
As I have done, where they can never reach.
But why should you go to Iberia?

Tigr. Alas, that thou wilt ask me! Ask the man
That rages in a fever, why he lies
Distempered there, when all the other youths
Are coursing o'er the meadows with their loves:

Mar. I ne'er saw such sudden extremities.

[Exeunt.]
Can I resist it? am I not a slave
To him that conquered me?

*Spa.* That conquered thee,
Tigranes, he has won but half of thee –
Thy body; but thy mind may be as free
As his; his will did never combat thine,
And take it prisoner.

*Tigr.* But if he by force
Convey my body hence, what helps it me,
Or thee, to be unwilling?

*Spa.* O, Tigranes!
I know you are to see a lady there;
To see, and like, I fear: perhaps the hope
Of her makes you forget me ere we part.
Be happier than you know to wish! farewell.

*Tigr.* Spaconia, stay, and hear me what I say.
In short, *destruction meet me, that I may*
See it, and not avoid it, when I *leave*
To be thy faithful lover! Part with me
Thou shalt not; there are none that know our love;
And I have given gold unto a *captain*,
That goes unto Iberia from the king,
That he would place a lady of our land
With the king’s sister that is offered me;

Thither shall you, and, being once got in,
Persuade her, by what subtle means you can,
To be as backward in her love as I.

*Spa.* Can you imagine that a longing maid,
When she beholds you, can be *pulled away*
*With words* from loving you?

*Tigr.* *Dispraise* my health,
My honesty, and tell her I am jealous.

*Spa.* Why, I had rather *loose you*. Can my heart
Consent to let my tongue throw out such words?
And I, that ever yet *spoke what I thought*,
Shall find it such a thing at first to lie!

*Tigr.* Yet, do thy best.

*Enter Bessus.*

*Bes.* What, is your majesty ready?

*Tigr.* There is the lady, captain.
**Bes.** Sweet lady, by your leave. I could wish myself more full of courtship for your fair sake.

**Spa.** Sir, I shall feel no want of that.

**Bes.** Lady, you must haste; I have received new letters from the king, that require more speed than I expected: he will follow me suddenly himself; and begins to call for your majesty already.

**Tigr.** He shall not do so long.

**Bes.** Sweet lady, shall I call you my charge hereafter?

**Spa.** I will not take upon me to govern your tongue, sir: you shall call me what you please.

[Exeunt.]
ACT II.

SCENE I.
The Capital of Iberia.
An Apartment in the Palace.

Enter Gobrias, Bacurius, Arane, Panthea, Waiting-women and Attendants.

Gob. My Lord Bacurius, you must have regard
Unto the queen; she is your prisoner;
’Tis at your peril, if she make escape.

Bac. My Lord, I know’t; she is my prisoner,
From you committed: yet she is a woman;
And, so I keep her safe, you will not urge me
To keep her close. I shall not shame to say,
I sorrow for her.

Gob. So do I, my lord:
I sorrow for her, that so little grace
Doth govern her, that she should stretch her arm
Against her king; so little womanhood
And natural goodness, as to think the death
Of her own son.

Arane. Thou know’st the reason why,
Dissembling as thou art, and wilt not speak.

Gob. There is a lady takes not after you:
Her father is within her; that good man,
Whose tears paid down his sins. Mark how she weeps;
How well it does become her! And if you
Can find no disposition in yourself
To sorrow, yet by gracefulness in her
Find out the way, and by your reason weep:
All this she does for you, and more she needs,
When for yourself you will not lose a tear.
Think how this want of grief discredits you;
And you will weep, because you cannot weep.

Arane. You talk to me, as having got a time
Fit for your purpose; but you know, I know
You speak not what you think.

The Setting: the first act having taken place in Armenia,
the remainder of the play is set in Iberia.

Entering Characters: Gobrias has been Protector of the
realm during King Arbaces' long absence from Iberia during
the wars; Panthea is Arbaces' sister, Arane the queen-mother, and Bacurius a lord.

= ie. Arane, the queen-mother. = Bacurius has been charged
with keeping Arane confined or under house arrest for
her plotting to kill the king.

7-8: so I…close: "so long as I keep her harmless (safe),
don't ask me to keep her confined."

12-13: so little…govern her = ie. Arane seems to have little
of the moral compass that God grants to humans.

15: natural = natural could carry a connotation describing
the type of feelings one would normally have for a close
relative.

 think (line 15) = intend.?

18-19: "you know why I did this; you are pretending to be
ignorant of the real story here, and will say nothing of it." Arane is addressing Gobrias; there is a back-story here, the
details of which we will not learn for a long while.

= "who is nothing at all like you;" Gobrias points to
Panthea, Arane's daughter, here.

22: Gobrias refers to Arane's deceased husband, the former
king, whom Panthea more takes after.

23: paid down = paid for in part, like a mortgage;¹ this is
now the third time the idea of redeeming one's sins with
tears of repentance has been used in our play.

she = ie. Panthea

25-27: "if your natural disposition doesn't lead you to cry,
then you should cry because logic (reason) says you
should, and learn from Panthea's virtue (gracefulness)¹
how to do so."

30-31: "think how disgraceful it is to you not to grieve, and
you will grieve that you cannot grieve" (Weber, quoting an
earlier editor).

 want (line 30) = lack.

33-34: You talk…purpose = basically, Arane is reminding
Gobrias of his past claims that he knows when it will be
appropriate to reveal whatever it is Arane is accusing him of
hiding.
36  *Pan.* I would my heart
38  Were stone, before my softness should be urged
Against my mother! A more troubled thought

37-39: *I would…mother* = "I wish my heart was made of stone, so that it could resist any encouragement to show tender regard (softness) towards my mother!" Note how softness linguistically contrasts with her "hard" heart of stone.

40  No virgin bears about her: should I excuse
My mother's fault, I should set light a life,
42  In losing which a brother and a king
Were taken from me: if I seek to save
That life so loved, I lose another life,
That gave me being, − I shall lose a mother,
46  A word of such a sound in a child's ear,
That it strikes reverence through it. May the will
Of Heaven be done, and if one needs must fall,
Take a poor virgin's life to answer all!

48-49: *if one…answer all* = "if one of them - either my brother or my mother - must lose his or her life, let me be the one to die instead!"

Note that lines 48-49 comprise a rhyming couplet, which was occasionally used to signal the end of a speech or a character's part (at least temporarily, as here) in a scene.

48  = Arane suggests there is another who should shoulder the blame for this situation.
49  50 ff: Arane and Gobrias refer, in this intense discussion, to that something mysterious that happened in the past.

52  *Arane.* But, Gobrias, let us talk. You know, this fault
Is not in me as in another woman.

54  *They walk apart.*

56  *Gob.* I know it is not.
58  *Arane.* Yet you make it so.
60  *Gob.* Why, is not all that's past beyond your help?
62  *Arane.* I know it is.
64  *Gob.* Nay, should you publish it
Before the world, think you 'twould be believed?
66  *Arane.* I know, it would not.
68  *Gob.* Nay, should I join with you,
Should we not both be torn, and yet both die
Uncredited?

70  *Arane.* I think we should.
72  *Gob.* Why, then,
Take you such violent courses? As for me,
I do but right in saving of the king
From all your plots.

74  *Arane.* The king!
76  *Gob.* I bade you rest
With patience, and a time would come for me
To reconcile all to your own content;
But by this way you take away my power;
And what was done, unknown, was not by me,
But you; your urging being done,  
I must preserve mine own; but time may bring  
All this to light, and happily for all.  

Arane. Accurséd be this over-curious brain,  
That gave that plot a birth! Accursed this womb,  
That after did conceive to my disgrace!  

"save the life of one who is my own"; the exact meaning of this line is meant to be enigmatic for us yet.  
= too-clever.¹

93: this line is especially mysterious.  
Here ends the curious dialogue between the Lord Protector and queen-mother. Frankly, the reader need not worry about the puzzling back-story; it will all become clear later.  
Located at the end of the play, Postscript 2 reviews several of these lines of dialogue. Readers may wish to consult the Postscript (after they have completed the play) to review what Arane and Gobrias meant when they spoke these particular lines.  
= various.  
= saved the day.

102f: more back-story: Bacurius appears to regret that he and other nobles had mocked Bessus for his obvious cowardice before he went off to the wars and performed, as they have been informed, so well; in fact, if they had known he was a valiant and honourable man, they would have, when he had insulted them in the past, challenged him to a duel, rather than laugh at him as not worth their time, as they had done.  

126: Bessus' answer was not explicit enough in its assurance of Arbaces' well-being for Panthea.  
= blow, thump.
Bes. He had divers.

Pan. And is he well again?

Bes. Well again, an't please your grace! Why, I was run twice through the body, and shot i' the head with a cross arrow, and yet am well again.

Pan. I do not care how thou dost: is he well?

Bes. Not care how I do? Let a man, out of the mightiness of his spirit, fructify foreign countries with his blood, for the good of his own, and thus he shall be answered. Why, I may live to relieve, with spear and shield, such a lady as you distressed.

Pan. Why, I will care: I'm glad that thou art well; I prithee, is he so?

Gob. The king is well, and will be here to-morrow.

Pan. My prayer is heard. Now will I open mine. [Reads.]

Gob. Bacurius, I must ease you of your charge.—Madam, the wonted mercy of the king, That overtakes your faults, has met with this, And struck it out; he has forgiven you freely: Your own will is your law; be where you please.

Arane. I thank him.

Gob. You will be ready to wait Upon his majesty to-morrow?

Arane. I will.

Bac. Madam, be wise, hereafter. I am glad I have lost this office. [Exit Arane.]

Gob. Good captain Bessus, tell us the discourse Betwixt Tigranes and our king, and how We got the victory.

Pan. I prithee do; And if my brother were in any danger, Let not thy tale make him abide there long Before thou bring him off, for all that while My heart will beat.

Bes. Madam, let what will beat, I must tell truth, and thus it was: they fought single in lists, but one to one.

As for my own part, I was dangerously hurt but three
days before; else perhaps we had been two to two, —

I cannot tell, some thought we had; and the occasion of my hurt was this: the enemy had made trenches —

Gob. Captain, without the manner of your hurt

Be much material to this business,

We'll hear't some other time.

Pan. I prithee, leave it,

And go on with my brother.

Bes. I will; but 'twould be worth your hearing. To the lists they came, and single sword and gauntlet was their fight.

Pan. Alas!

Bes. Without the lists there stood some dozen captains of either side mingled, all which were sworn, and one of those was I; and 'twas my chance to stand next a captain of the enemies' side, called Tiribasus; valiant, they said, he was. Whilst these two kings were stretching themselves, this Tiribasus cast something a scornful look on me, and asked me, who I thought would overcome. I smiled, and told him, if he would fight with me, he should perceive by the event of that, whose king would win. Something he answered; and a scuffle was like to grow, when one Zipetus offered to help him: I —

Pan. All this of is thyself: I prithee, Bessus,

Tell something of my brother; did he nothing?

Bes. Why, yes; I'll tell your grace. They were not to fight till the word given; which for my own part, by my troth, [I confess.] I was not to give.

Pan. See, for his own part!

Bes. Cried, "Give the word!" when, as some of them say, Tigranes was stooping; but the word was not given then; yet one Cosroes, of the enemies' part, held up his finger to me, which is as much with us martialists, as, "I will fight with you:" I said not a word, nor made sign during the combat; but that once done —

Pan. He slips o'er all the fight!
I called him to me; “Cosroes,” said I −
I will hear no more.
No, no, I lie.
I dare be sworn thou dost.
"Captain," said I; so 'twas.
I tell thee, I will hear no further.
No? Your grace will wish you had.
I will not wish it. What, is this the lady
My brother writes to me to take?
An't please your grace this is she. − Charge, will you come nearer the princess?
You are welcome from your country; and this land
Shall show unto you all the kindnesses
That I can make it. What's your name?
Thalestris.
You're very welcome: you have got a letter
To put you to me, that has power enough
To place mine enemy here; then much more you,
That are so far from being so to me,
That you ne'er saw me.
Madam, I dare pass my word for her truth.
My truth?
Why, captain, do you think I am afraid she'll steal?
I cannot tell; servants are slippery; but I dare give my word for her, and for her honesty: she came along with me, and many favours she did me by the way; but, by this light, none but what she might do with modesty, to a man of my rank.
Why, captain, here's nobody thinks otherwise.
Nay, if you should, your grace may think your pleasure; but I am sure I brought her from Armenia, and in all that way, if ever I touched any bare of her above her knee, I pray God I may sink where I stand.

Bessus clarifies: in line 247, he meant that he had lied about how he addressed his counterpart in the other army.

Arbaces, we remember, has requested Panthea to take on Spaconia as an attending servant.

"you are very welcome here: the letter from the king is of such strong influence with me (ie. she would do anything the king asks of her) that even if he wanted me to take on a personal enemy of mine as a servant, I would gladly do so; but you are far from being such a one - especially because you have never seen me before - so it is easy for me to submit to the king's request."

Bessus, without being asked, vouches for Spaconia's character; but the ladies wonder why Bessus feels the need to raise the issue at all.

"honesty, in addition to its usual meaning, also could mean "chastity"; Bessus' succeeding statements suggest he inappropriately has this second meaning in mind as well.

well, if you were thinking she did other 'services' for me on the way here, it's alright by me."

= ie. bare skin.
Above my knee?

No, you know I did not; and if any man will say I did, this sword shall answer. Nay, I'll defend the reputation of my charge whilst I live. Your grace shall understand I am secret in these businesses, and know how to defend a lady's honour.

I hope your grace knows him so well already, I shall not need to tell you he's vain and foolish.

Ay, you may call me what you please, but I'll defend your good name against the world. — And so I take my leave of your grace, — and of you, my Lord-protector. — I am likewise glad to see your lordship well.

Oh, captain Bessus, I thank you. I would speak with you anon.

When you please, I will attend your lordship.

Madam I'll take my leave too.

Good Bacurius!

Madam, what writes his majesty to you?

Oh, my lord, The kindest words! I'll keep 'em while I live, Here in my bosom; there's no art in 'em; They lie disordered in this paper, just As hearty nature speaks 'em.

And to me He writes, what tears of joy he shed, to hear How you were grown in every virtuous way; And yields all thanks to me, for that dear care Which I was bound to have in training you. There is no princess living that enjoys A brother of that worth.

My lord, no maid Longs more for anything, or feels more heat And cold within her breast, than I do now In hope to see him.

Yet I wonder much At this: he writes, he brings along with him A husband for you, that same captive prince; And if he love you, as he makes a show, He will allow you freedom in your choice.

And so he will, my lord, I warrant you;

= ie. Spaconia.

= discreet.¹

= ie. Bacurius.

= soon.²

= unnecessary rhetoric or verbal sophistry.

³³¹f: another important piece of our plot is that Gobrias has, over the many years Arbaces was away at war, sent the king letters telling him what a virtuous and beautiful young woman Panthea has grown into under his care.

= ie. "to decide if you want to marry him."
He will but offer, and give me the power
To take or leave.

Gob. Trust me, were I a lady,
I could not like that man were bargained with
Before I choose him.

Pan. But I am not built
On such wild humours: if I find him worthy,
He is not less because he's offerèd.

Spa. [Aside]
’Tis true he is not: would he would seem less!

Gob. I think there is no lady can affect
Another prince, your brother standing by:
He doth eclipse men's virtues so with his.

Spa. [Aside] I know a lady may, and more, I fear,
Another lady will.

Pan. Would I might see him!

Gob. Why so you shall. My businesses are great:
I will attend you when it is his pleasure
To see you, madam.

Pan. I thank you, good my lord.

Gob. You will be ready, madam?

Pan. Yes.

[Exit Gobrias with Attendants.]

Spa. I do beseech you, madam, send away
Your other women, and receive from me
A few sad words, which, set against your joys,
May make 'em shine the more.

Pan. Sirs, leave me all.

[Exeunt Waiting-women.]

Spa. [Kneels] I kneel, a stranger here, to beg a thing
Unfit for me to ask, and you to grant:
’Tis such another strange ill-laid request,
As if a beggar should entreat a king
To leave his sceptre and his throne to him,
And take his rags to wander o'er the world,
Hungry and cold.

Pan. That were a strange request.

Spa. As ill is mine.
Pan. Then do not utter it.

Spa. Alas, 'tis of that nature, that it must
Be uttered, ay, and granted, or I die!
I am ashamed to speak it; but where life
Lies at the stake, I cannot think her woman,

That will not talk something unreasonably
To hazard saving of it. I shall seem
A strange petitioner, that wish all ill
To them I beg of, ere they give me aught;

Yet so I must. I would you were not fair
Nor wise, for in your ill consists my good:
If you were foolish, you would hear my prayer;
If foul, you had not power to hinder me, —
He would not love you.

Pan. What's the meaning of it?

Spa. Nay, my request is more without the bounds
Of reason yet: for 'tis not in the power
Of you to do what I would have you grant.

Pan. Why, then, 'tis idle. Prithee, speak it out.

Spa. Your brother brings a prince into this land
Of such a noble shape, so sweet a grace,
So full of worth withal, that every maid
That looks upon him gives away herself
To him for ever; and for you to have,
He brings him; and so mad is my demand,
That I desire you not to have this man,
This excellent man; for whom you needs must die.
If you should miss him. I do now expect
You should laugh at me.

Pan. Trust me, I could weep
Rather; for I have found in all thy words
A strange disjointed sorrow.

Spa. 'Tis by me
His own desire too, that you would not love him.

Pan. His own desire! Why, credit me, Thalestris,
I am no common wooer: if he shall woo me,
His worth may be such, that I dare not swear
I will not love him: but if he will stay
To have me woo him, I will promise thee
He may keep all his graces to himself,
And fear no ravishing from me.

\[\text{Spa.} \quad \text{Tis yet}\]
His own desire; but when he sees your face,
I fear it will not be. Therefore I charge you,
As you have pity, stop those tender ears

From his enchanting voice; close up those eyes
That you may neither catch a dart from him,
Nor he from you: I charge you, as you hope
To live in quiet; for when I am dead,
For certain I shall walk to visit him,
If he break promise with me: for as fast
As oaths, without a formal ceremony,
Can make me, I am to him.

\[\text{Pan.} \quad \text{Then be fearless;}\]
For if he were a thing 'twixt god and man,
I could gaze on him, – if I knew it sin
To love him, – without passion. Dry your eyes:

I swear you shall enjoy him still for me;
I will not hinder you. But I perceive
You are not what you seem: rise, rise, Thalestris,
If your right name be so.

\[\text{Spa.} \quad \text{[Rising]}\]
Indeed, it is not:
Spaconia is my name; but I desire
Not to be known to others.

\[\text{Pan.} \quad \text{Why, by me}\]
You shall not; I will never do you wrong;
What good I can, I will: think not my birth
Or education such, that I should injure
A stranger-virgin. You are welcome hither.
In company you wish to be commanded;
But when we are alone, I shall be ready
To be your servant.

\[\text{[Exeunt.]}\]

\[\text{ACT II, SCENE II.}\]
\[\text{Fields in the Neighborhood of the City.}\]
\[\text{A great Crowd.}\]

= ie. so great.
= not deign.

= charge normally suggests a command, but here the sense may be more like "beg".

460-1: \textit{stop those...voice} = an allusion to the \textit{Odyssey}, in which Odysseus ordered his sailors to \textit{stop up} their ears, to prevent them from hearing the \textit{enchanting} song of the sea-creatures known as the Sirens, which would otherwise lure them to their deaths.

= ie. a glance, one of Cupid's arrows.
= entreat.\textsuperscript{2}
= peace.
= the sense is "haunt him", as a ghost.

466-8: \textit{for as...to him} = Spaconia suggests that she and Tigranes have made vows to marry each other; such vows, though made in the absence of a priest, were considered to be practically as binding as if the two had been "formally" married.

\textit{fast} (line 466) = bound, tied.

471-3: \textit{For if he...passion} = ie. "no matter how beautiful he might be, if I knew it would be a sin to fall in love with him, I could look on him without doing so."\textsuperscript{6} Note how this rather awkward sentence contains two conditional elements.

= forever in place of.

476-7: Panthea recognizes that Spaconia is really of a higher rank than a mere domestic.

= ie. "can do for you".

= a maiden from a foreign land.

488: ie. "when others are around we will play the parts of a servant and her mistress."

\[\text{Scene ii: although the scene takes place in exotic Iberia, the commoners portrayed here are very English!}\]
Enter three Shop-Men and a Woman.

1st Shop-M. Come, come, run, run, run.

2nd Shop-M. We shall outgo her.

3rd Shop-M. One were better be hanged than carry women out fiddling to these shows.

Wom. Is the king hard by?

1st Shop-M. You heard, he with the bottles said he thought we should come too late. What abundance of people here is!

Wom. But what had he in those bottles?

3rd Shop-M. I know not.

2nd Shop-M. Why, ink, goodman fool.

3rd Shop-M. Ink, what to do?

1st Shop-M. Why the king, look you, will many times call for those bottles, and break his mind to his friends.

Wom. Let's take our places quickly; we shall have no room else.

2nd Shop-M. The man told us, he would walk o'foot through the people.

3rd Shop-M. Ay, marry, did he.

1st Shop-M. Our shops are well looked to now.

2nd Shop-M. 'Slife, yonder's my master, I think.

1st Shop-M. No, 'tis not he.

Enter two Citizens' Wives, and Philip.

1st Cit.W. Lord, how fine the fields be! What sweet living 'tis in the country!

2nd Cit.W. Ay, poor souls, God help 'em, they live as contentedly as one of us.

1st Cit.W. My husband's cousin would have had me gone into the country last year. Wert thou ever there?

2nd Cit.W. Ay, poor souls, I was amongst 'em once.

1st Cit.W. And what kind of creatures are they, for = apprentices.¹

1: the woman is lagging behind.

= behaving idly or frivolously,¹ suggesting women slow everyone down.

= nearby.

= ie. a vendor selling bottles of something or another.

= have.

= normally a title of respect used for members of the middle level of society, but often used, as here, mockingly.

= disclose his thoughts.¹

= ie. the king.

= an oath, derived from the Virgin Mary. = "he did indeed say that."

= God's life (an oath); in 1605, Parliament passed a statute banning the blasphemous use of God's name on stage; consequently, implied blasphemies such as this became the norm in drama.

Our Shop-Men are apprentices; the 2nd Shop-Man thinks he recognizes his employer in the crowd.

Entering Characters: Philip is a servant of the 1st Citizen's Wife; a citizen was a freeman of the city.¹⁶

44ff: the citizens engage in some sympathetic stereotyping of the simple, unsophisticated lives of country-folk, but of course they are primarily showing off their own ignorance.
love of God?

2nd Cit. W. Very good people, God help 'em.

1st Cit.W. Wilt thou go with me down this summer, when I am brought to bed?

2nd Cit.W. Alas, tis no place for us!

1st Cit.W. Why, prithee?

2nd Cit.W. Why, you can have nothing there; there's nobody cries brooms.

1st Cit.W. No!

2nd Cit.W. No, truly, nor milk.

1st Cit.W. Nor milk! how do they?

2nd Cit.W. They are fain to milk themselves i’ the country.

1st Cit.W. Good lord! But the people there, I think, will be very dutiful to one of us.

2nd Cit.W. Ay, God knows, will they; and yet they do not greatly care for our husbands.

1st Cit.W. Do they not? alas! i’ good faith, I cannot blame them, for we do not greatly care for them ourselves. – Philip, I pray, choose us a place.

Phil. There’s the best, forsooth.

1st Cit.W. By your leave, good people, a little.

1st Shop-M. What’s the matter?

Phil. I pray you, my friend, do not thrust my mistress so; she’s with child.

2nd Shop-M. Let her look to herself, then; has she not had thrusting enough yet? If she stay shouldering here, she may hap to go home with a cake in her belly.

3rd Shop-M. How now, goodman squitter-breech! why do you lean so on me?
Phil. Because I will.

3rd Shop-M. Will you, Sir Sauce-box?

[Strikes him.]

1st Cit.W. Look, if one ha' not struck Philip! – Come hither, Philip; why did he strike thee?

Phil. For leaning on him.

1st Cit.W. Why didst thou lean on him?

Phil. I did not think he would have struck me.

1st Cit.W. As God save me, la, thou'rt as wild as a buck; there's no quarrel, but thou art at one end or other on't.

3rd Shop-M. It's at the first end, then, for he'll ne'er stay the last.

1st Cit.W. Well, slip-string, I shall meet with you.

3rd Shop-M. When you will.

1st Cit.W. I'll give a crown to meet with you.

3rd Shop-M. At a bawdy-house.

1st Cit.W. Ay, you're full of your roguery; but if I do meet you, it shall cost me a fall.

Flourish.

Enter a Man running.

Man. The king, the king, the king, the king! Now, now, now, now!

Enter Arbaces, Tigranes, Mardonius, and Soldiers.

Note the use of mock titles, goodman in this line, Sir in line 104 below.

= one who makes fresh remarks.¹

= to here; English has sadly long since lost its directional adverbs, which had been carried over from the proto-German from which English descended; hither means "in this direction" or "towards here", as opposed to hence ("from here"), and here, which was used only to indicate a static location.

The same goes for the triplets thither, thence and there, and whither, whence and where.

= an exclamation meant to call attention to a statement;¹ the 1st Citizen's Wife berates Philip for his penchant for getting involved in squabbles.

122: ie. "make it to the other (end);" the 3rd Shop-Man suggests Philip is either a weakling or coward.

= rogue¹ = "get even with you." The 1st Citizen's Wife, despite her criticism of Philip in her last speech, does not shrink from a good verbal row herself!

= brothel; the 3rd Shop-Man takes meet with you in its more literal sense.

132-3: but if I...fall = "but if I do meet up with you (ie. get revenge on you), I will be hung for my actions."

The phrase it shall cost me a fall was a common one, and seems to refer to the expected punishment one might get for committing a particular action, as here, or "I'll fail trying"; the term fall may have derived from wrestling, where it was (and still is) used to refer to the throwing down of one's opponent, but fall also was used punningly in this phrase to refer to the fall experienced while being hanged.

The Wife's point is that if she does manage to pay the Shop-Man back, it will be done most effectively, and the Shop-Man will greatly regret it.

= a fanfare from a horn plays, to announce the entrance of the king.
All. God preserve your majesty!

Arb. I thank you all. Now are my joys at full,
When I behold you safe, my loving subjects. By you I grow; 'tis your united love
That lifts me to this height.
All the account that I can render you
For all the love you have bestowed on me,

All your expenses to maintain my war,
Is but a little word: you will imagine
'Tis slender payment; yet 'tis such a word
As is not to be bought without our bloods:
'Tis peace!

All. God preserve your majesty!

Arb. Now you may live securely in your towns,
Your children round about you; you may sit
Under your vines, and make the miseries
Of other kingdoms a discourse for you,
And lend them sorrows. For yourselves, you may
Safely forget there are such things as tears;
And may you all, whose good thoughts I have gained,
Hold me unworthy, when I think my life
In such a calm estate!

All. God bless your majesty!

Arb. See, all good people, I have brought the man,
Whose very name you feared, a captive home:
Behold him; 'tis Tigranes! In your hearts
Sing songs of gladness and deliverance.

1st Cit.W. Out upon him!

2nd Cit.W. How he looks!

Wom. Hang him, hang him!

Mar. These are sweet people.

Tigr. Sir, you do me wrong,
To render me a scornèd spectacle
To common people.

Arb. It was far from me
To mean it so. – If I have aught deserved,
My loving subjects, let me beg of you
Not to revile this prince, in whom there dwells
All worth, of which the nature of a man
Is capable; valour beyond compare;
The terror of his name has stretched itself

149-152: All the...little word = "the only way I can pay you all back, in return for all the love you shower on me, and the taxes you have paid to maintain this long war, is with one little word."

152-3: you will...payment = "you may think it is an insufficient payment."

= topic of discussion.

166-8: my life...estate = "my life is too valuable to sacrifice to keep you in such peaceful circumstances."

177: an expression of scorn.

= anything.
Wherever there is sun: and yet for you
I fought with him **single**, and won him too;
I made his valour **stoop**, and brought that name,
Soared to so unbelieved a height, to fall
**Beneath** mine; this inspired with all your loves,
I did perform; and will, for your content,
Be ever ready for a greater work.

**All.** The Lord bless your majesty!

**Tigr.** [Aside] So, he has made me
Amends now with a speech in commendation
Of himself; I would not be so vain-glorious.

**Arb.** If there be anything in which I may
Do good to any **creature** here, speak out;
For I must leave you: and it troubles me,
That my **occasions**, for the good of you,
Are such as call me from you: else my joy
Would be to spend my days amongst you all.
You show your loves in these large multitudes
That come to meet me. I will pray for you:
Heaven prosper you, that you may know old years,
And live to see your children's children
Sit at your boards with plenty! When there is
A **want** of anything, let it be known
To me, and I will be a father to you:
God keep you all!

**All.** God bless your majesty, God bless your majesty!

[**Flourish. Exeunt Arbaces, Tigranes,**
**Mardonius, and Soldiers.**]

**1st Shop-M.** Come, shall we go? all's done.
**Wom.** Ay, for God's sake: I have not made a fire yet.

**2nd Shop-M.** Away, away! all's done.

**3rd Shop-M. Content.** − Farewell, Philip.
**1st Cit.W.** Away, you **halter-sack** you!

**2nd Shop-M.** Philip will not fight; he's **afraid on's face**.
**Phil.** Ay, marry; am I afraid of my face?

**3rd Shop-M.** Thou wouldst be Philip, if thou sawest it
in a **glass**; it looks so like a **visor**.

**1st Cit.W.** You'll be hanged, sirrah.

[**Exeunt the three Shop-Men and Woman.**]

Come Philip, **walk afore us homewards.** − Did not his
majesty say he had brought us home peas for all our
money?

= ie. in single combat; the line's meter is off: Dyce wonders
if "I" should be placed before **won**.
= bow down. = ie. the name of Tigranes.
= Arbaces' boastfulness is highly unattractive.
= for. = person.
=circumstances;? what specific **occasions** he is referring to
remain unexplained.
= dinner tables.
= lack.
= "good enough". = the Shop-Man is highly sarcastic.
= a sack with strings which allow it to be hung up;? thus,
one fit for the gallows.¹
= "fear is written on his face."
= mirror. = grotesque mask.
= a servant usually preceded his or her master or mistress
as they moved about in the public eye.
2nd Cit. W. Yes marry, did he.

1st Cit. W. They're the first I heard on this year, by my troth. I longed for some of 'em. Did he not say, we should have some?

2nd Cit. W. Yes, and so we shall anon, I warrant you, have every one a peck brought home to our houses.

[Exeunt.]
ACT III.

SCENE I.
A Room in the Palace.

Enter Arbaces And Gobrias.

Arb. My sister take it ill!

Gob. Not very ill; Something unkindly she does take it, sir, To have her husband chosen to her hands.

Arb. Why, Gobrias, let her: I must have her know, My will, and not her own, must govern her. What, will she marry with some slave at home?

Gob. Oh, she is far from any stubbornness! You much mistake her: and no doubt will like Where you will have her: but, when you behold her, You will be loth to part with such a jewel.

Arb. To part with her! why, Gobrias, art thou mad? She is my sister.

Gob. Sir, I know she is: But it were a pity to make poor our land, With such a beauty to enrich another.

Arb. Pish! Will she have him?

Gob. [Aside] I do hope she will not. – I think she will, sir.

Arb. Were she my father and my mother too, And all the names for which we think folks friends, She should be forced to have him, when I know 'Tis fit. I will not hear her say she's loth.

Gob. [Aside] Heaven, bring my purpose luckily to pass! You know 'tis just. – She will not need constraint, She loves you so.

Arb. How does she love me? Speak.

Gob. She loves you more than people love their health, That live by labour; more than I could love A man that died for me, if he could live Again.

Arb. She is not like her mother, then.

Gob. Oh, no! When you were in Armenia, I durst not let her know when you were hurt; For at the first, on every little scratch, She kept her chamber, wept, and could not eat

= ie. did not take the news well.

= the phrase means, "already prepared for her"; the sense is "on her behalf" or "for her".

= ie. "whoever you decide she should marry."

16-17: Arbaces senses the strange underlying suggestion of Gobrias' assertion.

19-21: Gobrias clarifies: if Arbaces' sister were to marry a foreign king, she would have to leave Iberia to live with him.

25-26: the dash at the end of an aside signals the speaker returning to address another character on the stage.

34: You know 'tis just = Gobrias apostrophizes to Providence: "you know my goal here is appropriate or lawful." constraint (line 34) = ie. "to be coerced".

= from. = ie. on hearing the news about. = to her room.
Till you were well; and many times the news
Was so long coming, that, before we heard,
She was as near her death as you your health.

_Arb._ Alas, poor soul! But yet she must be ruled:
I know not how I shall requite her well.
I long to see her: have you sent for her;
To tell her I am ready?

_Gob._ Sir, I have.

_Enter a Gentleman and Tigranes._

_Gent._ Sir, here is the Armenian king.

_Arb._ He's welcome.

_Gent._ And the queen-mother and the princess wait
Without.

_Arb._ Good Gobrias, bring 'em in.—

[Exit Gobrias.]

_Tigr._ Too safe I am, sir.

Re-enter Gobrias, with Aranes, Panthea, Spaconia,
Bacurius, Mardonius, Bessus, and two Gentlemen.

_Aranes._ [Kneels] As low as this I bow to you; and would
As low as is my grave, to show a mind
Thankful for all your mercies.

_Arb._ Oh, stand up,

And let me kneel! the light will be ashamed
To see observance done to me by you.

_Aranes._ You are my king.

_Arb._ You are my mother: rise.

[Raises her.]

As far be all your faults from your own soul
As from my memory! then you shall be
As white as Innocence herself.

_Aranes._ I came
Only to show my duty, and acknowledge
My sorrows for my sins: _longer to stay_,
Were but to draw eyes more attentively
Upon my shame. That power, that kept you safe
From me, preserve you still!
Arb. Your own desires
Shall be your guide.

Pan. Now let me die!
Since I have seen my lord the king return
In safety, I have seen all good that life
Can show me: I have ne'er another wish
For Heaven to grant; nor were it fit I should;
For I am bound to spend my age to come
In giving thanks that this was granted me.

Gob. Why does not your majesty speak?

Arb. To whom?

Gob. To the princess.

Pan. Alas, sir, I am fearful you do look
On me as if I were some loathèd thing,
That you were finding out a way to shun!

Gob. Sir, you should speak to her.

Arb. Ha!

Pan. I know I am unworthy, yet not ill-
Armed with which innocence, here I will kneel
Till I am one with earth, but I will gain
Some words and kindness from you.

Gob. Will you speak, sir?

Arb. [Aside] Speak! am I what I was?

What art thou, that dost creep into my breast,
And dar'st not see my face? Show forth thyself.
I feel a pair of fiery wings displayed
Hither, from thence. You shall not tarry there;
Up, and begone; if you be'st Love, begone!

Or I will tear thee from my wounded flesh,
Pull thy loved down away, and with a quill,
By this right arm drawn from thy wanton wing,
Write to thy laughing mother in thy blood,

That you are powers belied, and all your darts

113-119: Panthea's speech seems likely an aside.

119: at the conclusion of Panthea's speech, a long and uncomfortable silence likely ensues.

135-6: yet not...kneel = "yet I am not lacking innocence, with which I will kneel".

144: Arbaces is emotionally shaken up on seeing his beautiful sister for the first time since she has grown up; yet, because of the uncomfortable feelings her appearance is causing him, he will pretend not to understand who she is.

= Arbaces apostrophizes to Love; see the note at line 149 below.

= "to here from there" (ie. "from there to here").
= ie. Cupid; lines 149-156 contain a number of allusions to Love as Cupid, with his wings and arrows (darts), to whom Arbaces is apostrophizing.

= feathery material (of Cupid's wings).¹ = the hollow shaft of a feather.¹

152: "which I have pulled with my right hand from your lewd or wicked wing".
= ie. Cupid's mother was Venus; she was called the "laughter-loving queen" in Orphic Hymn LV to Aphrodite (Venus).¹⁸
= ie. "your supposed powers to cause a person to fall in
Are to be blown away by men resolved,
Like dust. I know thou fear'st my words: away!

Tigr. [Aside] Oh, misery! why should he be so slow?
There can no falsehood come of loving her:
Though I have given my faith, she is a thing
Both to be loved and served beyond my faith.
  I would he would present me to her quickly.

Pan. Will you not speak at all? are you so far
From kind words? Yet, to save my modesty,
That must talk till you answer, do not stand
As you were dumb; say something, though it be
Poisoned with anger, that may strike me dead.

Mar. Have you no life at all? For manhood sake,
Let her not kneel, and talk neglected thus.
A tree would find a tongue to answer her,
Did she but give it such a loved respect.

Arb. You mean this lady: lift her from the earth;
Why do you let her kneel so long? – Alas,

[They raise Panthea.]

Madam, your beauty uses to command,
And not to beg! what is your suit to me?
It shall be granted; yet the time is short,
And my affairs are great. – But where's my sister?
I bade she should be brought.

Mar. [Aside] What, is he mad?

Arb. Gobrias, where is she?
Gob. Sir!
Arb. Where is she, man?
Gob. Who, sir?
Gob. Your sister, sir!
Arb. Your sister, sir! Some one that hath a wit,
Answer, where is she?
Gob. Do you not see her there?
Arb. Where?
Gob. There.
Arb. There! where?
Mar. 'Slight, there: are you blind?
Arb. Which do you mean? that little one?
Gob. No, sir.

Arb. No, sir! Why, do you mock me? I can see No other here but that petitioning lady.

Gob. That's she.

Arb. Away!

Gob. Sir, it is she.

Arb. 'Tis false.

Gob. Is it?

Arb. As hell! By Heaven, as false as hell! My sister! − Is she dead? If it be so,

Speak boldly to me, for I am a man, And dare not quarrel with divinity; And do not think to cozen me with this. I see you all are mute, and stand amazed, Fearful to answer me: it is too true; A decreed instant cuts off every life, For which to mourn is to repine: she died A virgin though, more innocent than sleep, As clear as her own eyes; and blessedness Eternal waits upon her where she is: I know she could not make a wish to change Her state for new; and you shall see me bear My crosses like a man. We all must die; And she has taught us how.

Gob. Do not mistake, And vex yourself for nothing; for her death Is a long life off yet, I hope. 'Tis she; And if my speech deserve not faith, lay death Upon me, and my latest words shall force A credit from you.

Arb. Which, good Gobrias? That lady dost thou mean?

Gob. That lady, sir: She is your sister; and she is your sister That loves you so; 'tis she for whom I weep, To see you use her thus.

Arb. It cannot be.

Tigr. [Aside] Pish! this is tedious: I cannot hold; I must present myself: And yet the sight of my Spaconia Touches me as a sudden thunder-clap Does one that is about to sin.
Away!

No more of this. Here I pronounce him traitor,
The direct plotter of my death, that names
Or thinks her for my sister: 'tis a lie,
The most malicious of the world, invented
To mad your king. He that will say so next,
Let him draw out his sword, and sheathe it here;
It is a sin fully as pardonable.
She is no kin to me, nor shall she be:
If she were ever, I create her none:
And which of you can question this? My power
Is like the sea, that is to be obeyed,
And not disputed with: I have decreed her
As far from having part of blood with me
As the naked Indians. Come and answer me,
He that is boldest now: is that my sister?

Mar. [Aside] Oh, this is fine!

Bes. No, marry, she is not, an't please your majesty;
I never thought she was; she's nothing like you.

Arb. No; 'tis true, she is not.

Mar. [To Bessus] Thou shouldst be hang'd.

Pan. Sir, I will speak but once. By the same power
You make my blood a stranger unto yours,
You may command me dead; and so much love
A stranger may importune; pray you, do.
If this request appear too much to grant,
Adopt me of some other family
By your unquestioned word; else I shall live
Like sinful issues, that are left in streets
By their regardless mothers, and no name
Will be found for me.

Arb. I will hear no more.

Why should there be such music in a voice,
And sin for me to hear it? All the world
May take delight in this; and 'tis damnation
For me to do so. — You are fair and wise,
And virtuous, I think; and he is blessed
That is so near you as your brother is:
But you are naught to me but a disease,
Continual torment without hope of ease.
Such an ungodly sickness I have got,
That he that undertakes my cure must first
O'erthrow divinity, all moral laws,
And leave mankind as unconfined as beasts,

= drive to madness.
= Arbaces points to his own breast.
= to create meant to invest or ordain with a title, like a knight or a priest.
= the English were familiar with American Indians, since
the founding of Jamestown in 1607; Captain John Smith,
a leader of the colony, had returned to England in 1608
and quickly published A True Relation, a narrative of
his experiences, which included extensive descriptions
of the American natives.

= plead for. = ie. "please, command me to be killed."
= to.
= ie. bastards.
= indifferent (literally, the mothers are without regard
for their offspring).\(^1\)

308-311: the lines between the dashes are likely an aside;
parts or all of lines 311-324 between the dashes may
also be spoken as asides.
= ie. because of the improper feelings her voice raises in
him.
= ie. "and yet".\(^6\)

= nothing.
314-5: note the rhyming couplet here.
= ie. by helping him satisfy his sinful desire.
319-321: Arbaces suggests men may as well be animals,
Allowing them to do all actions
As freely as they drink when they desire.

Let me not hear you speak again; yet so
I shall but languish for the want of that,
The having which would kill me. – No man here

Offer to speak for her; for I consider
As much as you can say. I will not toil
My body and my mind too; rest thou there;
Here's one within will labour for you both.

**Pan.** I would I were past speaking!

**Gob.** Fear not, madam;
The king will alter: 'tis some sudden rage,
And you shall see it end some other way.

**Pan.** Pray Heaven it do!

**Tigr.** [Aside]
Though she to whom I swore be here, I cannot
Stifle my passion longer; if my father
Should rise again, disquieted with this,
And charge me to forbear, yet it would out –
Madam, a stranger and a prisoner begs
To be bid welcome.

**Pan.** You are welcome, sir,
I think; but if you be not, 'tis past me

To make you so; for I am here a stranger
Greater than you: we know from whence you come;
But I appear a lost thing, and by whom

Is yet uncertain; found here in the court,
And only suffered to walk up and down,
As one not worth the owning.

**Spa.** [Aside]
Oh, I fear
Tigranes will be caught! he looks, methinks,
As he would change his eyes with her. Some help
There is above for me, I hope!

**Tigr.** Why do you turn away, and weep so fast,
And utter things that misbecome your looks?
Can you want owning?

**Spa.** [Aside]
Oh, 'tis certain so.

**Tigr.** Acknowledge yourself mine.

**Arb.** How now?

**Tigr.** And then

fulfilling all their most instinctive base desires without conscience, if they are permitted to do what he is thinking of doing; the imagery is agonizingly powerful.

323-4: *I shall...kill me* = either option - having or not having Panthea - will destroy him.

*languish* = waste away or weaken.

*want of that* = ie. non-fulfillment of his sinful desire.

326-8: *I will not...you both* = likely an aside.

*toil* = entrap.¹

¹ Bond suggests that Arbaces here is addressing his own body; he may collapse onto his chair of state from exhaustion.⁷
See if you want an owner.

*Arb.* They are talking!

*Tigr.* Nations shall own you for their queen.

*Arb.* Tigranes, art not thou my prisoner?

*Tigr.* I am.

*Arb.* And who is this?

*Tigr.* She is your sister.

*Arb.* She is so.

*Marr.* [Aside] Is she so again? that's well.

*Arb.* And how, then, dare you offer to change words with her?

*Tigr.* Dare do it! Why, you brought me hither, sir,

To that intent.

*Arb.* Perhaps I told you so:

If I had sworn it, had you so much folly

To credit it? The least word that she speaks

Is worth a life. Rule your disordered tongue,

Or I will temper it.

*Spa.* [Aside] Blest be that breath!

*Tigr.* Temper my tongue! Such incivilities

As these no barbarous people ever knew:

You break the laws of nature, and of nations;

You talk to me as if I were a prisoner

For theft. My tongue be tempered! I must speak,

If thunder check me, and I will.

*Arb.* You will!

*Spa.* [Aside] Alas, my fortune!

*Tigr.* Do not fear his frown.

Dear madam, hear me.

*Arb.* Fear not my frown? But that 'twere base in me

To fight with one I know I can o'ercome.

Again thou shouldst be conquerèd by me.

*Mar.* [Aside] He has one ransom with him already;

methinks, 'twere good to fight double or quit.

*Arb.* Away with him to prison! − Now, sir, see

If my frown be regardless. − Why delay you?

Seize him, Bacurius! − You shall know my word

= lack.

= exchange; this line is another example of an alexandrine, a line with 12 syllables in iambic meter.

= believe.

= ie. control, restrain. = ie. disorderly, unruly.¹

= Tigranes has no idea how near he has come to the truth!

= "except that it would be ignoble or dishonourable of me".

= "you, Tigranes, would be".

= is not worthy of being regarded or heeded.¹
Sweeps like a wind, and all it grapples with
Are as the chaff before it.

*Tigr.* Touch me not.

*Arb.* Help there!

*Tigr.* Away!

1st *Gent.* It is in vain to struggle.

2nd *Gent.* You must be forced.

*Bac.* Sir, you must pardon us;
We must obey.

*Arb.* Why do you dally there?
Drag him away by any thing.

*Bac.* Come, sir.

*Tigr.* Justice, thou ought'st to give me strength enough
To shake all these off. — This is tyranny,
Arbaces, subtler than the burning bull's.

Or that famed tyrant's bed. Thou might'st as well
Search i' the deep of winter through the snow
For half-starved people, to bring home with thee
To show 'em fire and send 'em back again,
As use me thus.

*Arb.* Let him be close, Bacurius.

[Exit Tigranes, led off by Bacurius and two Gentlemen.]

*Spa.* [Aside] I ne'er rejoiced at any ill to him
But this imprisonment: what shall become
Of me forsaken?

*Gob.* You will not let your sister
Depart thus discontented from you, sir?

*Arb.* By no means, Gobrias: I have done her wrong,
And made myself believe much of myself
That is not in me. — You did kneel to me,

427: at this point, the Two Gentlemen and Bacurius move to seize Tigranes.
Whilst I stood stubborn and regardless by,
And, like a god incensed, gave no ear
To all your prayers.

[Kneels.]

Behold, I kneel to you:
Show a contempt as large as was my own,
And I will suffer it; yet, at the last,
Forgive me.

Pan. Oh, you wrong me more in this
Than in your rage you did! you mock me now.

[Kneels.]

Arb. Never forgive me, then; which is the worst
Can happen to me.

Pan. If you be in earnest,
Stand up, and give me but a gentle look
And two kind words, and I shall be in Heaven.

Arb. Rise you, then, too. Here I acknowledge thee,

[Rising, and raising Panthea.]

My hope, the only jewel of my life,
The best of sisters, dearer than my breath,
A happiness as high as I could think:
And when my actions call thee otherwise,
Perdition light upon me!

Pan. This is better
Than if you had not frowned; it comes to me
Like mercy at the block: and when I leave
To serve you with my life, your curse be with me!

Arb. Then, thus I do salute thee; and again,

[Kisses her.]

To make this knot the stronger. — [Aside] Paradise
Is there! — It may be you are yet in doubt;
This third kiss blots it out. — [Aside] I wade in sin,
And foolishly entice myself along! —
Take her away; see her a prisoner
In her own chamber, closely, Gobrias.

Pan. Alas, sir, why?

Arb. I must not stay the answer. —
Do it.

Gob. Good sir!

Arb. No more: do it, I say.
Mar. [Aside] This is better and better.

Pan. Yet, hear me speak.

Arb. I will not hear you speak. −
Away with her! Let no man think to speak
For such a creature; for she is a witch.
A poisoner, and a traitor!

Gob. Madam, this office grieves me.

Pan. Nay, 'tis well;
The king is pleased with it.

Arb. Bessus, go you along too with her. I will prove
All this that I have said, if I may live
So long: but I am desperately sick;
For she has given me poison in a kiss, −

She had it 'twixt her lips, − and with her eyes
She witches people. Go, without a word!

[Exeunt Gobrias, Panthea, Bessus, and Spaconia.]

Why should you, that have made me stand in war
Like Fate itself, cutting what threads I pleased,
Decree such an unworthy end of me
And all my glories? What am I, alas,
That you oppose me? If my secret thoughts
Have ever harboured swellings against you,
They could not hurt you; and it is in you
To give me sorrow, that will render me
Apt to receive your mercy: rather so,
Let it be rather so, than punish me
With such unmanly sins. Incest is in me
Dwelling already; and it must be holy,
That pulls it thence. − Where art, Mardonius?

Mar. Here, sir.

Arb. I prithee, bear me, if thou canst.
Am I not grown a strange weight?

Mar. As you were.

Arb. No heavier?

Mar. No, sir.

Arb. Why, my legs

= on behalf of. = a frequent Elizabethan motif was to accuse a woman of witchcraft for causing another to (undesirably) fall in love with her.

= duty or assigned job.

543: another alexandrine; though Dyce suggests along is superfluous.

= given, like most normally two-syllable words with a medial 'v', is pronounced as a monosyllable, with the 'v' omitted: gi'n.

= bewitches, enchants.

553-565: this entire speech, an apostrophe to the gods, is likely an aside, except for the last few words spoken to Mardonius.

554: Arbaces compares his skill in war to that of the three Fates of Greek mythology, who measured out the length of each person's life with a thread; when the third Fate, Atropos, cut the thread, its assignee died.

= arrogant or rebellious thoughts; swellings alludes to the notion of one being swollen with pride.

560-1: that will...mercy = "which will qualify me then to receive thy mercy."
= "let this be", ie. "please have mercy on me, by taking away these unnatural feelings in me".

564-5: and it...thence = "that power (it) would have to be a holy one that could remove my desire or sin."?

569-570: Arbaces leans on Mardonius, asking him if he feels unusually heavy.

572: "the same as you were before."
Refuse to bear my body! Oh, Mardonius, Thou hast in field beheld me, when thou know'st I could have gone, though I could never run!

Mar. And so I shall again.

Arb. Oh, no, 'tis past.

Mar. Pray you, go rest yourself.

Arb. Wilt thou hereafter, when they talk of me, As thou shalt hear, nothing but infamy, Remember some of those things?

Mar. Yes, I will.

Arb. I prithee, do; for thou shalt never see Me so again.

Mar. I warrant ye.

[Exeunt.]

ACT III, SCENE II.
A Room in the House of Bessus.

Enter Bessus.

Bes. They talk of fame; I have gotten it in the wars, and will afford any man a reasonable pennyworth.

Some will say, they could be content to have it, but that it is to be achieved with danger; but my opinion is otherwise: for if I might stand still in cannon-proof, and have fame fall upon me, I would refuse it. My reputation came principally by thinking to run away; which nobody knows but Mardonius, and I think he conceals it to anger me. Before I went to the wars, I came to the town a young fellow, without means or parts to deserve friends; and my empty guts persuaded me to lie, and abuse people, for my meat; which I did, and they beat me: then would I fast two days, till my hunger cried out on me, "Rail still!" Then, methought, I had a monstrous stomach to abuse 'em again; and did it. In this state I continued, till they hung me up by the heels, and beat me with hazel-sticks, as if they would have baked me, and have cozened somebody with me for venison. After this I railed, and eat quietly; for the whole kingdom took notice of me for a baffled whipped fellow, and what I said was remembered in

= "seen me in the battlefield".
= ie. run away.

598: "I assure you, you will."

Arbaces' Prisoners: the current scorecard shows Bacurius acting as Tigranes' jailer, and Gobrias keeping Panthea confined in his own home.

= reputation (for valour).
2: "and would gladly sell any amount of my reputation that I can for a reasonable price."¹
= ie. glad to have a reputation for bravery.
= ie. even if. = always. = ie. armour that is cannon-proof.

= Mardonius knows Bessus is unhappy to be thought of as a hero.

= qualities.
= vilify or slander; Bessus is explaining the round-about way he used to be able to procure food.

= inclination,¹ with obvious pun.
16-17: they hung ...hazel-sticks = a punishment "inflicted on recreant knights" (Dyce).
18-19: cozened...venison = tricked (cozened) someone into thinking he was venison.

= ate unmolested.⁷
= disgraced⁵ or treated humiliatingly.⁶

21-22: what I said...in mirth = once people realized what a joke Bessus was, they would feed him, as if they were rewarding him for entertaining them.
mirth, but never in anger; of which I was glad. – I would.

it were at that pass again! After this, Heaven called an
aunt of mine, that left two hundred pounds in a
cousin’s hand for me; who, taking me to be a gallant
young spirit, raised a company for me with the money,
and sent me into Armenia with ’em. Away I would

have run from them, but that I could get no company;
and alone I durst not run. I was never at battle but
once, and there I was running, but Mardonius cudgelled
me: yet I got loose at last, but was so afraid that
I saw no more than my shoulders do, but fled with
my whole company amongst my enemies, and
overthrew ’em: now the report of my valour is come
over before me, and they say I was a raw young
fellow, but now I am improved: – a plague on their
elocuence! ’twill cost me many a beating: and
Mardonius might help this too, if he would; for now
they think to get honour on me, and all the men I
have abused call me freshly to account, (worthily,
as they call it) by the way of challenge.

Enter a Gentleman.

Gent. Good-morrow, Captain Bessus.

Bes. Good-morrow, sir.

Gent. I come to speak with you –

Bes. You’re very welcome.
Gent. From one that holds himself wronged by you some three years since. Your worth, he says, is famed, and he doth nothing doubt but you will do him right, as beseems a soldier.

Bes. [Aside] A pox on 'em, so they cry all!

Gent. And a slight note I have about me for you, for the delivery of which you must excuse me: it is an office that friendship calls upon me to do, and no way offensive to you, since I desire but right on both sides.

[ Gives him a letter.]

Bes. 'Tis a challenge, sir, is it not?

Gent. 'Tis an inviting to the field.

Bes. [Aside] An inviting? Oh, cry you mercy! — What a compliment he delivers it with! he might as agreeably to my nature present me poison with such a speech.

[ Reads.]

Um, um, um — reputation — um, um, um — call you to account — um um, um — forced to this — um, um, um — with my sword — um, um, um — like a gentleman — um, um, um — dear to me — um, um, um — satisfaction. — 'Tis very well, sir; I do accept it; but he must wait an answer this thirteen weeks.

Gent. Why, sir, he would be glad to wipe off his stain as soon as he could.

Bes. Sir, upon my credit, I am already engaged to two hundred and twelve; all which must have their stains wiped off, if that be the word, before him.

Gent. Sir, if you be truly engaged but to one, he shall stay a competent time.

Bes. Upon my faith, sir, to two hundred and twelve: and I have a spent body too, much bruised in battle; so that I cannot fight, I must be plain with you, above three combats a-day. All the kindness I can show him, is to set him resolutely in my roll the two hundred and

= the Gentleman is delivering a challenge on behalf of another.
= typical euphemism for accepting a challenge to a duel; the sense is to "give him a chance to defend his honour."
= "they all say the same thing!"

= the Gentleman is behaving in the proper manner of what is known as the second, a person appointed by each party to represent them in negotiating the exact terms of the duel, e.g. location, weapons to be used, etc. The code technically required the duel to be fought for the sake of determining the truth of any indecorous comments that passed between the parties, so as to preserve their honours, and not for any purposes of revenge; hence the Gentleman's desire to do right on both sides.¹

69: again, the Gentleman prefers to use a euphemism; as sovereigns generally frowned upon dueling (in England, James I had favoured prosecuting participants), a language of euphemisms was developed so that those who chose to continue the practice could avoid using any explicit and incriminating phrases.

72-73: he might...speech = the Gentleman's language is so complimentary that he could persuade Bessus to take poison with such a speech.

= ie. to his honour.
= "on my honour", ie. "you may believe me".
= ie. correct phrase.
= even.
= wait for an appropriate (competent)¹ period of time.

= definitely.¹ = list or register of his opponents.
thirteenth man, which is something; for, I tell you, I think there will be more after him than before him; I think so. Pray you commend me to him, and tell him this.

Gent. I will, sir. Good-morrow to you.

[Exit Gentleman.]

Bes. Good-morrow, good sir. – Certainly, my safest way were to print myself a coward, with a discovery how I came by my credit, and clap it upon every post. I have received above thirty challenges within this two hours: Marry, all but the first I put off with engagement; and, by good fortune, the first is no madder of fighting than I; so that that's referred: the place where it must be ended is four days' journey off, and our arbitrators are these; he has chosen a gentleman in travel, and I have a special friend with a quartan ague, like to hold him this five years, for mine; and when his man comes home, we are to expect my friend's health. If they would send me challenges thus thick, as long as I lived, I would have no other living: I can make seven shillings a-day o' th' paper to the grocers. Yet I learn nothing by all these, but a little skill in comparing of styles: I do find evidently that there is some one scrivener in this town, that has a great hand in writing of challenges, for they are all of a cut, and six of 'em in a hand; and they all end, "My reputation is dear to me, and I must require satisfaction."

Who's there? more paper, I hope. No; 'tis my lord Bacurius: I fear all is not well betwixt us.

Enter Bacurius.

Bac. Now, Captain Bessus! I come about a frivolous matter, caused by as idle a report: you know, you were a coward.

Bes. Very right.

Bac. And wronged me.

Bes. True, my lord.
Bac. But now, people will call you valiant; —
desertlessly, I think; yet, for their satisfaction, I will
have you fight with me.

Bes. Oh, my good lord, my deep engagements —

Bac. Tell not me of your engagements, Captain Bessus!
It is not to be put off with an excuse. For my own part, I
am none of the multitude that believe your conversion
from coward.

Bes. My lord, I seek not quarrels, and this belongs not
to me; I am not to maintain it.

Bac. Who, then, pray?

Bes. Bessus the coward wronged you.

Bac. Right.

Bes. And shall Bessus the valiant maintain what
Bessus the coward did?

Bac. I prithee, leave these cheating tricks! I swear
thou shalt fight with me, or thou shalt be beaten
extremely and kicked.

Bes. Since you provoke me thus far, my lord, I will
fight with you; and, by my sword, it shall cost me
twenty pounds but I will have my leg well a week
sooner purposely.

Bac. Your leg! why, what ail's your leg? I'll do a cure
on you. Stand up!

[Kicks him.]

Bes. My lord, this is not noble in you.

Bac. What dost thou with such a phrase in thy mouth?
I will kick thee out of all good words before I leave thee.

[Kicks him.]

Bes. My lord, I take this as a punishment for the
offence I did when I was a coward.

Bac. When thou wert! confess thyself a coward still,
or, by this light, I'll beat thee into sponge.

Bes. Why, I am one.

Bac. Are you so, sir? and why do you wear a sword,

143-4: although Bacurius knows Bessus to be a coward,
and therefore unworthy of dueling with, other people
do not, so to preserve his honour in the eyes of the other
citizens of Iberia he must challenge Bessus.

= ie. "this challenge".
= "the one to maintain this quarrel with you"

167-8: leaving all pretense of politeness behind, Bacurius
switches pronouns, addressing Bessus with the
contemptuous "thee".

171: by my sword = an oath.

171-3: it shall...purposely = "since you are eager
to fight, I will speed up the healing of my leg, even if I
have to pay a doctor 20 pounds to have it done so, so
that we can hurry forward the date of our appointment."

182: Bessus has no business uttering the word "noble".

= common Elizabethan oath; = in addition to its everyday
meaning, sponge also refers to one who lives off the
generosity of others,1 which is how Bessus kept body
and soul together before the war, as Bessus notes.
then? Come, unbuckle; quick!

_Bes._ My lord!

_Bac._ Unbuckle, I say, and give it me; or, as I live, thy head will ache extremely.

_Bes._ It is a pretty hilt; and if your lordship take an affection to it, with all my heart I present it to you, for a new-year's gift.

_Gives him his sword, with a knife in the scabbard._

_Bac._ I thank you very heartily. Sweet captain, farewell.

_Bes._ One word more: I beseech your lordship to render me my knife again.

_Bac._ Marry, by all means, captain. _[Gives him back the knife.]_ Cherish yourself with it, and eat hard, good captain; we cannot tell whether we shall have any more such. Adieu, dear captain.

[Exit.]

_Bes._ I will make better use of this than of my sword. A _base spirit_ has this _vantage_ of a brave one; it _keeps always_ at a _stay_, nothing brings it down, not beating. I remember I promised the king, in a great audience, that I would make my backbiters eat my sword to a knife: How to get another sword I know not; nor know any means left for me to maintain my _credit_ but impudence: Therefore I will _outraswer_ him and all his followers, that this is all that's left uneaten of my sword.

[Exit.]
for one to address the other in an insulting fashion would bring dishonour on himself only, and "showeth himself rather to have mind to fight with the pen than with the sword."

Saviolo's dueling code is so absurdly detailed as to almost appear to be a parody rather than a guidebook in earnest. He categorizes and discusses at great length, for example, the different types of slanders, or lies, a man may tell another (conditional lies, the lie in general - of which there are two kinds, "the one having respect to the person, and the other to the injury" - the lie in particular, and foolish lies), and he further hopes to instruct his audience with such hoary sentences as this:

"This man whosoever he be saith, that with reason they may be refuseth, doth charge him that brought them, and he who saith that they may not be refused in reason, chargeth him that refuseth to fight with them, and therefore the task being given as well on the affirmative as negative, the lie may accordingly be given, and no more the affirmative than the negative may it be wrested or sent back, being both in the one and in the other manner given for repulse, and not of any injury."

**ACT III, SCENE III.**

*An Apartment in the Palace.*

*Enter Mardonius.*

1

*Mar.* I'll move the king; he is most strangely altered: I guess the cause, I fear, too right; Heaven has

2

Some secret end in't, and 'tis a scourge, no question,

3

Justly laid upon him. He has followed me

4

Through twenty rooms; and ever, when I stay

5

To wait his command, he blushes like a girl,

6

And looks upon me as if modesty

7

Kept in his business; so turns away from me;

8

But, if I go on, he follows me again.

9

*Enter Arbaces.*

10

See, here he is. I do not use this, yet,

11

I know not how, I cannot choose but weep

12

To see him: his very enemies, I think,

13

Whose wounds have bred his fame, if they should see

14

Him now, would find tears in their eyes.

15

*Arb.* I cannot utter it! Why should I keep

16

A breast to harbour thoughts I dare not speak?

17

Darkness is in my bosom; and there lie

18

A thousand thoughts that cannot brook the light. —

19

How wilt thou vex me, when this deed is done,

20

Conscience, that art afraid to let me name it!

21

*Mar.* How do you, sir?

22

*Arb.* Why very well, Mardonius. How dost thou do?

Arb. I hope thou art; for, to be plain with thee,
Thou art in hell else. Secret scorching flames,
That far transcend earthly material fires,
Are crept into me, and there is no cure:
Is it not strange, Mardonius, there's no cure?

Mar. Sir, either I mistake, or there is something hid,
That you would utter to me.

Arb. So there is:
But yet I cannot do it.

Mar. Out with it, sir.
If it be dangerous, I will not shrink
To do you service. I shall not esteem
My life a weightier matter than indeed
It is. I know 'tis subject to more chances
Than it has hours; and I were better lose it
In my king's cause than with an ague or
A fall, or, sleeping, to a thief; as all these
Are probable enough. Let me but know
What I shall do for you.

Arb. It will not out. Were you with Gobrias,
And bade him give my sister all content
The place affords, and give her leave to send
And speak to whom she please?

Mar. Yes, sir, I was.

Arb. And did you to Bacurius say as much
About Tigranes?

Mar. Yes.

Arb. That's all my business.

Mar. Oh, say not so!
You had an answer of all this before:
Besides, I think this business might be uttered
More carelessly.

Arb. Come, thou shalt have it out. I do beseech thee,
By all the love thou hast professed to me,
To see my sister from me.

Mar. Well; and what?

Arb. That's all.

Mar. That's strange: Shall I say nothing to her?

Arb. Not a word:
But, if thou lov'st me, find some subtle way
To make her understand by signs.

*M Mar.* But what shall I make her understand?

*Arb.* Oh, Mardonius, for that I must be pardoned.

*M Mar.* You may; but I can only see her then.

*Arb.* 'Tis true.

[Gives him a ring.]

Bear her this ring, then; and, on more advice,
Thou shalt speak to her: tell her I do love
My kindred all; wilt thou?

*M Mar.* Is there no more?

*Arb.* Oh, yes! And her the best;
Better than any brother loves his sister:
That's all.

*M Mar.* Methinks, this need not have been
Delivered with such caution. I'll do it.

*Arb.* There is more yet: wilt thou be faithful to me?

*M Mar.* Sir, if I take upon me to deliver it,
After I hear it, I'll pass through fire to do it.

*Arb.* I love her better than a brother ought.
Dost thou conceive me?

*M Mar.* I hope I do not, sir.

*Arb.* No! thou art dull. Kneel down before her,
And never rise again, till she will love me.

*M Mar.* Why, I think she does.

*Arb.* But, better than she does
Another way; as wives love husbands.

*M Mar.* Why, I think there are few wives that love their husbands
Better than she does you.

*Arb.* Thou wilt not understand me. Is it fit
This should be uttered plainly? Take it, then,
Naked as it is; I would desire her love
Lasciviously, lewdly, incestuously,
To do a sin that needs must damn us both,
And thee too. Dost thou understand me now?

*M Mar.* Yes; there's your ring again.

= ie. if Arbaces can't even explain to Mardonius what message he should impart to Panthea, then he is not going to be able to accomplish anything other than to look at her.

= understand.

120: Mardonius starts to sense - uncomfortably - what Arbaces is getting at; he will equivocate until Arbaces finally is forced to spell it out for him.

= appropriate.

= explicitly.
[Gives back the ring.] What have I done
Dishonestly in my whole life, name it,
That you should put so base a business to me?

**Arb.** Didst thou not tell me thou wouldst do it?

**Mar.** Yes, if I undertook it: but if all
My hairs were lives, I would not be engaged
In such a cause to save my last life.

**Arb.** Oh, Guilt, how poor and weak a thing art thou!
This man that is my servant, whom my breath
Might blow about the world, might beat me here,
Having his cause; whilst I, pressed down with sin,
Could not resist him. – Dear, Mardonius,
It was a motion misbeeming man,
And I am sorry for it.

**Mar.** Pray God you may be so! You must
understand, nothing that you can utter can remove
my love and service from my prince; but otherwise,
I think I shall not love you more, for you are sinful;
and, if you do this crime, you ought to have no laws,
for, after this, it will be great injustice in you to
punish any offender for any crime. For myself, I
find my heart too big: I feel I have not patience to
look on, whilst you run these forbidden courses.
*Means* I have none but your favour; and I am rather
glad that I shall lose 'em both together than keep 'em with such conditions. I shall find a dwelling
amongst some people, where, though our garments
perhaps be coarser, we shall be richer far within,
and harbour no such vices in 'em. God preserve
you, and mend you!

**Arb.** Mardonius! Stay, Mardonius! for, though
My present state requires nothing but knaves
To be about me, such as are prepared
For every wicked act, yet who does know
But that my loathed fate may turn about,
And I have use for honest men again?
I hope I may: I prithee, leave me not.

*Enter Bessus.*

**Bes.** Where is the king?

**Mar.** There.

**Bes.** An't please your majesty, there's the knife.

**Arb.** What knife?

**Bes.** The sword is eaten.

**Mar.** Away, you fool! the king is serious,
And cannot now admit your vanities.
Bes. Vanities! I'm no honest man, if my enemies have not brought it to this. What, do you think I lie?

Arb. No, no; 'tis well, Bessus; tis very well: I'm glad on't.

Mar. If your enemies brought it to this, your enemies are cutters. Come, leave the king.

Bes. Why, may not valour approach him?

Mar. Yes; but he has affairs. Depart, or I shall be something unmannerly with you.

Arb. No; let him stay, Mardonius, let him stay; I have occasions with him very weighty, And I can spare you now.

Mar. Sir?

Arb. Why, I can spare you now.

Bes. Mardonius, give way to the state affairs.

Mar. Indeed, you are fitter for his present purpose.

[Exit.]

Arb. Bessus, I should employ thee: wilt thou do't?

Bes. Do't for you? By this air, I will do anything, without exception, be it a good, bad, or indifferent thing.

Arb. Do not swear.

Bes. By this light, but I will; anything whatsoever.

Arb. But I shall name a thing Thy conscience will not suffer thee to do.

Bes. I would fain hear that thing.

Arb. Why, I would have thee get my sister for me, − Thou understand'st me, − in a wicked manner.

Bes. Oh, you would have a bout with her? I'll do't, I'll do't, i'faith.

Arb. Wilt thou? dost thou make no more on't?

Bes. More? No. Why, is there anything else? If there be, tell me; it shall be done too.

= ie. eaten his sword till it was reduced to a knife.

= those who repair and deal in cutting utensils.

= ie. a courageous man; valour is an appellation, meaning himself.

= no doubt meaning "the king (he) has other business right now"; but he could refer to valour, in which case the meaning of the line is a little more insulting, and interesting: "but valour has other business to attend to than to interact with you."

= business. = important.

228ff: Beaumont's comic genius is apparent in the ensuing dialogue; the juxtaposition of the king's hopelessly tragic situation with the inane responses of the clueless Bessus results in one of the classic conversations of the entire Elizabethan canon.

= an oath: "I swear".

= Bessus swears again anyway!

= allow, permit.

= like to

= literally "have a round with", as in a fencing match; but also, as here, a common euphemism for "sleep with".

250-1: Bessus doesn't even blink at the proposal!
Arb. Hast thou no greater sense of such a sin?
Thou art too wicked for my company,
Though I have hell within me, and may'st yet
Corrupt me further. Pray thee, answer me,
How do I show to thee after this motion?

Bes. Why, your majesty looks as well, in my opinion,
as ever you did since you were born.

Arb. But thou appear'st to me, after thy grant.
The ugliest, loathed, détestable thing,
That I have ever met with. Thou hast eyes
Like flames of sulphur, which, methinks, do dart
Infection on me; and thou hast a mouth
Enough to take me in, where there do stand
Four rows of iron teeth.

Bes. I feel no such thing; but 'tis no matter how I look;
I'll do your business as well as they that look better:
and when this is dispatched, if you have a mind to
your mother, tell me, and you shall see I'll set it hard.

Arb. My mother? − Heaven forgive me, to hear this!
I am inspired with horror. − Now I hate thee
Worse than my sin; which, if I could come by,
Should suffer death eternal, ne'er to rise
In any breast again. Know, I will die
Languishing mad, as I resolve I shall,
Ere I will deal by such an instrument.
Thou art too sinful to employ in this:
Out of the world, away!

[Beats him.]

Bes. What do you mean, sir?

Arb. Hung round with curses, take thy fearful flight
Into the deserts; where, 'mongst all the monsters,
If thou find'st one so beastly as thyself,
Thou shalt be held as innocent!

Bes. Good sir −

Arb. If there were no such instruments as thou,
We kings could never act such wicked deeds.
Seek out a man that mocks divinity,
That breaks each precept both of God and man,
And nature's too, and does it without lust,
Merely because it is a law and good,
And live with him; for him thou can'st not spoil;
Away, I say! −

[Exit Bessus.]
I will not do this sin:
I'll press it here, till it do break my breast.
it heaves to get out; but thou art a sin,
And, spite of torture, I will keep thee in.

= "despite the resulting feeling of torture", or "even if I were tortured".

[Exit.]
ACT IV.

SCENE I.
A Room in the House of Gobrias.

Enter Gobrias, Panthea, and Spaonia.

Entering Characters: Spaonia is visiting with Panthea.

1  Gob. Have you written, madam?

2  Pan. Yes, good Gobrias.

4  Gob. And with a kindness and such winning words

As may provoke him, at one instant, feel

His double fault; your wrong, and his own rashness?

8  Pan. I have sent words enough, if words may win him

From his displeasure; and such words, I hope,

As shall gain much upon his goodness, Gobrias.

12  Yet fearing, since they are many, and a woman's,

A poor belief may follow, I have woven

As many truths within 'em to speak for me,

That, if he be but gracious and receive 'em –

16  Gob. Good lady, be not fearful: though he should not

Give you your present end in this, believe it,

You shall feel, if your virtue can induce you

To labour out this tempest (which, I know,

Is but a poor proof against your patience),

All those contents your spirit will arrive at,

Newer and sweeter to you. Your royal brother,

When he shall once collect himself, and see

How far he has been asunder from himself,

What a mere stranger to his golden temper,

Must, from those roots of virtue, never dying,

Though somewhat stopt with humour, shoot again

Into a thousand glories, bearing his fair branches

High as our hopes can look at, straight as justice,

Loaden with ripe contents. He loves you dearly:

I know it, and I hope I need not further

Win you to understand it.

36  Pan. I believe it:

Howskiwer, I am sure I love him dearly;

So dearly, that if anything I write

= Panthea, we remember, is being held in confinement in Gobrias' home.

= immediately.

= ie. "the injury he has done to you".

= prevail.

12-14: "yet I worry that, because I have written so much, and because the words are those of a mere woman, my letter will not be credited, so I have incorporated as many maxims of eternal truths that are innately wise as I could"; they (line 12) refers to her "words".

= immediate goal (ie. release from confinement).

20: labour out = ride out, survive.

20-21: (which…patience) = the sense is that this troubling period (ie. this tempest) cannot defeat Panthea’s patience.

proof against = armor or protection against.

= joys, pleasures; the stress in conduct is on the second syllable.

= come to his senses, gather himself together; the OED’s earliest recorded published entry for the still-common phrase to collect oneself is from Shakespeare's The Winter Tale, believed to be performed in 1610 or so.

= separated (contrasted with collect).

= complete, absolute.

27-31: note the extended botanical metaphor.

28: stopt = plugged up, blocked or prevented from appearing.

humour = eccentric fancies.

= satisfactions, pleasures; content was sometimes used in the plural form like this, even into the early 18th century.

= ie. "have to persuade you".
For my enlarging should beget his anger,
Heaven be a witness with me, and my faith,
I had rather live entombèd here.

Gob. You shall not feel a worse stroke than your grief;
I am sorry 'tis so sharp. I kiss your hand,
And this night will deliver this true story
With this hand to your brother.

Pan. Peace go with you!
You are a good man. —

[Exit Gobrias.]

My Spaonia,
Why are you ever sad thus?

Spa. Oh, dear lady!

Pan. Prithee, discover not a way to sadness,
Nearer than I have in me. Our two sorrows
Work, like two eager hawks, who shall get highest.
How shall I lessen thine? for mine, I fear,
Is easier known than cured.

Spa. Heaven comfort both,
And give yours happy ends, however I
Fall in my stubborn fortunes.

Pan. This but teaches
How to be more familiar with our sorrows,
That are too much our masters. Good Spaonia,
How shall I do you service?

Spa. Noblest lady,
You make me more a slave still to your goodness,
And only live to purchase thanks to pay you;
For that is all the business of my life now.
I will be bold, since you will have it so,
To ask a noble favour of you.

Pan. Speak it; 'tis yours; for from so sweet a virtue
No ill demand has issue.

Spa. Then, ever-virtuous, let me beg your will
In helping me to see the prince Tigranes,
With whom I am equal prisoner, if not more.

Pan. Reserve me to a greater end, Spaonia;
Bacurius cannot want so much good manners
As to deny your gentle visitation,
Though you came only with your own command.

Spa. I know they will deny me, gracious madam,
Being a stranger, and so little famed,
So utter empty of those excellencies

= "which serves the purpose of freeing me from confine-
ment".

= ie. Panthea's letter to Arbaces.
= Gobrias raises or indicates his own hand here.

= "don't show me" (discover = reveal, ie. un-cover).
= ie. "more than I already have".
= "which one shall reach the greatest height."

= ie. "your sorrow a happy conclusion".
= ie. from the height of line 59.

= Bond suggests This refers to Panthea's "mood of
resignation".

= "I only".

= base.

86: ie. "this is an easy thing to grant you; you could have
asked for a more difficult favour than this."
= lack.

= "armed with no authority or permission to see him other
than your own desire."

= foreigner. = with so little renown or reputation.
93-94: So utter…authority = the idea is that the greater a
reputation or status one who asks for a favour has, the
That tame authority: but in you, sweet lady,
All these are natural; beside, a power
Derived immediate from your royal brother,
Whose least word in you may command the kingdom.

**Pan.** More than my word, Spaconia, you shall carry,
For fear it fail you.

**Spa.** Dare you trust a token?
Madam, I fear I am grown too bold a beggar.

**Pan.** You are a pretty one; and, trust me, lady,
It joys me I shall do a good to you,
Though to myself I never shall be happy.
Here, take this ring, and from me as a token

[**Gives ring.**]

Deliver it: I think they will not stay you.
So, all your own desires go with you, lady!

**Spa.** And sweet peace to your grace!

**Pan.** Pray Heaven, I find it!

[**Exeunt.**]

**ACT IV, SCENE II.**
A Prison.

**Tigranes is discovered.**

Tigr. Fool that I am! I have undone myself,
And with my own hand turned my fortune round.

That was a fair one: I have childishly
Played with my hope so long, till I have broke it,
And now too late I mourn for't. Oh, Spaconia,
Thou hast found an even way to thy revenge now!
Why didst thou follow me, like a faint shadow,
To wither my desires? But, wretched fool,
Why did I plant thee 'twixt the sun and me,
To make me freeze thus? why did I prefer her

more likely it is to be granted; and Spaconia is without any such quality in Iberia.
= "who have any control over those in office or power" (Dyce, quoting another earlier editor).
95-97: **a power...kingdom** = Spaconia understands that as Panthea is the sister of the king, any request she makes would be particularly difficult to refuse.

= an Elizabethan convention was for a person of authority or power to give a personal item, such as a piece of jewelry, to a messenger, who would then in delivering the message to a third party present the "token" as visual evidence of the authenticity of the message, thus granting authority to the third party to do whatever is requested.

110: when Spaconia presents Panthea's ring to Bacurius, her request to visit with Tigranes will more likely be granted.
= "prevent you (from seeing Tigranes)".

**The Setting:** Dyce notes the setting actually likely takes place in a room in Bacurius' house, where Tigranes is confined.
= a curtain at the back of the stage is drawn open to reveal (discover) Tigranes.
= ruined.
= the allusion is to personified Fortune's wheel, which she spins around, arbitrarily raising and lowering people's circumstances and states.
= ie. his fortune, that was already agreeable.
= "toyed with my expectations (hope)".

= ie. "wretched fool that I am".
9: the image is that of an eclipse; Spaconia (thee) stands between Tigranes and Panthea (the sun), the woman he loves.
= recommend Spaconia? (for employment in Panthea's household).
To the fair princess? Oh, thou fool, thou fool,
Thou family of fools, live like a slave still,
And in thee bear thine own hell and thy torment!
Thou hast deserved it. Couldst thou find no lady,
But she that has thy hopes, to put her to,
And hazard all thy peace? none to abuse,
But she that loved thee ever, poor Spaconia?
And so much loved thee, that in honesty
And honour thou art bound to meet her virtues!

She, that forgot the greatness of her griefs,
And miseries that must follow such mad passions,
Endless and wild as woman’s! she, that for thee,
And with thee, left her liberty, her name,
And country! You have paid me, equal Heavens,
And sent my own rod to correct me with,
A woman! For inconstancy I’ll suffer;
Lay it on, justice, till my soul melt in me,
For my unmanly, beastly, sudden doting
Upon a new face, after all my oaths,
Many, and strange ones.
I feel my old fire flame again, and burn
So strong and violent, that, should I see her
Again, the grief and that would kill me.

Enter Bacurius and Spaconia.

Bac. Lady,
Your token I acknowledge; you may pass:
There is the king.

Spa. I thank your lordship for it.

[Exit Bacurius.]

Tigr. She comes, she comes! Shame hide me ever from her!
Would I were buried, or so far removed,
Light might not find me out! I dare not see her.

Spa. Nay, never hide yourself! For, were you hid
Where earth hides all her riches, near her centre,
My wrongs, without more day, would light me to you:

I must speak ere I die. Were all your greatness
Doubled upon you, you’re a perjured man,
And only mighty in your wickedness
Of wronging women. Thou art false, false prince!

I live to see him: poor Spaconia lives

1: meaning himself again.

= place Spaconia in a difficult or awkward situation.¹
= risk.

18-19: Tigranes recognizes that in order to preserve his own honour, he must remain loyal to Spaconia - it would be shameful if he were to allow her to behave in a more worthy manner than he does.

20-22: She...woman's = a much argued-about passage: perhaps, "she, who has forgotten her griefs and miseries which must necessarily follow on the heels of such intense or crazy emotions, which are as endless and wild as they are in women."²

= repaid. = just.¹
= literature of the period makes frequent reference to the metaphorical rod of punishment (correction).
= disloyalty or unfaithfulness (to Spaconia).

= strong.²
= ie. Spaconia.

38: Bacurius recognizes, and defers to, the permission granted by Panthea to Spaconia to see the prisoner Tigranes, as evidenced by Panthea's ring.

ie. "all its gold, silver, and other precious metals".

51: without more day = "without even needing the light of the sun (to show me where you are)".

light me = "show me the way".

52-53: Were all...perjured man = "even if you were twice as great a man as you are, you are still a perjurer (for having broken your vow to me)".

= Spaconia dramatically changes pronouns: with "thee", she signals her contempt for Tigranes.
To tell thee thou art false, and then no more:

She lives to tell thee, thou art more inconstant
Than all ill women ever were together;

Thy faith as firm as raging overflows,

That no bank can command; and as lasting

As boys’ gay bubbles, blown i’ the air and broken:

The wind is fixed to thee; and sooner shall
The beaten mariner with his shrill whistle
Calm the loud murmurs of the troubled main.

And strike it smooth again, than thy soul fall
To have peace in love with any: thou art all
That all good men must hate; and if thy story
Shall tell succeeding ages what thou wert,
Oh, let it spare me in it, lest true lovers,
In pity of my wrongs, burn thy black legend,
And with their curses shake thy sleeping ashes!

Tigr. Oh! oh!

Spa. The Destinies, I hope, have pointed out
Our ends alike, that thou may’st die for love,
Though not for me; for, this assure thyself,
The princess hates thee deadly, and will sooner
Be won to marry with a bull, and safer,

Than such a beast as thou art. – I have struck,

I fear too deep; beshrew me for it! – Sir,
This sorrow works me, like a cunning friendship,

Into the same piece with it. – He’s ashamed:
Alas, I have been too rugged! – Dear my lord,
I am sorry I have spoken anything,
Indeed I am, that may add more restraint
To that too much you have. Good sir, be pleased
To think it was a fault of love, not malice;
And do as I will do, – forgive it, prince:
I do, and can, forgive the greatest sins
To me you can repent of. Pray believe me.

Tigr. Oh, my Spaonia! oh, thou virtuous woman!

Spa. No more; the king, sir.
Enter Arbaces, Bacurius, and Mardonius.

Arb. Have you been careful of our noble prisoner, That he want nothing fitting for his greatness?

Bac. I hope his grace will quit me for my care, sir.

Arb. 'Tis well. − Royal Tigranes, health!

Tigr. More than the strictness of this place can give, sir, I offer back again to great Arbaces.

Arb. We thank you, worthy prince; and pray excuse us; We have not seen you since your being here. I hope your noble usage has been equal With your own person: your imprisonment, If it be any, I dare say, is easy; And shall not out-last two days.

Tigr. I thank you. My usage here has been the same it was, Worthy a royal conqueror. For my restraint, It came unkindly, because much unlooked-for; But I must bear it.

Arb. What lady's that, Bacurius?

Bac. One of the princess' women, sir.

Arb. I feared it.

Bac. To speak with the prince Tigranes.

Arb. From whom, Bacurius?

Bac. From the princess, sir.

Arb. I knew I had seen her.

Mar. [Aside] His fit begins to take him now again: 'tis a strange fever, and 'twill shake us all anon, I fear. Would he were well cured of this raging folly! Give me the wars, where men are mad, and may talk what they list, and held the bravest fellows; this pelting, prattling peace is good for nothing; drinking's a virtue to't.

Arb. I see there's truth in no man, nor obedience, But for his own ends. Why did you let her in?
Bac. It was your own command to bar none from him: Besides, the princess sent her ring, sir, for my warrant.

Arb. A token to Tigranes, did she not?

Sirrah, tell truth.

Bac. I do not use to lie, sir; 'Tis no way I eat or live by; and I think This is no token, sir.

Mar. [Aside] This combat has undone him: if he had been well beaten, he had been temperate. I shall never see him handsome again, till he have a horseman's staff poked through his shoulders, or an arm broke with a bullet.

Arb. I am trifled with.

Bac. Sir?

Arb. I know it, as I know thee to be false.


Bac. You never knew me so, sir, I dare speak it; And durst a worse man tell me, though my better –

Mar. [Aside] Tis well said, by my soul.

Arb. Sirrah, you answer as you had no life.

Bac. That I fear, sir, to lose nobly.

Arb. I say, sir, once again –

Bac. You may say what you please, sir:


Arb. I will, sir; and say openly, This woman carries letters: by my life, I know she carries letters; this woman does it.

Mar. 'Would Bessus were here, to take her aside and search her! he would quickly tell you what she

= as an authorization or sanction for Bacurius' admitting Spaconia.

152: Arbaces believes that Panthea had given Spaconia the ring to give to Tigranes as a token of Panthea's admiration for him, and not just as a sign of her grant for Spaconia to visit him.

= this form of address, usually reserved for servants, can also be used, as it is here, to express authority, and signals Arbaces' annoyance at Bacurius.

= keepsake, ie. symbol of love.

= Mardonius refers not to the war with Armenia, but rather Arbaces single combat with Tigranes: he believes the king's victory there led him, perhaps out of some misplaced hubris, to lose all his sense of proportion.

= gracious in behavior.¹ = spear or lance.²

= being toyed with.

= explosion or sudden blow;¹ Mardonius is reacting to the king's calling Bacurius a liar.

174: Bacurius' blood is up: "if a man who was less than a king, but still of higher rank than me, had talked this way to me..."; the remaining thought, that he would ask such a person to let him defend his honour in a duel, is implied. durst = dared.

176: Mardonius greatly admires Bacurius' refusing to back down in the face of the king's wrath.

178: in so brazenly risking execution, Bacurius speaks as if he places no value on his own life.

180: Bacurius finishes the king's sentence: ie. "(I have no life) that I fear to lose in a noble cause."

186: Mardonius wishes he had the courage to say what he was thinking; his asides here are delightful.

189: This woman carries letters = Arbaces asserts Spaconia is carrying love-letters between Panthea and Tigranes. by my life = an oath, "I swear".

192-4: Mardonius appears to be trying to defuse the rising tension with his rough soldier's humor;² but what
carried, sir.

Arb. I have found it out, this woman carries letters.

Mar. [Aside] If this hold, 'twill be an ill world for bawds, chambermaids, and post-boys. I thank Heaven,

I have none but his letters-patents, things of his own inditing.

Arb. Prince, this cunning cannot do't.

Tigr. Do what, sir? I reach you not.

Arb. It shall not serve your turn, prince.

Tigr. Serve my turn, sir?

Arb. Ay, sir, it shall not serve your turn.

Tigr. Be plainer, good sir.

Arb. This woman shall carry no more letters back to your love, Panthea; by Heaven she shall not; I say she shall not.

Mar. [Aside] This would make a saint swear like a soldier, and a soldier like Termagant.

Tigr. This beats me more, king, than the blows you gave me.

Arb. Take 'em away both, and together let 'em be prisoners, strictly and closely kept; or, sirrah, your life shall answer it; and let nobody speak with 'em hereafter.

Tigr. Well, I am subject to you, And must endure these passions.

Spa. [Aside] This is th' imprisonment I have looked for always, And the dear place I would choose.

[Exeunt Bacurius, Tigranes, and Spaonia.]

Mar. Sir, have you done well now?

Arb. Dare you reprove it?
Mar. No.

Arb. You must be crossing me.

Mar. I have no letters, sir, to anger you,
But a dry sonnet of my corporal’s,
To an old sutler's wife; and that I'll burn, sir.

'Tis like to prove a fine age for the ignorant.

Arb. How darest thou so often forfeit thy life?
Thou knowest it is in my power to take it.

Mar. Yes, and I know you wo' not; or, if you do.
You'll miss it quickly.

Arb. Why?

Mar. Who shall then tell you of these childish follies,
When I am dead? who shall put to his power
To draw those virtues out of a flood of humours,
Where they are drowned, and make 'em shine again?

No, cut my head off:
Then you may talk, and be believed and grow worse,
And have your too self-glorious temper rocked
Into a dead sleep, and the kingdom with you,
Till foreign swords be in your throats and slaughter
Be everywhere about you, like your flatterers.
Do, kill me.

Arb. Prithee, be tamer, good Mardonius.
Thou know'st I love thee; nay, I honour thee;

Believe it, good old soldier, I am thine;
But I am racked clean from myself; bear with me;
Wo't thou bear with me, good Mardonius?

Enter Gobrias.

Mar. There comes a good man; love him too; he's temperate;
You may live to have need of such a virtue;
Rage is not still in fashion.

Arb. Welcome, good Gobrias.

Gob. My service and this letter to your grace.

[Gives letter.]
Arb. From whom?

Gob. From the rich mine of virtue and all beauty,
Your mournful sister.

Arb. She is in prison, Gobrias, is she not?

Gob. [Kneels]
She is, sir, till your pleasure do enlarge her,
Which on my knees I beg. Oh, 'tis not fit
That all the sweetness of the world in one,
The youth and virtue that would tame wild tigers,
And wilder people that have known no manners,
Should live thus cloistered up! For your love's sake,
If there be any in that noble heart
To her, a wretched lady, and forlorn,
Or for her love to you, which is as much
As nature and obedience ever gave,
Have pity on her beauties!

Arb. Prithee, stand up. 'Tis true, she is too fair,
[Gobrias rises.]
And all these commendations but her own:
Would thou hadst never so commended her,
Or I ne'er lived to have heard it, Gobrias!
If thou but knew'st the wrong her beauty does her,
Thou wouldst, in pity of her, be a liar.
Thy ignorance has drawn me, wretched man,
Whither myself, nor thou, canst well tell. Oh my fate!
I think she loves me, but I fear another
Is deeper in her heart: how think'st thou, Gobrias?

Gob. I do beseech your grace, believe it not;
For, let me perish, if it be not false.
Good sir, read her letter.

Mar. [Aside] This love, or what a devil it is, I know not, begets more mischief than a wake. I had rather
be well beaten, starved, or lousy, than live within the air on't. He, that had seen this brave fellow charge through a grove of pikes but t'other day, and look upon him now, will ne'er believe his eyes again. If he continue thus but two days more, a tailor may beat him with one hand tied behind him.

Arb. Alas, she would be at liberty;
And there be thousand reasons, Gobrias,
Thousands, that will deny it;
Which if she knew, she would contentedly
Be where she is, and bless her virtue for it,
And me, though she were closer: she would, Gobrias;

= ie. confined in Gobrias' house.
= free.
= ie. contained in a single person.
302: ie. barbarians, or any uncivilized peoples.
= ie. any love.

= beautiful.
315-6: Arbaces blames Gobrias' letters praising Panthea's beauty and virtue, which he had sent to the king while he was away at war, for his predicament.
= ie. dispraise rather than praise Panthea's obvious good looks.
= in which direction, to where.
= ie. another love or person.

= "even if she were confined more closely than she is"?
Good man, indeed she would.

Gob. Then, good sir, for her satisfactiön,
Send for her, and with reason let her know
Why she must live thus from you.

Arb. I will. Go, bring her to me.

[Exeunt.]

ACT IV, SCENE III.
A Room in the House of Bessus.

Enter Bessus, two Sword-Men, and a Boy.

Bes. You're very welcome, both! − Some stools there,
boy; and reach a table. − Gentlemen o' th' sword, pray
sit, without more compliment. − Begone, child.

[Exit Boy.]

I have been curious in the searching of you, because I
understand you wise and valiant persons.

1st Sw.M. We understand ourselves, sir.

Bes. Nay, gentlemen, and my dear friends o' the sword,

No compliment, I pray; but to the case

I hang upon, which, in few, is my honour.

2nd Sw.M. You cannot hang too much, sir, for your
honour.
But to your case: be wise, and speak [the] truth.

Bes. My first doubt is, my beating by my prince.

1st Sw.M. Stay there a little, sir; Do you doubt a beating?
Or have you had a beating by your prince?

Entering Characters: the two Sword-Men are professional
instructors whom Bessus has hired to advise him regarding
how to handle his disputes with those who would challenge
him to a duel. The Boy is Bessus' servant.

= chairs were rarely used in Elizabethan times; most every
person sat on a stool.

= "no need for formalities here."

= fastidious or careful.

12ff: though this farcical scene between the foolish Sword-
Men and Bessus could appropriately enough be presented in
prose, it has been suggested that it was instead deliberately,
and humorously, written in verse as to suggest a "mock-
heroic" dialogue. The verse, however, has a fair amount of
irregularity to it; see Postscript 3 at the end of the play on
the problems of the verse lines of Bessus and the Sword-
Men.

= in this conversation, case (or cause) refers to the grounds
of a quarrel between gentlemen; the complex code of
dueling is satirized wonderfully in this scene.

= ie. in few words.

= the 2nd Sword-Man humorously uses hang in its
"gallows" sense.

= dread. = "my being beat up by my king."

21: Stay there a little = "stop there a moment".

21-22: Do you…prince = The Sword-Man asks for a
clarification: does Bessus worry about a future beating, or
has he already been beaten?

doubt = dread.

The humour of the entire scene will be based on the
absurd parsing, by the Sword-Men, of the exact conditions
which must be present which would require a beating victim
to challenge his tormenter. As a point of comparison, and for
24 *Bes.* Gentlemen o' th' sword, my prince has beaten me.

26 *2nd Sw.M.* Brother, what think you of this case?

28 *1st Sw.M.* If he have beaten him, the case is clear.

30 *2nd Sw.M.* If he have beaten him, I grant the case. – But how? – we cannot be too subtle in this business. – I say, but how?

34 *Bes.* Even with his royal hand.

36 *1st Sw.M.* Was it a blow of love or indignation?

38 *Bes.* 'Twas twenty blows of indignation, gentlemen, Besides two blows o' th' face.

40 *2nd Sw.M.* Those two blows o' th' face have made a new case on't;
The rest were but an honourable rudeness.

44 *1st Sw.M.* Two blows o' th' face, and given by a worse man,

I must confess, as we sword-men say, had turned
The business: mark me, brother, by a worse man;
But, being by his prince, had they been ten,
And those ten drawn ten teeth, besides the hazard
Of his nose for ever, all these had been but favours.
This is my flat opinion, which I'll die in.

48 *2nd Sw.M.* The king may do much, captain, believe it;
For had he cracked your skull through, like a bottle,
Or broke a rib or two with tossing of you,
Yet you had lost no honour. This is strange,
You may imagine, but this is truth now, captain.

52 *Bes.* I will be glad to embrace it, gentlemen.
But how far may he strike me?

56 *1st Sw.M.* There's another,
A new cause rising from the time and distance,
In which I will deliver my opinion.
He may strike, beat, or cause to be beaten;
For these are natural to man:
Your prince, I say, may beat you so far forth
As his dominion reacheth; that's for the distance;
The time, ten miles a-day, I take it.

60 *2nd Sw.M.* Brother, you err, 'tis fifteen miles a-day;
His stage is ten, his beatings are fifteen.

64 *Bes.* 'Tis of the longest, but we subjects must –

68 *1st Sw.M.* Be subject to it: you are wise and virtuous.

---

a little context regarding physical assaults and duels, see the note at the end of this scene.

= they are not necessarily siblings; brother could mean simply "fellow sword-man" or "brother in arms".

= ie. there are clear grounds for a challenge.

= "how did he beat you?" = careful, particular.¹

41-42: the absurd argument here is that the twenty blows did not impinge on Bessus' honour, and therefore need not require him to challenge the king to preserve that honour; but the two blows to the face did.

44f: the 1st Sword-Man disagrees with the 2nd; the king has every right to beat his subjects; only if the two blows had come from anyone other than the king would they be grounds for a challenge.

= expressions of goodwill.¹

= unqualified. = ie. in defending or sticking to this opinion.

52: the 2nd Sword-Man agrees with his buddy.

58: Bessus is of course relieved that, his honour not being impinged upon by Arbaces' beating, he does not to have to challenge the king.

= "so much for".

= ie. distance.
Bes. Obedience ever makes that noble use on't,
To which I dedicate my beaten body.
I must trouble you a little further, gentlemen o' th' sword.

2nd Sw.M. No trouble at all to us, sir, if we may
Profit your understanding: we are bound,
By virtue of our calling, to utter our opinions
Shortly and discretely.

Bes. My sorest business is, I have been kicked.

2nd Sw.M. How far, sir?

Bes. Not to flatter myself in it, all over:
My sword lost, but not forcèd; for discretely
I rendered it, to save that imputation.

1st Sw.M. It showed discretion, the best part of valour.

2nd Sw.M. Brother, this is a pretty case; pray, ponder on't:
Our friend here has been kicked.

1st Sw.M. He has so, brother.

2nd Sw.M. Sorely, he says. Now, had he sit down here
Upon the mere kick, 't had been cowardly.

1st Sw.M. I think, it had been cowardly indeed.

2nd Sw.M. But our friend has redeemed it, in delivering
His sword without compulsion; and that man
That took it of him, I pronounce a weak one,
And his kicks nullities.

He should have kicked him after the delivery,
Which is the confirmation of a coward.

1st Sw.M. Brother, I take it you mistake the question;
For say, that I were kicked.

2nd Sw.M. I must not say so;
Nor I must not hear it spoke by th' tongue of man:
You kicked, dear brother! you are merry.

1st Sw.M. But put the case, I were kicked.

2nd Sw.M. Let them put it,
That are things weary of their lives, and know
Not honour! Put the case, you were kicked!

1st Sw.M. I do not say I was kicked.

2nd Sw.M. Nor no silly creature that wears his head
Without a case, his soul in a skin-coat:
You kicked, dear brother!

91: not forced = Bessus' sword was not forced from him -
he had, at least in outward show, voluntarily handed
his sword over to Bacurius (even though he was really
under duress).

discretely (line 91) = separately, ie. not connected in
any way to his kicking.¹

94: this proverbial sentiment originated in Shakespeare's
Henry IV, Part I: "The better part of valour is discretion."
= worthy.¹

¹: the 2nd Sword-Man's equivocation leads to an
absurd argument between the two advisors.
= kidding.
= suppose.
= simple or weak.¹
= unprotected;⁷ the sense of this speech is to suggest
that no one who was vulnerable to a severe beating
would dare kick his companion.⁷
Bes. Nay, gentlemen, let us do what we shall do, Truly and honestly! Good sirs, to the question.

1st Sw.M. Why, then, I say, suppose your boy kicked, captain.

2nd Sw.M. The boy may be supposed, he’s liable: But, kick my brother!

1st Sw.M. A foolish, forward zeal, sir, in my friend, But to the boy: suppose the boy were kicked.

Bes. I do suppose it.

1st Sw.M. Has your boy a sword?

Bes. Surely, no; I pray, suppose a sword too.

1st Sw.M. I do suppose it. You grant, your boy was kicked then.

2nd Sw.M. By no means, captain; let it be supposed still; The word "grant" makes not for us.

1st Sw.M. I say, this must be granted.

2nd Sw.M. This must be granted, brother!

1st Sw.M. Ay, this must be granted.

2nd Sw.M. Still the must!

1st Sw.M. I say, this must be granted.

2nd Sw.M. Give me the must again! brother, you palter.

1st Sw.M. I will not hear you, wasp.

2nd Sw.M. Brother, I say, you palter: the must three times together!

1st Sw.M. I wear as sharp steel as another man, And my fox bites as deep: musted, my dear brother! But to the case again.

Bes. Nay, look you, gentlemen –

2nd Sw.M. In a word, I ha’ done.

1st Sw.M. A tall man, but intemperate; ’tis great pity. Once more, suppose the boy kicked.

2nd Sw.M. Forward.

1st Sw.M. And, being thoroughly kicked, laughs at the kicker.

2nd Sw.M. So much for us. Proceed.

= was kicked; in order to appease his fellow, the 1st Sword-Man changes the hypothetical scenario: but now the 2nd Sword-Man misunderstands his colleague to mean he was kicked by the Boy.

= likely to do so.

140: the 1st Sword-Man apologizes to Bessus (Sir) for his friend’s hypersensitivity and aggressive misunderstanding.

= "let's suppose he had".

152: the brothers are chopping logic; "I'm not granting that he was actually kicked, only supposing he was."

156: the 2nd Sword-Man repeats his colleague's words out of disbelief; now he objects to his using the word must.

= equivocate.

= the 1st Sword-Man implies his companion is acting like a persistent, petty jerk.

= common term for the ancient English broadsword.

= "I am done arguing".

= brave man, i.e. referring to his associate.

181: "fine, continue."

= common alternative for thoroughly.
1st Sw.M. And in this beaten scorn, as I may call it,
Delivers up his weapon; where lies the error?

Bes. It lies ’t the beating, sir: I found it four days since.

2nd Sw.M. The error, and a sore one, as I take it,
Lies in the thing kicking.

Bes. I understand that well; ’tis sore indeed, sir.

1st Sw.M. That is, according to the man that did it.

2nd Sw.M. There springs a new branch: whose was the
foot?

Bes. A lord’s.

1st Sw.M. The case is mighty; but, had it been two lords,
And both had kicked you, if you laughed, ’tis clear.

Bes. I did laugh; but how will that help me, gentlemen?

2nd Sw.M. Yes, it shall help you, if you laughed aloud.

Bes. As loud as a kicked man could laugh, I laughed, sir.

1st Sw.M. My reason now: the valiant man is known
By suffering and contemning; you have contemning

Enough of both, and you are valiant.

2nd Sw.M. If he be sure he has been kicked enough;
For that brave sufferance you speak of, brother,
Consists not in a beating and away,
But in a cudgelled body, from eighteen

To eight and thirty; in a head rebuked
With pots of all size, daggers, stools, and bed-staves;
This shows a valiant man.

Bes. Then I am valiant, as valiant as the proudest;
For these are all familiar things to me;
Familiar as my sleep or want of money;
All my whole body’s but one bruise with beating;
I think I have been cudgelled with all nations,
And almost all religions.

2nd Sw.M. Embrace him, brother! this man is valiant;
I know it by myself, he’s valiant.

1st Sw.M. Captain, thou art a valiant gentleman;
Abide upon’t, a very valiant man.

Bes. My equal friends o’ th’ sword, I must request
Your hands to this.

187-8: the 1st Sword-Man has presented, in the hypothetical case of the Boy being beaten and then turning over his sword, exactly what happened between Bessus and Bacurius.

= ago.

= severe.²

= Bessus puns on sore.

= ie. line of argument.

= ie. then the case is clear.

213: contemming = scorning.

213-4: you have...valiant = ie. "by suffering the kicking, and then showing scorn by laughing at it, you have proved you are valiant, ie. your honour has been preserved.”

= suffering.

219-220: from eighteen...thirty = the ages when such a beating would be most resented by the recipient.³

= ie. struck.

= "wooden pins in the side of the bedstead for holding the bed-clothes in position" (Bond).

= lack.

= beaten.

237-8: I must...to this = "let's shake on this".

= depend.³
2nd Sw.M. Tis fit it should be.

Bes. [To boy within.] Boy, Get me some wine, and pen and ink, within. – Am I clear, gentlemen?

1st Sw.M. Sir, when the world has taken notice what We have done, make much of your body; for I'll pawn My steel, men will be cover of their legs Hereafter.

Bes. I must request you go along, and testify to the lord Bacurius, Whose foot has struck me, how you find my case.

2nd Sw.M. We will; and tell that lord he must be ruled, Or there be those abroad will rule his lordship. [Exeunt.]

ACT IV, SCENE IV.

An Apartment in the Palace.

Enter on one side Arbaces, on the other Gobrias and Panthea.

Gob. Sir, here's the princess.

Arb. Leave us, then, alone; For the main cause of her imprisonment Must not be heard by any but herself. – [Exit Gobrias.]

You're welcome, sister; – and I would to Heaven I could so bid you by another name! – If you above love not such sins as these, Circle my heart with thoughts as cold as snow, To quench these rising flames that harbour here.

= the sense is "in the clear", or "free of any further obligation in this matter."

= more reserved, ie. people will be more careful about who they go around kicking from now on!

251-3: Bessus requests the Sword-Men go with him to Bacurius and explain what they have discussed; Bessus is relieved that he is not required to challenge or fight with him.

= ie. governed by this decision.

256: a threat to Bacurius is implied.

The Dueling Code and Challenges, Part 2: in addition to articulating rules for dealing with slanders, Vincentio Saviolo, in his 1594 treatise *Honor and Honorable Quarrels*, also explains how potential duelists should develop their cause in the case of a battery.

If person A strikes B, B must accuse A of injuring him; A must respond that B is lying, and B, to back up his accusation, is the one who must issue the challenge. However, if B does not deny beating A, then there is no cause for a challenge (because a duel should never be offered for purposes of revenge) and B should seek damages in law.

We can compare this to the situation described in the note at the end of Act II.ii, in which A, having made a charge against B (which B calls a lie), must be the one to challenge; in other words, one must be accused of lying in order to challenge his adversary.

Entering Characters: Gobrias has convinced Arbaces to meet Panthea to explain the reason for her imprisonment.

9f: and I would…: the rest of the speech may be an aside.

= Arbaces asks God, or the gods, for help, sort of: "if you disapprove of incest, then remove the love I have for my sister from my heart."
Pan. Sir, does it please you I shall speak?

Arb. Please me!

Ay, more than all the art of music can,
Thy speech doth please me; for it ever sounds
As thou brought'st joyfull, unexpected news:
And yet it is not fit thou shouldest be heard;
I prithee, think so.

Pan. Be it so; I will.
I am the first that ever had a wrong
So far from being fit to have redress,

That 'twas unfit to hear it: I will back
To prison, rather than disquiet you,
And wait till it be fit.

Arb. No, do not go;
For I will hear thee with a serious thought:
I have collected all that's man about me
Together strongly, and I am resolved
To hear thee largely: but I do beseech thee,
Do not come nearer to me, for there is
Something in that, that will undo us both.

Pan. Alas, sir, am I venom?

Arb. Yes, to me;
Though, of thyself, I think thee to be in
As equal a degree of heat or cold

As nature can make; yet, as unsound men
Convert the sweetness and the nourishing'st meats
Into diseases, so shall I, distempered,
Do thee: I prithee, draw no nearer to me.

Pan. Sir, this is that I would; I am of late
Shut from the world; and why it should be thus
Is all I wish to know.
Arb. Why, credit me,
Panthea, credit me, that am thy brother,
Thy loving brother, that there is a cause
Sufficient, yet unfit for thee to know,
That might undo thee everlastingly,
Only to hear. Wilt thou but credit this?
By Heaven, tis true; believe it, if thou canst.

Pan. Children and fools are ever credulous,
And I am both I think, for I believe,
If you dissemble, be it on your head!
I'll back unto my prison. Yet, methinks,
I might be kept in some place where you are;
For in myself I find, I know not what
To call it, but it is a great desire
To see you often.

Arb. Fie, you come in a step; what do you mean?
Dear sister, do not so! Alas, Panthea;
Where am you would you be? why, that's the cause
You are imprisoned, that you may not be
Where I am.

Pan. Then I must endure it, sir.
Heaven keep you!

Arb. Nay, you shall hear the cause in short, Panthea;
And, when thou hear'st it, thou wilt blush for me,
And hang thy head down, like a violet
Full of the morning's dew. There is a way
To gain thy freedom; but 'tis such a one
As puts thee in worse bondage, and I know
Thou wouldst encounter fire, and make a proof
Whether the gods have care of innocence,
Rather than follow it. Know, I have lost,
The only difference betwixt man and beast,
My reason.

Pan. Heaven forbid!

Arb. Nay, it is gone;
And I am left as far without a bound
As the wild ocean, that obeys the winds;
Each sudden passion throws me where it lists,
And overwomls all that oppose my will.
I have beheld thee with a lustful eye;
My heart is set on wickedness, to act
Such sins with thee, as I have been afraid
To think of. If thou dar'st consent to this,
(Which, I beseech thee, do not,) thou mayst gain
Thy liberty, and yield me a content.
If not, thy dwelling must be dark and close,
Where I may never see thee: for Heaven knows,
Thy sight at some time will enforce my madness
To make a start e'en to thy ravishing,
Now spit upon me, and call all reproaches
Thou canst devise together, and at once
Hurl 'em against me; for I am a sickness,
As killing as the plague, ready to seize thee.

Pan. Far be it from me to revile the king!
But it is true that I shall rather choose
To search out death, that else would search out me,
And in a grave sleep with my innocence,
Than welcome such a sin. It is my fate;
To these cross accidents I was ordained,
And must have patience; and, but that my eyes
Have more of woman in 'em than my heart,
I would not weep. Peace enter you again!

Arb. Farewell; and, good Panthea, pray for me,
(Thy prayers are pure,) that I may find a death,
However soon, before my passions grow,
That they forget what I desire is sin;
For thither they are tending. If that happen,
Then I shall force thee, though thou wert a virgin
By vow to Heaven, and shall pull a heap
Of strange yet un-invented sin upon me.

Pan. Sir, I will pray for you; yet you shall know
It is a sullen fate that governs us:
For I could wish, as heartily as you,
I were no sister to you; I should then
Embrace our lawful love, sooner than health.

Arb. Couldst thou affect me, then?
Pan. So perfectly,
That, as it is, I ne'er shall sway my heart
To like another.

Arb. Then, I curse my birth.
Must this be added to my miseries,
That thou art willing too? Is there no stop
To our full happiness but these mere sounds,
Brother and sister?

Pan. There is nothing else:
But these, alas! will separate us more
Than twenty worlds betwixt us!

Arb. I have lived
To conquer men, and now am overthrown
Only by words, brother and sister. Where
Have those words dwelling? I will find 'em out,
And utterly destroy 'em; but they are

= "seeing you". = reinforce, ie. magnify or intensify.
= ie. "my sexually assault/raping you."
= otherwise.
= adverse fortunes.
= except for the fact that.
= typical Elizabethan expression for crying.
= read as "so that".
= in that direction.
129: force thee = "take you (sexually) by force".
129-130: though thou...Heaven = "even if you had
taken a vow to Heaven to remain celibate", as if she had
entered a convent.
= Heaven, unusually, is disyllabic here.
= never before thought of or seen.

= ie. love.
= obstacle.
= ie. words alone.
= defeated.
Not to be grasped: let ‘em be men or beasts,  
And I will cut ‘em from the earth; or towns,  
And I will raze ‘em, and then blow ‘em up:  
Let ‘em be seas, and I will drink ‘em off,  
And yet have unquenched fire left in my breast;  
Let ‘em be anything but merely voice.

Pan. But ‘tis not in the power of any force  
Or policy to conquer them.

Arb. Panthea,  
What shall we do? shall we stand firmly here,  
And gaze our eyes out?

Pan. Would I could do so!  
But I shall weep out mine.

Arb. Accursèd man,  
Thou bought’st thy reason at too dear a rate;  
For thou hast all thy actions bounded in  
With curious rules, when every beast is free:  
What is there that acknowledges a kindred  
But wretched man? Who ever saw the bull  
Fearfully leave the heifer that he liked,  
Because they had one dam?

Pan. Sir, I disturb you  
And myself too; ’twere better I were gone.

Arb. I will not be so foolish as I was;  
Stay, we will love just as becomes our births,  
No otherwise: brothers and sisters may  
Walk hand in hand together; so will we.  
Come nearer: Is there any hurt in this?

Pan. I hope not.

Arb. Faith, there is none at all:  
And tell me truly now, is there not one  
You love above me?

Pan. No, by Heaven.

Arb. Why, yet  
You sent unto Tigranes, sister.

Pan. True,  
But for another: for the truth –

Arb. No more:  
I’ll credit thee; I know thou canst not lie,  
Thou art all truth.

Pan. But is there nothing else  
That we may do, but only walk? Methinks  
Brothers and sisters lawfully may kiss.
Arb. And so they may, Panthea; so will we;
And kiss again too: we were scrupulous
And foolish, but we will be so no more.

Pan. If you have any mercy, let me go
To prison, to my death, to anything:
I feel a sin growing upon my blood,
Worse than all these, hotter, I fear, than yours.

Arb. That is impossible: what should we do?

Pan. Fly, sir, for Heaven's sake.

Arb. So we must: away!
Sin grows upon us more by this delay.

[Exeunt severally.]

Incest and the Law in England: Historically, the ecclesiastical courts handled cases involving sex between blood relatives. A 1650 law passed by Parliament made incest a capital offense, but the law appears to have been enforced rarely, if at all. The crime of incest was not again addressed by any modern statute in England until 1908.
ACT V.

SCENE I.

Before the Palace.

Enter Mardonius and Lygones.

Mar. Sir, the king has seen your commission, and believes it; And freely, by this warrant, gives you power To visit prince Tigranes, your noble master.

Lyg. I thank his grace, and kiss his hand.

Mar. But is the main of all your business Ended in this?

Lyg. I have another, but a worse: I am ashamed: it is a business −

Mar. You seem a worthy person; and a stranger I am sure you are: you may employ me. If you please, without your purse; such offices Should ever be their own rewards.

Lyg. I am bound to your nobleness.

Mar. I may have need of you, and then this courtesy, If it be any, is not ill bestowed. But may I civilly desire the rest? I shall not be a hurter, if no helper.

Lyg. Sir, you shall know I have lost a foolish daughter, And with her all my patience: pilfered away

By a mean captain of your king's.

Mar. Stay there, sir: If he have reached the noble worth of captain, He may well claim a worthy gentlewoman, Though she were yours and noble.

Lyg. I grant all that too. But this wretched fellow Reaches no further than the empty name That serves to feed him: were he valiant, Or had but in him any noble nature, That might hereafter promise him a good man, My cares were so much lighter, and my grave A span yet from me.

Mar. I confess, such fellows Be in all royal camps, and have and must be,
To make the sin of coward more detested
In the mean soldier, that with such a foil

Sets off much valour. By description,
I should now guess him to you; it was Bessus,
I dare almost with confidence pronounce it.

Lyg. Tis such a scurvy name as Bessus;
And, now I think, 'tis he.

Mar. Captain do you call him?
Believe me, sir, you have a misery
Too mighty for your age: a pox upon him!
For that must be the end of all his service.
Your daughter was not mad, sir?

Lyg. No; 'would she had been!
The fault had had more credit. I would do something.

Mar. I would fain counsel you, but to what I know not.
He's so below a beating, that the women
Find him not worthy of their distaves; and

To hang him were to cast away a rope.
He's such an airy, thin, unbodied coward,
That no revenge can catch him.
I'll tell you, sir, and tell you truth: this rascal
Fears neither God nor man; has been so beaten,
Sufferance has made him wainscot; he has had,
Since he was first a slave.
At least three hundred daggers set in's head,
As little boys do new knives in hot meat;
There's not a rib in's body, o’ my conscience,
That has not been thrice broken with dry beating;
And now his sides look like two wicker targets.

Every way bended:
Children will shortly take him for a wall,
And set their stone-bows in his forehead. He
Is of so base a sense, I cannot in
A week imagine what should be done to him.

Lyg. Sure, I have committed some great sin,
That this strange fellow should be made my rod:
I would see him; but I shall have no patience.

50: when Bessus, in the play's first scene, left Armenia
with Spaconia to place her in Panthea's household,
Ligones had assumed Bessus was actually taking
Spaconia - his daughter - for himself.

54-55: you have...your age = you are too old to have to
endure a grief such as this."

57: Mardonius assumes that, if she was not taken by force,
that Lygones' daughter must have been insane if she
voluntarily eloped with Bessus.

= "it would have been better if she were (mad)!

60: "this error in judgment would be more understandable.
I wish there was something I could do."

= like to.
= unworthy of.
= distaffs - instruments for weaving - which Mardonius
imagines could be used as weapons, if it were worth it,
to beat Bessus off with.
= throw away, ie. waste.

= ie. beaten so often.
= suffering, = oak, ie. tough or hard as oak.

= honestly, truly.
= ie. severe.

76: two wicker targets = two small round shields made of
wicker.

76-78: Bond interprets: Bessus' sides are so battered
with beatings that they have taken on the uneven
surface of wicker or a roughly-built wall.

= "soon mistake him".

79: ie. use his head like a wall on which to rest their cross-
bows as they prepare to shoot them.
stone-bows (line 79) = cross-bows used to shoot
stones.

= "certainly, I must have".
= instrument of punishment.
= "I would like to meet him."
Mar. 'Tis no great matter, if you have not. If a lamming of him, or such a toy, may do you pleasure, sir, he has it for you; and I'll help you to him: 'tis no news to him to have a leg broken, or a shoulder out, with being turn'd o' the stones like a tansy. Draw not your sword, if you love it; for, on my conscience, his head will break it; we use him i' the wars like a ram, to shake a wall withal. Here comes the very person of him; do as you shall find your temper; I must leave you: but if you do not break him like a biscuit, you're much to blame, sir.

[Exit.]

Enter Bessus and the two Sword-Men.

Lyg. Is your name Bessus?

Bes. Men call me Captain Bessus.

Lyg. Then, Captain Bessus, you are a rank rascal, without more exordiums, a dirty frozen slave! And with the favour of your friends here, I will beat you.

2nd Sw.M. Pray, use your pleasure, sir; you seem to be a gentleman.

Lyg. [Beats Bessus.] Thus, Captain Bessus, thus! [Kicks him, &c.]

Thus twinge your nose, thus kick you, and thus tread you.

Bes. I do beseech you, yield your cause, sir, quickly.

Lyg. Indeed, I should have told you that first.

Bes. I take it so.

1st Sw.M. Captain, he should, indeed; he is mistaken.

Lyg. Sir, you shall have it quickly, and more beating: You have stolen away a lady, Captain Coward,
And such a one −

[Beats him.]

_Bes._ Hold, I beseech you, hold, sir!
I never yet stole any living thing
That had a tooth about it.

_Lyg._ Sir, I know you dare _lie_.

_Bes._ With none but summer-whores, upon my life, sir:
My means and _manners_ never could attempt
Above a hedge or _haycock_.

_Lyg._ Sirrah, that _quits_ not me. Where is this lady?
Do that you do not use to do, tell truth,
Or, by my hand, I'll beat your captain's brains out,
Wash 'em and put 'em in again, that will I.

_Bes._ There was a lady, sir, I must confess,
Once in my charge; the prince Tigranes gave her
To my guard, for her safety. How I _used_ her
She may herself report; she's with the prince now.
I did but wait upon her like a _groom_,
Which she will testify, I am sure; if not,
My brains are at your service, when you please, sir,
And glad I have 'em for you.

_Lyg._ This is most likely. Sir, I ask your pardon
And am sorry I was so intemperate.

_Bes._ Well, I can ask no more. You would think it
strange now, to have me beat you at first sight.

_Lyg._ Indeed I would; but I know your goodness can
forget twenty beatings: you must forgive me.

_Bes._ Yes; there's my hand. Go where you will, I shall
think you a valiant fellow, for all this.

_Lyg._ [Aside] My daughter is a whore;
I feel it now too _sensible_; yet I will see her;
Discharge myself of being father to her,
And then back to my country, and there die. −
Farewell, captain.

_Bes._ Farewell, sir, farewell; commend me to the
gentlewoman, I pray.
180  
1st Sw.M. How now, captain? bear up, man.

182  
Bes. Gentlemen o' the sword, your hands once more; 
I have been kicked again; but the foolish fellow is penitent, he asked me mercy, and my honour's safe.

186  
2nd Sw.M. We knew that, or the foolish fellow had better have kicked his grandsire.

190  
Bes. Confirm, confirm, I pray.

192  
1st Sw.M. There be our hands again.

194  
2nd Sw.M. Now let him come, and say he was not sorry, and he sleeps for it.

196  
Bes. Alas, good, ignorant old man! let him go, let him go: these courses will undo him.

198  
[Exeunt.]

ACT V, SCENE II.
A Prison.

Enter Lygones and Bacurius.

Bac. My lord, your authority is good, and I am glad it is so; for my consent would never hinder you from seeing your own king: I am a minister, but not a governor of this state. Yonder is your king; I'll leave you.

[Exit.]

Enter Tigranes and Spaconia.

Lyg. There he is,
Indeed, and with him my disloyal child.

Tigr. I do perceive my fault so much, that yet,
Methinks, thou shouldst not have forgiven me.

Lyg. Health to your majesty!

Tigr. What, good Lygones!
Welcome: what business brought thee hither?

Lyg. Several Businesses: my public business will appear By this;

[Gives a paper.]

I have a message to deliver,
Which, if it please you so to authorize,
Is an embassage from the Armenian state
Unto Arbaces for your liberty:
The offer's there set down; please you to read it.
There is no alteration happened since I came thence?

None, sir; all is as it was.

And all our friends are well?

All very well.

None, sir; all is as it was.

And all our friends are well?

All very well.

[Tigranes reads.]

Though I have done nothing but what was good, I dare not see my father: it was fault enough not to acquaint him with that good.

Madam, I should have seen you.

Oh, good sir, forgive me!

Forgive you! why, I am no kin to you, am I?

Should it be measured by my mean deserts. Indeed you are not.

Thou couldst prate unhappily ere thou couldst go; would thou couldst do as well! And how does your custom hold out here?

Sir?

Are you in private still, or how?

What do you mean?

Do you take money? Are you come to sell sin yet? perhaps I can help you to liberal clients: or has not the king cast you off yet? Oh, thou vild creature, whose best commendation is, that thou art a young whore! I would thy mother had lived to see this; or, rather, that I had died ere I had seen it! Why didst not make me acquainted when thou wert first resolved to be a whore? I would have seen thy hot lust satisfied more privately: I would have kept a dancer, and a whole consort of musicians, in my own house, only to fiddle thee.

Sir, I was never whore.

If thou couldst not say so much for thyself, thou shouldst be carted.

Lygones, I have read it, and I like it; you shall deliver it.

Well, sir, I will: but I have private business with you.
Tigr. Speak; what is't?

Lyg. How has my age deserved so ill of you, That you can pick no strumpets i' the land, But out of my breed?

Tigr. Strumpets, good Lygones!

Lyg. Yes; and I wish to have you know, I scorn To get a whore for any prince alive; And yet scorn will not help: methinks, my daughter Might have been spared; there were enow besides.

Tigr. May I not prosper but she's innocent As morning light, for me! and, I dare swear, For all the world.

Lyg. Why is she with you, then? Can she wait on you better than your man? Has she a gift in plucking off your stockings? Can she make caudles well, or cut your corns? Why do you keep her with you? For a queen, I know, you do contemn her; so should I; And every subject else think much at it.

Tigr. Let 'em think much; but 'tis more firm than earth. Thou seest thy queen there.

Lyg. Then have I made a fair hand: I called her whore.

Tigr. Get you about your business to Arbaces; Now you talk idly.

Lyg. Yes, sir, I will go. And shall she be a queen? She had more wit Than her old father, when she ran away: Shall she be queen? now, by my troth, 'tis fine. I'll dance out of all measure at her wedding; Shall I not, sir?

Tigr. Yes, marry, shalt thou.

Lyg. I'll make these withered kexes bear my body Two hours together above ground.

Tigr. Nay, go; My business requires haste.

Lyg. Good Heaven preserve you!

= ie. "own family?"

= beget = ie. king.

= ie. "enough other women for you to choose from".

enow = plural form of "enough".

108f: Lygones, sarcastic, asks "if Spaconia is not your whore, then what is she, your domestic help?"

= a type of warm, medicinal gruel.²

112-3: For a queen...her = "I know you do not think her good enough to be your queen"; however, the homonym for queen, "quean", means "whore", so that Lygones' meaning is double.

= scorn.

119f: Lygones' unenthusiastic speech seems to suggest he is unsure himself what to make out of what he has heard.

121-3: but if...whore = a monarch's advisor always prefers for the monarch to marry from only the highest ranks of society, such as a princess from another country.

125-6: Tigranes recognizes the lack of purpose in Lygones' speech.

= cleverness.

= moderation; but measure also refers to a stately dance.

= a mild oath, derived from the Virgin Mary, but he is also obviously punning on wedding.

= dry stalks,³ ie. his legs
You are an excellent king.

Farewell, good father.

Farewell, sweet virtuous daughter.

I never was so joyful in my life, that I remember: shall she be a queen? Now I perceive a man may weep for joy; I had thought they had lied that said so.

Farewell, good father.

Lygones finally appears to believe and accept his good fortune, but his words come across, at least to this editor, as oddly unconvincing.

Farewell, sweet virtuous daughter.

at a superficial level, Lygones finally appears to believe and accept his good fortune, but his words come across, at least to this editor, as oddly unconvincing.

That I remember: shall she be a queen? Now I perceive a man may weep for joy; I had thought they had lied that said so.

Come, my dear love.

I never was so joyful in my life, that I remember: shall she be a queen? Now I perceive a man may weep for joy; I had thought they had lied that said so.

Come, my dear love.

Now I perceive a man may weep for joy; I had thought they had lied that said so.

But you may see another, may alter that again.

Urge it no more: I have made up a new strong constancy, not to be shook with eyes. I know I have the passions of a man; but if I meet with any subject that should hold my eyes more firmly than is fit, I'll think of thee, and run away from it: let that suffice.

ACT V. SCENE III.

A Room in the house of Bacurius.

Enter Bacurius and Servant.

Three gentlemen without, to speak with me?

Yes, sir.

Let them come in.

Enter Bessus and the two Sword-Men.

They are entered, sir, already.

Now, fellows, your business? – Are these the gentlemen?

My lord, I have made bold to bring these gentlemen, my friends o’ the sword, along with me.

I am afraid you’ll fight, then.

My good lord, I will not; your lordship is mistaken; fear not, lord.

Sir, I am sorry for’t.

I ask no more in honour. – Gentlemen, you hear my lord is sorry.

148: at a superficial level, Lygones finally appears to believe and accept his good fortune, but his words come across, at least to this editor, as oddly unconvincing.

158-9: Spaconia is worried that if Tigranes sees Panthea again (she refers to her rival indirectly as another), he will change his mind about her once again.

24: Bessus takes Bacurius’ ironic apology as a general one for his beating Bessus; his honour satisfied, he no longer
Bac. Not that I have
Beaten you, but beaten one that will be beaten;
One whose dull body will require a lamming.^^^3
As surfeits do the diet, spring and fall.

Now, to your sword-men:
What come they for, good captain Stockfish?

Bes. It seems your lordship has forgot my name.

Bac. No, nor your nature neither; though they are
Things fitter, I must confess, for any thing
Than my remembrance, or any honest man's:
What shall these billets do? be piled up in my
woodyard?

Bes. Your lordship holds your mirth still, Heaven
continue it!
But, for these gentlemen, they come —

Bac. To swear
You are a coward? Spare your book; I do believe it.

Bes. Your lordship still draws wide; they come to
vouch, under their valiant hands, I am no coward.

Bac. That would be a show, indeed, worth seeing.

Sirrah, be wise and take money for this motion; travel
with it; and where the name of Bessus has been
known, or a good coward stirring, 'twill yield more
than a tilting; this will prove more beneficial to you,
if you be thrifty, than your captainship, and more
natural. — Men of most valiant hands, is this true?

2nd Sw.M. It is so, most renowned.

Bac. 'Tis somewhat strange.

1st Sw.M. Lord, it is strange, yet true.
We have examined, from your lordship's foot there
To this man's head, the nature of the beatings;
And we do find his honour is come off
Clean and sufficient: this, as our swords shall help us!

has to meet him in a duel! Bacurius, however, hurries to
correct Bessus' misimpression: his apology was not for
having beaten Bessus, but rather for the fact that Bessus has
challenged him, and he is sorry he must beat him yet again.

= beating.^^^3
= just as occasional overindulgence in food (surfeit)
requires a succeeding period of scaling back.^^^1
= a dried cod, often beaten before cooking;^^^1 hence its use
to refer to Bessus.
= Bessus is ever willing to give others the benefit of the
doubt!
36-38: though they...man's = Bessus' name and nature are
not worth recollecting for Bacurius, nor for any honest
man for that matter.
= thick pieces of wood, as used for fire-wood;^^1 Bacurius is
referring to the Sword-Men.

= "no need to get your Bible (to swear on)".
= is off the mark; a metaphor from archery.

51f: Bacurius praises the entertainment value of the two
Sword-Men avowing that Bessus is not a coward, and
he recommends that they take their show on the road
and make money off of it.
52: Sirrah = a form of address used to express an assump-
tion of authority, and with it a bit of contempt.
take = charge.
motion = puppet show.

= "make you more money".
= jousting tournament.
= realistic, ie. conforming with Bessus' nature.^^^1
Bac. You are much bound to your bilbo-men;
I am glad you're straight again, captain. 'Twere good
You would think on some way to gratify them:

They have undergone a labour for you, Bessus,
Would have puzzled Hercules with all his valour.

2nd Sw.M. Your lordship must understand we are no men
Of the law, that take pay for our opinions;
It is sufficient we have cleared our friend.

Bac. Yet there is something due, which I, as touched
In conscience, will discharge. — Captain, I'll pay
This rent for you.

Bes. Spare yourself, my good lord;
My brave friends aim at nothing but the virtue.

Bac. That's but a cold discharge, sir, for their pains.

2nd Sw.M. Oh, lord! my good lord!

Bac. Be not so modest; I will give you something.

Bes. They shall dine with your lordship; that's sufficient.

Bac. Something in hand the while. You rogues, you apple-squires,
Do you come hither, with your bottled valour,
Your windy froth, to limit out my beatings?

[Kicks them.]

1st Sw.M. I do beseech your lordship!

2nd Sw.M. Oh, good lord!

Bac. 'Sfoot, what a bevy of beaten slaves are here! —
Get me a cudgel, sirrah, and a tough one.

[Exit Servant.]

2nd Sw.M. More of your foot, I do beseech your lordship!

Bac. You shall, you shall, dog, and your fellow beagle.

1st Sw.M. O' this side, good my lord.

Bac. Off with your swords; for if you hurt my foot,
I'll have you flead, you rascals.

1st Sw.M. Mine's off, my lord.

2nd Sw.M. I beseech your lordship, stay a little; my strap's

= sword-men; the term, which Fletcher coined, comes from Bilboa, a Spanish city known for the manufacture there of the high-quality Spanish sword called a "bilbo".³

70-71: 'Twere good...them = "you should reward them for their good service to you"; note that Bacurius, with his use of the pronoun "you", covers his irony with only the thinnest veneer of formality.

= which would.

72-73: note the allusion to the 12 labours of Hercules.

= fee or charge;¹ Bacurius would like to give the Sword-Men their due compensation.

86: the sense of the line is, "that is not much for all their efforts."

94f: Bacurius finally takes off the gloves. apple-squires = kept men.³

= used to describe something of little or no value.¹

= by God's foot. = company (a collective term, like "flock", used often for a group of women).¹

= club or stick; Bacurius is addressing his own servant.

109ff: perhaps because they know that receiving a good beating proves one is honourable, the Sword-Men encourage Bacurius to further thrash them.

= flayed.¹

= wait a moment.
Tied to my cod-piece point: now, when you please.

[They take off their swords.]

_Bac._ Captain, these are your valiant friends; you long
For a little too?

_Bes._ I am very well, I humbly thank your lordship.

_Bac._ What's that in your pocket hurts my toe, you mongrel?
Thy buttocks cannot be so hard; out with't quickly.

_2nd Sw.M._ [Takes out a pistol.] Here 'tis, sir;
A small piece of artillery, that a gentleman,
A dear friend of your lordship's, sent me with,
To get it mended, sir; for, if you mark,
The nose is somewhat loose.

_Bac._ A friend of mine, you rascal! —
I was never wearier of doing nothing,
Than kicking these two foot-balls.

Enter Servant.

_Serv._ Here's a good cudgel, sir.

_Bac._ It comes too late; I am weary; prithee, do thou
beat them.

_2nd Sw.M._ My lord, this is foul play, i'faith, to put a
fresh man upon us: men are but men, sir.

_Bac._ That jest shall save your bones. — Captain, rally
up your rotten regiment, and begone. — I had rather
thresh than be bound to kick these rascals till they
cried, "ho!" — Bessus, you may put your hand to them
now, and then you are quit. — Farewell: as you like
this, pray visit me again; 'twill keep me in good breath.
[Exit.]

_2nd Sw.M._ H'as a devilish hard foot; I never felt the like.

_1st Sw.M._ Nor I; and yet, I am sure, I ha’ felt a hundred.

_2nd Sw.M._ If he kick thus i' the dog-days, he will be
dry-foundered. —

What cure now, captain, besides oil of bays?
used to treat the hooves of horses, tying in with dry- 
foundered in line 163.9

= that will work well enough. = ie. walk.7
= severe.
= hip.

= effective as a cure.1 = substance.
= "it has been proved", a phrase usually used to describe formulas.10

= intestines.1
= long shoes with pointed toes (called Krakows, after the 
city from which they were believed to have originated) 
were popular with the upper classes of England in the late 
14th and 15th centuries.22

ACT V, SCENE IV.
An Apartment in the Palace.

Enter Arbaces, with his sword drawn.

Arb. It is resolved: I bore it whilst I could;
I can no more. Hell, open all thy gates,
And I will thorough them: if they be shut,
I'll batter 'em, but I will find the place
Where the most damned have dwelling! Ere I end,
Amongst them all they shall not have a sin,
But I may call it mine; I must begin
With murder of my friend, and so go on
To that incestuous ravishing, and end
My life and sins with a forbidden blow
Upon myself!

Enter Mardonius.

Mar. What tragedy is near?

That hand was never wont to draw a sword,
But it cried "dead" to something.

[Exeunt.]
Arb. Mardonius,
Have you bid Gobrias come?

Mar. How do you, sir?

Arb. Well. Is he coming?

Mar. Why, sir, are you thus?
Why does your hand proclaim a lawless war
Against yourself?

Arb. Thou answer'st me one question with another:
Is Gobrias coming?

Mar. Sir, he is.

Arb. 'Tis well:
I can forbear your questions, then. Begone.

Mar. Sir, I have marked—

Arb. Mark less; it troubles you and me.

Mar. You are
More variable than you were.

Arb. It may be so.

Mar. To-day no hermit could be humbler
Than you were to us all.

Arb. And what of this?

Mar. And now you take new rage into your eyes,
As you would look us all out of the land.

Arb. I do confess it; will that satisfy?
I prithee, get thee gone.

Mar. Sir, I will speak.

Arb. Will ye?

Mar. It is my duty.
I fear you'll kill yourself: I am a subject,
And you shall do me wrong in't; 'tis my cause,
And I may speak.

Arb. Thou art not trained in sin,
It seems, Mardonius: kill myself! by Heaven,
I will not do it yet; and, when I will,
I'll tell thee; then I shall be such a creature,

That thou wilt give me leave without a word.
There is a method in man's wickedness;

27-28: Mardonius believes Arbaces is intent on killing himself.

= dispense with.¹
= noticed.

47-48: Mardonius reminds Arbaces of how mildly he had behaved when they were together earlier; *humbler* is trisyllabic: HUM-bul-er.⁷

63-65: *I am...speak* = since he is one of the king's subjects, Mardonius, who has an interest in his sovereign's health, would be harmed if the king were to kill himself; thus, he has standing to say his peace.

*cause* (line 64) = grounds for speaking.

70-71: *then 1...a word* = "when I have done the unnamable thing I have set out to do, you will gladly give me permission to kill myself."

= perhaps a variation on there being a *method to one's madness*, a phrase which originated in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (c.1600); but an early editor saw an allusion to a line from the *Satires* of the Roman poet Juvenal.
It grows up by degrees: I am not come
So high as killing of myself; there are
A hundred thousand sins 'twixt me and it,
Which I must do; I shall come to't at last,
But, take my oath, not now. Be satisfied,
And get thee hence.

Mar. I am sorry 'tis so ill.

Arb. Be sorry, then:
True sorrow is alone; grieve by thyself.

Mar. I pray you let me see your sword put up
Before I go: I'll leave you then.

What folly is this in thee? is it not
As apt to mischief as it was before?
Can I not reach it, think'st thou? These are toys
For children to be pleased with, and not men.
Now I am safe, you think: I would the book
Of Fate were here: my sword is not so sure
But I would get it out, and mangle that,
That all the Destinies should quite forget
Their fixed decrees, and haste to make us new,
For other fortunes; mine could not be worse. Wilt thou now leave me?

Mar. Heaven put into your bosom temperate thoughts!
I'll leave you, though I fear.

[Exit Mardonius.]

Arb. Go; thou art honest.

Gob. [Aside] There is the king;
Now it is ripe.

Arb. Draw near, thou guilty man,
That art the author of the loathed'st crime
Five ages have brought forth, and hear me speak:
Curses incurable, and all the evils
Man's body or his spirit can receive,
Be with thee!

Gob. Why, sir, do you curse me thus?

Arb. Why do I curse thee? If there be a man

= greater.
= ie. "I won't kill myself right now"
= ie. "away from here."
= Bond notes this phrase was proverbial; the idea of acting or being alone in one's sorrow was common in early English literature.
= replaced in its sheath.
= as able to do harm.
91-92: Arbaces suggests that Mardonius' belief, that simply putting the sword away will stop Arbaces from using it if he wants to, is childish.
93-98: I would...fortunes = briefly, Arbaces wishes he could carve up the book of Fate, so that it could be rewritten, changing his destiny.
= ie. new decrees.6
= moderate.
= that cannot be helped.
= ie. the time is ripe for Gobrias to finally reveal to the king the secret he has been hinting at having throughout the play.
= allusion to the ancient Greek idea, as described by the 8th century B.C. poet Hesiod, that humanity has passed through five ages: the golden age first, then silver, bronze, heroic, and iron; the ages describe a long-term and continuous decline in the condition of mankind.
Subtle in curses, that exceeds the rest,
His worst wish on thee! thou hast broke my heart.

_Gob._ How, sir! Have I preserved you, from a child,
From all the arrows malice or ambition
Could shoot at you, and have I this for pay?

_Arb._ Tis true, thou didst preserve me, and in that,
Wert crueller than hardened murderers
Of infants and their mothers: thou didst save me,
Only till thou hadst studied out a way
How to destroy me cunningly thyself;
This was a curious way of torturing.

_Gob._ What do you mean?

_Arb._ Thou know'st the evils thou hast done to me:
Dost thou remember all those witching letters
Thou sent'st unto me to Armenia,
Filled with the praise of my belovèd sister,
Where thou extol'dst her beauty? − what had I
To do with that? what could her beauty be
To me? − and thou didst write how well she loved me! −
Dost thou remember this? − so that I doted
Something before I saw her.

_Gob._ This is true.

_Arb._ Is it? and, when I was returned, thou know'st,
Thou didst pursue it, till thou wound'st me in
To such a strange and unbelieved affection,
As good men cannot think on.

_Gob._ This I grant;
I think I was the cause.

_Arb._ Wert thou? Nay, more.
I think thou meant'st it.

_Gob._ Sir, I hate a lie:
As I love Heaven and honesty, I did;
It was my meaning.

_Arb._ Be thine own sad judge:
A further condemnation will not need:
Prepare thyself to die.

_Gob._ Why, sir, to die?

_Arb._ Why shouldst thou live? was ever yet offender
So impudent, that had a thought of mercy
After confession of a crime like this?
Get out I cannot where thou hurl'st me in;
But I can take revenge; that's all the sweetness
Left for me.

_Gob._ [Aside] Now is the time. − Hear me but speak.
Arb. No. Yet I will be far more merciful
Than thou wert to me: thou didst steal into me
And never gav’st me warning: so much time
As I give thee now, had prevented me
For ever. Notwithstanding all thy sins,
If thou hast hope that there is yet a prayer
To save thee, turn and speak it to thyself.

Gob. Sir, you shall know your sins, before you do 'em:
If you kill me —

Arb. I will not stay then.

Gob. Know
You kill your father.

Arb. How?

Gob. You kill your father.

Arb. My father! Though I know it for a lie,
Made out of fear, to save thy stainèd life,
The very reverence of the word comes 'cross me,
And ties mine arm down.

Gob. I will tell you that
Shall heighten you again; I am thy father;
I charge thee hear me.

Arb. If it should be so,
As 'tis most false, and that I should be found
A bastard issue, the despisèd fruit
Of lawless lust, I should no more admire
All my wild passions! But another truth
Shall be wrung from thee: if I could come by
The spirit of pain, it should be poured on thee,
'Till thou allow'st thyself more full of lies
Than he that teaches thee.

Enter Arane.

Arane. Turn thee about;
I come to speak to thee, thou wicked man!
Hear me, thou tyrant!

Arb. I will turn to thee:
Hear me, thou strumpet! I have blotted out
The name of mother, as thou hast thy shame.

Arane. My shame! Thou hast less shame than any thing:

---

186-8: so much...ever = "if I had given as much time to listen to you in the past as I give you now to speak - which is to say, none at all - I would not be in the situation I am in now."
   had prevented me = "would have anticipated me", ie. "kept me out of this predicament."

189-190: a conscientious murderer would let his victim make a confession of his sins to save his soul before killing him.
= hold off.

= disgraced, guilty.¹

= entreat, order.

= Arbaces has a new worry now: if Gobrias is his father, and Arane his mother, and since Gobrias and Arane were never married, then he, Arbaces, would be illegitimate.
= wonder or be surprised at.³
= ie. a different truth altogether;⁶ Arbaces assumes Gobrias is lying.⁸

= "turn around."

= harlot, since (as Arbaces believes) she had been impregnated by Gobrias.
Why dost thou keep my daughter in a prison?  
Why dost thou call her sister, and do this?

**Arb.** Cease, thou strange impudence, and answer quickly!

[Draws his sword.]

If thou contemn'st me, this will ask an answer,  
And have it.

**Arane.** Help me, gentle Gobrias!

**Arb.** Guilt dare not help guilt: though they grow together  
In doing ill, yet at the punishment  
They sever, and each flies the noise of other.  
Think not of help; answer!

**Arane.** I will; to what?

**Arb.** To such a thing, as, if it be a truth,  
Think what a creature thou hast made thyself,  
That didst not shame to do what I must blush  
Only to ask thee. Tell me who I am,  
Whose son I am, without all circumstance;  
Be thou as hasty as my sword will be,  
If thou refusest.

**Arane.** Why, you are his son.

**Arb.** His son? Swear, swear, thou worse than woman damned!

**Arane.** By all that's good, you are his.

**Arb.** Then art thou all  
That ever was known bad. Now is the cause  
Of all my strange misfortunes come to light.  
What reverence expect'st thou from a child,  
To bring forth which thou hast offended Heaven,  
Thy husband, and the land? Adulterous witch,  
I know now why thou wouldst have poisoned me:  
I was thy lust, which thou wouldst have forgot!  
Then, wicked mother of my sins and me,  
Show me the way to the inheritance  
I have by thee, which is a spacious world  
Of impious acts, that I may soon possess it.  
Plagues rot thee as thou liv'st, and such diseases  
As use to pay lust recompense thy deed!

**Gob.** You do not know why you curse thus.

**Arb.** Too well.  
You are a pair of vipers; and behold  
The serpent you have got! There is no beast,  
But, if he knew it, has a pedigree  
As brave as mine, for they have more descents;  
And I am every way as beastly got,
As far without the compass of a law, 
As they.

Arane. You spend your rage and words in vain, 
And rail upon a guess: hear us a little.

Arb. No, I will never hear, but talk away 
My breath, and die.

Gob. Why, but you are no bastard.

Arb. How’s that?

Arane. Nor child of mine.

Arb. Still you go on 
In wonders to me.

Gob. Pray you, be more patient: 
I may bring comfort to you.

Arb. I will kneel,

[Kneels.] 

And hear with the obedience of a child. 
Good father, speak! I do acknowledge you, 
So you bring comfort.

Gob. First know, our last king, your supposèd father, 
Was old and feeble when he married her, 
And almost all the land as she, past hope 
Of issue from him.

Arb. Therefore she took leave 
To play the whore, because the king was old: 
Is this the comfort?

Arane. What will you find out 
To give me satisfaction, when you find 
How you have injured me? Let fire consume me, 
If ever I were whore!

Gob. Forbear these starts, 
Or I will leave you wedded to despair, 
As you are now. if you can find a temper, 
My breath shall be a pleasant western wind, 
That cools and blasts not.

Arb. Bring it out, good father.
I'll lie, and listen here as reverently

As to an angel: if I breathe too loud,
Tell me; for I would be as still as night.

_Gob._ Our king, I say, was old, and this our queen
Desired to bring an heir, but her yet husband,
She thought was past it; and to be dishonest.
I think she would not: if she would have been,
The truth is, she was watched so narrowly.
And had so slender opportunities,
She hardly could have been. But yet her cunning
Found out this way; she feigned herself with child,
And posts were sent in haste throughout the land,
And God was humbly thanked in every church,
That so had blessed the queen, and prayers were made
For her safe going and delivery.
She feigned now to grow bigger; and perceived
This hope of issue made her feared, and brought
A far more large respect from every man,
And saw her power increase, and was resolved,
Since she believed she could not have't indeed,
At least she would be thought to have a child.

_Arb._ Do I not hear it well? nay, I will make
No noise at all; but, pray you, to the point,
Quick as you can!

_Gob._ Now when the time was full
She should be brought to bed, I had a son
Born, which was you. This, the queen hearing of,
Moved me to let her have you: and such reasons
She showed me, as she knew would tie
My secrecy: she swore you should be king;

And, to be short, I did deliver you
Unto her, and pretended you were dead,
And in mine own house kept a funeral,
And had an empty coffin put in earth.
That night this queen feigned hastily to labour,
And by a pair of women of her own,
Which she had charmed, she made the world believe
She was delivered of you. You grew up
As the king's son, till you were six years old:
Then did the king die, and did leave to me
Protection of the realm; and, contrary
To his own expectation, left this queen
Truly with child, indeed, of the fair princess
Panthea. Then she could have torn her hair,
And did alone to me, yet durst not speak
In public, for she knew she should be found
A traitor; and her tale would have been thought Madness, or any thing rather than truth. This was the only cause why she did seek To poison you, and I to keep you safe; And this the reason why I sought to kindle Some sparks of love in you to fair Panthea, That she might get part of her right again.

Arb. And have you made an end now? Is this all? If not, I will be still till I be aged, Till all my hairs be silver. Gob. This is all.

Arb. [Rising] And is it true, say you too, madam? Arane. Yes; Heaven knows, it is most true.

Arb. Panthea, then, is not my sister? Gob. No.

Arb. But can you prove this? Gob. If you will give consent, Else who dares go about it?

Arb. Give consent? Why, I will have 'em all that know it racked To get this from 'em. – All that wait without, Come in; whate'er you be, come in, and be Partakers of my joy! –

Re-enter Mardonius, with Bessus, two Gentlemen, and Attendants.

Oh, you are welcome! Mardonius, the best news! – Nay, draw no nearer; They all shall hear it: – I am found no king.

Mar. Is that so good news?

Arb. Yes, the happiest news That e'er was heard.

Mar. Indeed, 'twere well for you If you might be a little less obeyed.
Arb. One call the queen.

Mar. Why, she is there.

Arb. The queen, Mardonius! Panthea is the queen. And I am plain Arbaces. — Go, some one; She is in Gobrias' house.

[Exit 1st Gentleman.]

Since I saw you, There are a thousand things delivered to me You little dream of.

Mar. So it should seem. — My lord, What fury's this?

Gob. Believe me, 'tis no fury; All that he says is truth.

Mar. 'Tis very strange.

Arb. Why do you keep your hats off, gentlemen? Is it to me? I swear, it must not be; Nay, trust me, in good faith, it must not be: I cannot now command you; but I pray you, For the respect you bare me when you took Me for your king, each man clap on his hat At my desire.

Mar. We will: but you are not found So mean a man but that you may be covered As well as we; may you not?

Arb. Oh, not here! You may, but not I, for here is my father In presence.

Mar. Where?

Arb. Why, there. Oh, the whole story Would be a wilderness, to lose thyself For ever. — Oh, pardon me, dear father, For all the idle and unreverent words That I have spoke in idle moods to you! — I am Arbaces; we all fellow-subjects; Nor is the queen Panthea now my sister.

Bes. Why, if you remember, fellow-subject Arbaces, I told you once she was not your sister; ay, and she looked nothing like you.

Arb. I think you did, good captain Bessus.

Bes. [Aside] Here will arise another question now amongst the sword-men, whether I be to call him to account for beating me, now he is proved no king.

Enter Lygones.
Sir, here's Lygones, the agent for the Armenian state.

Where is he? — I know your business, good Lygones.

We must have our king again, and will.

I knew that was your business. You shall have
Your king again; and have him so again
As never king was had. — Go, one of you,
And bid Bacurius bring Tigranes hither;
And bring the lady with him, that Panthea,
The queen Panthea, sent me word this morning
Was brave Tigranes' mistress.

[Exit 2nd Gentleman.]

'Tis Spaconia.

Ay, ay, Spaconia.

She is my daughter.

She is so. I could now tell any thing
I never heard. Your king shall go so home
As never man went.

Shall he go on's head?

He shall have chariots easier than air,
That I will have invented; and ne'er think
He shall pay any ransom: and thyself,
That art the messenger, shall ride before him
On a horse cut out of an entire diamond,
That shall be made to go with golden wheels,
I know not how yet.

Why, I shall be made
For ever! They belied this king with us
And said he was unkind.

And then thy daughter;
She shall have some strange thing: we'll have the kingdom
Sold utterly and put into a toy,
Which she shall wear about her carelessly,
Somewhere or other. —

Enter Panthea with 1st Gentleman.

See the virtuous queen! —
Behold the humblest subject that you have,
Kneel here before you.

[Kneels.]
Pan. Why kneel you to me,
That am your vassal?

Arb. Grant me one request.

Pan. Alas; what can I grant you? what I can I will.

Arb. That you will please to marry me,
If I can prove it lawful.

Pan. Is that all?

Arb. More willingly than I would draw this air.

Pan. [Rising] I'll kiss this hand in earnest.

Re-enter 2nd Gentleman.

2nd Gent. Sir, Tigranes
Is coming, though he made it strange at first
To see the princess any more.

Arb. The queen,
Thou mean'st. –

Enter Tigranes and Spaonia.

Oh, my Tigranes, pardon me!
Tread on my neck: I freely offer it;
And, if thou be'st so given, take revenge,
For I have injured thee.

Tigr. No; I forgive,
And rejoice more that you have found repentance,
Than I my liberty.

Arb. May'st thou be happy
In thy fair choice, for thou art temperate!
You owe no ransom to the state! Know that
I have a thousand joys to tell you of,
Which yet I dare not utter, till I pay
My thanks to Heaven for 'em. Will you go
With me, and help me? pray you, do.

Tigr. I will.

Arb. Take, then, your fair one with you: – and you, queen
Of goodness and of us, oh, give me leave
To take your arm in mine! – Come, every one
That takes delight in goodness, help to sing
Loud thanks for me, that I am proved no king.

[Exeunt.]

FINIS

Postscript 1. Bessus: Bessus is one of the most appealing comic characters in all of Elizabethan drama; he is completely aware of his own cowardice, is glad to let everyone know it, and never shows any bitterness towards those who mistreat him, or to life or fate in general. He is most willing to do...
favours for others, and his willingness to go to any length to appease and excuse the most outrageous behavior directed at him is ingeniously funny.

Postscript 2. The Mysterious Conversation of Act II: in lines 56-93 of the opening scene of Act II, Gobrias and Arane engage in a conversation in which they refer repeatedly to the secrets they were carrying, the contents of which were not revealed until the play's closing scene. Such dialogue must be, I expect, frustrating to many readers, because, frankly, it is aggravating to try to follow conversations when we don't understand what they are talking about.

It may be of interest, then, to return to what were at the time a few of the more enigmatic lines of the discussion between the Lord Protector and Queen Mother, now that the play has concluded:

(1) Line 80: Arane: "the king!" Arane is stunned that Gobrias would refer to Arbaces as king, when he really is no such thing, not being related to the previous king (Arane's husband), and thus having no claim to legitimacy.

(2) Line 88: Gobrias: "I must preserve mine own." Gobrias means he must do whatever it takes to save the life of his own son, Arbaces, even if it means crossing Arane, who has been trying to kill him.

(3) Lines 91-92: Arane: "Accursed be this over-curious brain, / That gave birth to this plot!" When Arane's husband the king died, and Arane had been pretending to be pregnant with the heir to the throne, it was she who, learning of the birth of Gobrias' son, came up with the idea of convincing Gobrias to give Arbaces to her to pretend it was her own baby.

(4) Lines 92-93: Arane: "Accursed this womb, / That did ever conceive to my disgrace!" Arane, surprisingly, actually did become pregnant by the king, this time with Panthea. We may also note that it is now clear why Gobrias put so much effort into sending letters to Arbaces while he was in Armenia telling him how beautiful Panthea had become, and why he further spent so much capital discouraging Arbaces from forcing Panthea to marry Tigranes, and describing to the king how much Panthea loved him!

Postscript 3. The Problem of Prose vs. Verse: the various old published editions of this play neatly demonstrate the difficulty that editors can have in determining whether certain speeches should be printed in verse or prose. Specifically, the issue in A King and No King revolves around how to present the speeches of Mardonius, and many of the speeches of Lygones, Bessus and the Sword-Men. The alert reader will notice, in reading the play, that those lines of these characters that are presented as verse are of noticeably lesser "quality" than those lines of verse spoken by the other, more elevated (ie. higher ranking) characters; that is, they are clearly less regular, which is generally to say they contain many more extra syllables that make the iambic rhythm somewhat herky-jerky.

So, were these lines intended to be verse or prose? The old editors come to different conclusions.

The topic is discussed, and a satisfying solution to the quandary is presented, in the Variorum Edition of the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher, published in 1904 (cited in footnote #7 at the top of this play). The editor suggests that the lines in
question of these characters are actually too suggestive of having meter, imperfect as it often is, to have been intended as prose. To put it another way, prose has no or little meter; perfect iambic pentameter has perfect rhythm; the lines in question have a good deal of meter, so they were likely intended to be printed in verse. However, they were written as less regular verse to match the "rougher", or less exalted, qualities of their speakers. The authors, in other words, deliberately wanted to give their lines a certain increased degree of "fluidity" than would be contained in pure prose, but not so much as would be contained in the speeches of the more elevated characters.

In light of this discussion, I generally have presented the lines at issue of Mardonius et al. as verse.
Like all of the writers of the era, Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher made up words when they felt like it, usually by adding prefixes and suffixes to known words, combining words, or using a word in a way not yet used before. The following is a list of words from *A King and No King* that are indicated by the OED as being either the first or only use of a given word, or, as noted, the first use with a given meaning:

- **bilbo-man**
- **bottled** (as an adjective, describing something kept in a bottle)
- **cross-arrow**
- **curdle / cruddle** (used to describe blood)
- **desertlessly**
- **dry-founded**
- **gracefulness** (meaning virtuousness)
- **kex** (applied figuratively to a person / legs))
- **lay it on** (phrase referring to inflicting blows)
- **like a tansy** (phrase)
- **over-grace**
- **rebuke** (meaning to beat)
- **squitter-breach**
- **summer-whore**
- **uninvented**
- **utter** (meaning altogether, or to the highest degree)
- **where** (indicating who one should marry)
- **woman** (meaning the qualities of a woman)
FOOTNOTES.

The footnotes in the annotations correspond as follows:
1. Oxford English Dictionary (OED) online.