ElizabethanDrama.org presents
the Annotated Popular Edition of

ARDEN of FEVERSHAM

ANONYMOUS
Earliest Extant Edition: 1592

Featuring complete and easy-to-read annotations.

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ARDEN OF FEVERSHAM

ANONYMOUS

Earliest Extant Edition: 1592

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

Thomas Arden, a Gentleman of Feversham
Alice, Wife of Arden.
Michael, Servant of Arden.
Franklin, a Friend of Arden.

Mosbie, Lover of Alice.
Susan, Mosbie's Sister, and Maid to Alice.
Clarke, a Painter.
Adam Fowle, Landlord of the Flower-de-Luce.
Bradshaw, a Goldsmith.
Dick Greene.
Richard Reede, a Sailor
Black Will, a Murderer.
Shakebag, a Murderer.
A Prentice.
A Ferryman.
Lord Cheiny, and his Men
Mayor of Feversham, and Watch

INTRODUCTION to the PLAY

The anonymous play Arden of Feversham is usually described as the earliest extant domestic tragedy, but modern readers might be more interested to categorize it as the first dramatic "true crime" story. A long and unusually complete play, Arden features a strong female lead, one Alice, who desperately wants to escape her unhappy marriage, so she may live out her life with her paramour. Alice arranges for her husband to be assassinated, but he miraculously and repeatedly avoids getting killed, even as he never once realizes he is the target of an ever-growing conspiracy to eliminate him.

OUR PLAY'S SOURCE

The text of the play is taken from Ronald Bayne's edition of Arden of Feversham of 1897, but with much original wording and spelling reinstated from the quarto of 1592.

NOTES ON THE ANNOTATIONS

Mention in the annotations of various editors refers to the notes supplied by these scholars for their editions of this play. Their works are cited fully below.

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

Footnotes in the text correspond as follows:

1. Oxford English Dictionary (OED) online.
Notes.


The story of *Arden of Feversham* is supposedly true, having taken place in 1551. It was recounted in a work entitled *The Chronicles of England*, whose first edition appeared in 1577. The *Chronicles* itself comprises a lengthy history of the British Isles, and is sometimes referred to simply as *Holinshed*, after Rafael Holinshed, one of the *Chronicles'* compilers. The *Chronicles* is most well-known for being the source for a number of Shakespeare's plays, but many of the era's dramatists drew inspiration from the *Chronicles*.

Arden's tale appears beginning on page 1703 of the first of the *Chronicle's* two volumes, in the chapter on Edward VI (reigned 1547-1553). The *Chronicles'* section on Arden begins prosaically enough – "About this tyme there was at Feuersham in Kent, a Gentleman named Arden, most cruelly murthered and slaine by the procurement of hys owne wife" – but actually goes on to devote quite a bit of space to Arden's story, almost exactly 5000 words worth.

B. A Strong Woman and No Heroes.

Like the plays of Christopher Marlowe, *Arden of Feversham* ultimately has few, if any, sympathetic characters. Even the victim of the assassination conspiracy, the eponymous husband Arden, is portrayed as an ambitious and greedy land-grabber who has no consideration for those he has dispossessed.

Arden's wife Alice is a brilliantly manipulative woman, a genuine precursor to the strong female leads, such as Lady Macbeth, of the Shakespearean era. Except when she is describing her love for her paramour Mosbie, it seems as if every line Alice speaks in the play is dissembled, designed to mislead her listeners regarding her thoughts and feelings, or to get those with whom she is conversing to do her bidding. We must be careful about believing anything Alice says!

The only honourable main character is the fictional best friend of Arden, the gentleman Franklin. But even Franklin comes off as a weak and ultimately unhelpful fellow, most notably in his facility to give the most useless and banal advice to Arden.

C. Co-Authored by Shakespeare?

A delightful surprise awaits those who are reading the officially anonymous play *Arden of Feversham* for the first time: it seems likely that several scenes were written by William Shakespeare. *The New Oxford Shakespeare* assigns Scenes 1-5 of Act III to Shakespeare, and further notes that Scene 6 may also have dripped from the pen of the Bard.

While the Oxford editors have relied on technical and computer analysis to reach their conclusions, readers who are deeply familiar with Shakespeare's language will notice the jarring change in writing style when reaching these scenes.

Specifically, the reader will note that the language becomes significantly denser, and in the lengthier speeches, we find a continuous inter-weaving of one concentrated metaphor after another. We may observe a noticeable increase in figurative language involving plants and gardening and agriculture, a true Shakespearean signature. More subtly, the
language employs more odd and new uses of familiar Elizabethan words than is found in the writing of other playwrights.

Alert readers of Arden will also notice a pair of ideas that were adopted by Shakespeare in later plays. In the first Scene of Act III, Arden recounts a troubling dream in much the same manner as does George, Duke of Clarence, in Richard III. And when the servant Susan tries and fails to wash the blood off the floor in our play's final Act, she cries, "The blood cleaveth to the ground and will not out!", just as Lady Macbeth will a decade later exclaim "Out, damned spot! out, I say!" when she finds the blood will not come off her hands.

Who is to say Shakespeare did not have Arden of Feversham in mind as he wrote these scenes for his more famous plays?

**D. Pronunciation of Alice's Name.**

It is clear from the placement of Alice's name in the verse that Alice should actually be pronounced as a single syllable, something like Al's, perhaps with a hissing s. Consider, for example, these two sample lines:

"But trust me, Alice, I take it passing ill..."
"Ay, Alice, and it was cunningly performed."

Neither line scans properly if Alice is pronounced with its modern two syllables.

**E. Iambic Pentameter Problems.**

Readers who enjoy giving their attention to the verse's iambic pentameter will note that there are many lines in Arden which do not scan very well. In some cases, a line's meter cannot be easily repaired without deleting a word or two or rewriting the line. But in many other cases, what appear to be unmetrical lines do in fact scan properly if we are aware of some common ways Elizabethan poets likely intended their words to be contracted.

1. two-syllable words with a medial v, such as Heaven, given, even and over, often should be pronounced in a single syllable, with the v omitted: Hea'n, gi'n, e'en and o'er.

2. sometimes a two-syllable word with a medial th, such as whether, should be pronounced in a single syllable, with the th omitted: whe'r. For example, the line printed as,
   But, mistress, tell her, whether I live or die,
should be scanned,
   But, mistress, tell her, whe'r I live or die…

3. the word to oftentimes should blend into the first syllable of the next word, if that next word is a multisyllable word which begins with an unstressed vowel: for example,
   To encounter all their accusatiöns.
should be scanned,
   T' encounter all their accusatiöns.

4. certain common collocations of two short words (usually a pronoun and verb) should often be contracted into a single syllable, e.g., here is to here 's.
The problem for those interested in following the meter is that the original editions of the play sometimes print the words in question in their abbreviated or contracted form, and sometimes not, even when they should, e.g., sometimes disyllable over is printed as over when the intended pronunciation is the monosyllable o'er. In other words, it is left to the reader or actor to figure out for him- or herself when the shortened forms should be used.

We struggled with the decision of whether we should, in publishing Arden, convert the words in such cases to their abbreviated forms; however, we came down on the side of not deviating from our site's overriding policy to publish plays in a form that comports as closely as possible to how they appear in the original quartos. This means that we will leave it to the reader to figure out, as a sort-of challenge, when to use the shortened versions of the words and phrases in question, and when not.

F. Scene Breaks, Settings, and Stage Directions.

Arden of Feversham was originally published in a 1592. As usual, we lean towards adhering to the wording of the earliest volume as much as possible.

Words or syllables which have been added to the original text to clarify the sense or repair the meter are surrounded by hard brackets [ ]; these additions are often adopted from the play's later editions. A director who wishes to remain truer to the original text may of course choose to omit any of the supplementary wording.

The 1592 quarto does not divide Arden into Acts and Scenes, or provide settings. We separate the play into Acts and Scenes based on the suggestions of Bayne, and adopt his suggestions for scene locations as well.

Finally, as is our normal practice, a good number of the quarto's stage directions have been modified, and others added, usually without comment, to give clarity to the action. These changes are adopted from various sources.

G. Map of Kent.

A map of the Shire of Kent, including all of the place names mentioned in our play, may be found on the Arden of Feversham page of our website.
ACT I.

SCENE I.

A Room in Arden's House.

Play setting: much of the action in the play takes place in Feversham (modern Faversham), a market town in the shire, or county, of Kent in south-east England. Feversham is about 47 miles east-south-east of London.

The events depicted in our play occurred in February 1551, and were recounted in the well-known and oft-referred-to 1577 publication, The Histories of England, commonly called the Chronicles (as we shall refer to them), or Holinshed, after one of the compilers. The Chronicles was the primary source of the story of Arden for our playwright.

The quarto of Arden of Feversham does not provide scene locations. All scene settings are adopted from Bayne.¹

Enter Arden and Franklin.

Frank. Arden, cheer up thy spirits, and droop no more!²

My gracious Lord, the Duke of Somerset,
Hath freely given to thee and to thy heirs,

By letters patents from his Majesty,
All the lands of the Abbey of Feversham.
Here are the deeds,

[He hands them.]

Franklin. By letters patents from his Majesty,
All the lands of the Abbey of Feversham.
Here are the deeds,

Sealed and subscribed with his name and the king’s:

¹ Sealed and subscribed with his name and the king’s:

² "be depressed no more!" The reason for Arden's woe will be explained in a moment.

³ = two-syllable words possessing a medial v were usually (but not always) pronounced in a single syllable, the v essentially omitted: gi’n.

⁴ = signed.

Franklin, a man of equal standing in society, has just stopped in to see his close friend Arden to deliver some good news to him. Franklin is a fictional character, introduced by our playwright to give Arden someone to confide in, and hence a clever way to let the audience know what is going through Arden's mind.

Franklin is also a follower of Edward Seymour, the first Duke of Somerset, who had served as Lord Protector for young Edward VI from 1547-9, after Edward's father Henry VIII died.

The Duke of Somerset: Duke Edward Seymour had been deposed from his position of Lord Protector (the man appointed to rule England when the monarch was a minor) in October 1549 by his political enemies, which included the Earl of Warwick, who replaced him as Lord Protector.

Briefly held in the Tower of London, Somerset was released and pardoned by mid-February, and re-admitted to the Privy Council, but in October 1551 he would be re-arrested, and finally executed on 22 January 1552.

John Dudley, 1st Earl of Warwick, served as Lord Protector until young Edward's death in 1553 at the age of 16.⁵,⁶

Frank. My gracious Lord, the Duke of Somerset, Hath freely given to thee and to thy heirs,
Read them, and leave this melancholy mood.

How Abbey Lands Ended Up in Private Hands: as part of the English Reformation, King Henry VIII dissolved many of England's Catholic institutions, including the shutting-down of a large percentage of its religious houses. The Abbey of Feversham, though small (a contemporary report indicated that in 1511, the Abbey consisted of only 13 monks and the abbot), was one victim of this wholesale disbandment. Under intense pressure from the government, the Abbey of Feversham "voluntarily" closed in 1538, handing over all of its property to the crown. Its moveable wealth was presumably appropriated by the government, and the lands were leased first to one John Wheler in May 1539. A reversion was granted in 1540 to "Sir Thomas Cheyne, warden of the Cinque Ports and treasurer of the household." Cheyne, or Cheiny, will in fact appear later as a character in our play.

The Chronicles states that Arden had "purchased" the lands of the Abbey. Bourus tells us that it was Cheyne who transferred ownership of all the Abbey lands to Arden in 1547, not the former Lord Protector.

An important consideration in our play is that all those who had held leaseholds on Abbey lands directly from the previous landlord saw their interests instantly terminated without any compensation at the moment Arden took over the property. One of our play's key characters, Richard Greene, is not going to be satisfied to have lost his lease, since he basically made his living off of that land.

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Arden. Franklin, thy love prolongs my weary life;
And but for thee how odious were this life,
That shows me nothing, but torments my soul,
And those foul objects that offend mine eyes!

Which makes me wish that, for this veil of Heaven,
The earth hung over my head and covered me.

Love-letters passed 'twixt Mosbie and my wife,
And they have privy meetings in the town:
Nay, on his finger did I spy the ring
Which at our marriage-day the priest put on.
Can any grief be half so great as this?

Frank. Comfort thyself, sweet friend; it is not strange
That women will be false and wavering.

Arden. Ay, but to dote on such a one as he
Is monstrous, Franklin, and intolerable.

Frank. Why, what is he?

Arden. A botcher, and no better at the first;
Who, by base brokage getting some small stock,
Crept into service of a nobleman,
And by his servile flattery and fawning,
Is now become the steward of his house.

And bravely jets it in his silken gown.

Frank. No nobleman will countenance such a peasant.

Arden. Yes, the Lord Clifford, he that loves not me.

But through his favour let not him grow proud;

For were he by the Lord Protector backed,
He should not make me to be pointed at.

I am by birth a gentleman of blood,

And that injurious ribald, that attempts
To violate my dear wife’s chastity
(For dear I hold her love, as dear as Heaven)
Shall on the bed which he thinks to defile

quite low esteem in Elizabethan society.

at the first = at the beginning,\(^1\) ie. when he was born.\(^{36}\)

34: Mosbie, engaging in some unscrupulous business practices, earned a bit of capital (getting some small stock).\(^{36}\)

brokage = could refer to bribery or pimping,\(^1\) or shady and semi-legal trading of some kind,\(^7\) or simply dealing in used clothing.\(^3\)

35-37: Mosbie has persuaded a nobleman to hire him as a servant, weaseling his way into becoming the lord's steward, or head, of the household staff: in this capacity, Mosbie is responsible for managing many of the important activities of the home, including overseeing the hiring, firing and work of all the household's servants, supervising the preparation of meals, announcing callers, and preceding his master as he moves formally about.\(^{11}\)

38: bravely jets it = splendidly struts around.

gown = the uniform of the steward. A fascinating handbook of instructions, written by the Viscount Montague in the late 16th century, details the duties of the household servants, specifically prescribing that his steward should be dressed "always in a gown."\(^{12}\)

= favour or patronize.\(^1\)

42: ie. the named Lord is indeed such a nobleman who would hire such a low personage such as Mosbie; Arden suggests that Clifford dislikes him.

43: "but Mosbie should not think he is a big-shot just because Clifford holds him in high esteem."

Playwrights of the Elizabethan age seem to have been addicted to filling their verse with an abundance of pronouns, leading to frequent uncertainty as to meaning. In line 43, his refers to "Lord Clifford's", and him refers to Mosbie.

Barker\(^8\) notes that Mosbie actually had been the servant of Arden's wife's stepfather, Sir Edward North, who at one time had also been Arden's master.

44-45: "because even if Mosbie had the support of the Lord Protector, I would not allow myself to become an object of ridicule (because they know my wife is having an affair with Mosbie)."

46: Arden was born into the status of gentleman; an English gentleman occupied a rank in society a step below that of noble; any man who could make a living avoiding manual labour could consider himself a gentleman. One could thus achieve this position through hard work, but Arden, as he points out, began his life with this status.

= man of low status, rascal.\(^1\) = who.

= of great value.
See his dissevered joints and sinews torn,
Whilst on the planchers pants his weary body,
Smeared in the channels of his lustful blood.

Frank. Be patient, gentle friend, and learn of me
To ease thy grief and save her chastity:
Entreat her fair; sweet words are fittest engines
To race the flint walls of a woman’s breast.

In any case, be not too jealous.

Nor make no question of her love to thee;
But, as securely, presently take horse,
And lie with me at London all this term;
For women, when they may, will not,
But being kept back, straight grow outrageous.

Arden. Though this abhors from reason, yet I’ll try it,
And call her forth and presently take leave. –

Here enters Alice.

Alice. Husband, what mean you to get up so early?
Summer-nights are short, and yet you rise ere day.

Had I been wake, you had not rise so soon.

Arden. Sweet love, thou know’st that we two, Ovid-like,

= ie. floor made of planks.¹ = breathes heavily, a verb.
= ie. streams.
= from.
= "how to".

Franklin’s advice to Arden is simplistic and probably naïve: Arden, he claims, can win back his wife by simply treating her nicely!

fittest engines = metaphorically the best instruments or agents, ie. means; engines are machines of war, such as catapults, which Franklin imagines can be employed to break down and breach (race)³ the stone (flint) walls of a woman’s heart.

= ie. jealous, printed in the quarto as jealyous to indicate it should be pronounced in three syllables: JEA-li-ous, or perhaps JEA-lo-us.

= and do not question her love for you."
Note the line’s double negative, a common and acceptable feature of Elizabethan writing.

"but without misgiving (as securely)³ get riding immediately", ie. "let’s get out of here right away".

lie = stay.
term = one of the four periods of the year in which the courts are in session.¹

= ie. "your strategy is contrary to reason".

Entering Character: Alice is Arden’s wife. The Chronicles describes Arden and Alice as an attractive couple: Arden "was a man of a tall and comely personage", and Alice "a gentlewoman, young, tall, and well-favoured of shape and countenance".

Mosbie, Alice’s paramour, is by contrast portrayed as "a black swart man", ie. dark and swarthy, and hence quite homely.

= before day-break.

there seems to be some suggestive dialogue in the play: Alice suggests that if she too had been awake that early, Arden would not have been so eager to leave bed! There is probably some bawdry with rise.

rise = ie. risen; the editors usually emend rise to risen, though it ruins the meter.

Arden notes how frequently he and Alice have re-
Have often chid the morning when it 'gan to peep, proached (chid) the dawn for arriving to soon, ie. they would have liked the night to have lasted longer!

The reference is to an episode in The Amores of the Roman poet Ovid: in I.13, the narrator has just spent the night with his mistress, and he wonders why Aurora (personified Dawn, or morning) is in a hurry to appear; he chastises Aurora severely, suggesting that if Aurora herself had just spent the night with the handsome prince Cephalus whom she loved, she too would cry out for a delay in the arrival of the morning.

78-79: night's = Night is personified as arriving and leaving on a chariot pulled by horses: Arden has often wished Night would take an active role and keep Morning from arriving. purblind = with impaired vision.¹

her = ie. Morning.
purple mantle = allusion to the reddish hue of the dawn.

80: Aurora, who lived in Oceanus, or the ocean, also fell in love with Tithonis, a Trojan prince, with whom it was imagined she spent her nights, before rising to bring morning to the world; Arden would have her remain with Tithonis rather than bring dawn to Feversham.

= though pronounced in the modern era in two distinct syllables, the name Alice, in our play, should actually be pronounced in a single syllable, something like "Al/s", with a hissing s.

= likely.
= ie. "when I am".

84: 'Tis like I was asleep when I named him,

= ie. "when there is only one man present (around whom I can throw my arms)".

94: Nay, love, there is no credit in a dream;

= believability, ie. truth.

99: "were we not speaking about Mosbie last night?"

= alternate form of heard.

Characterization of Alice: Alice's skills in manipulation are made clear right off the bat: Alice will prove herself repeatedly to be quick-witted, and is especially facile in her ability to shamelessly explain away her frequent misdeeds and miscalculations.

= go to. = right away.
Alice. But tell me, do you mean to stay there long?

Arden. No longer there till my affairs be done.

Frank. He will not stay above a month at most.

Alice. A month? ay me! Sweet Arden, come again
Within a day or two, or else I die.

Arden. I cannot long be from thee, gentle Alice.

Franklin and I will down unto the key;

For I have certain goods there to unload.

Meanwhile prepare our breakfast, gentle Alice;
For yet ere noon we’ll take horse and away.

[Exeunt Arden and Franklin.]

Alice. Ere noon he means to take horse and away!
Sweet news is this. Oh, that some airy spirit
Would in the shape and likeness of a horse
Gallop with Arden 'cross the Oceän,
And throw him from his back into the waves!
Sweet Mosbie is the man that hath my heart:
And he usurps it, having nought but this.

That I am tied to him by marriage.

Love is a God, and marriage is but words;
And therefore Mosbie’s title is the best.

Tush! whether it be or no, he shall be mine,
In spite of him, of Hymen, and of rites.

Here enters Adam of the Flower-de-luce.

And here comes Adam of the Flower-de-luce; I hope he brings me tidings of my love. — How now, Adam, what is the news with you? Be not afraid; my husband is now from home.

Adam. He whom you wot of, Mosbie, Mistress Alice, Is come to town, and sends you word by me In any case you may not visit him.

Alice. Not visit him?

Adam. No, nor take no knowledge of his being here.

Alice. But tell me, is he angry or displeased?

Adam. [It] should seem so, for he is wondrous sad.

Alice. Were he as mad as raving Hercules.

I’ll see him, I; and were thy house of force, These hands of mine should race it to the ground, Unless that thou wouldest bring me to my love.

Adam. Nay, and you be so impatient, I’ll be gone.

137: him = ie. Arden.

Hymen = the god of marriage.

rites = ie. the ceremony of marriage.

Entering Character: Adam is the landlord of an inn known as the Flower-de-luce. Mosbie stays at this house when he is an Feversham. The earlier editors noted that the Flower-de-luce was located almost directly opposite Arden’s house on Abbey Street.

= news. = ie. Mosbie.

= ie. not home; Arden and Franklin have gone down to the wharf.

= know.

= "that at all events", ie. "that no matter what".¹

= would. = could mean grave or sorrowful.

158: mad = insane.

raving Hercules = there were a couple of myths of Hercules being driven mad. One time the queen of the gods Juno (who hated Hercules because he was the bastard son of Juno’s husband Jupiter) drove the hero insane, causing him to kill his first wife Megara and their five children.

In another episode, Hercules prevented Nessus the centaur (one of a race of half-horse half-humans) from raping his second wife Deianeira by shooting him with a poisoned arrow. Nessus, in revenge, told Deianeira that should she ever fear losing Hercules to another woman, she should touch or smear him with a magic potion made out of his now-dripping blood.

Sometime later, having successfully fought in a war in which he captured a daughter of a king and made her his concubine, Hercules sent for some new clothes from Deianeira. She, jealous, dipped his tunic into the blood of Nessus, and sent it to Hercules to wear. The blood was poisonous, however, and when Hercules put on the tunic, it burned him fiercely, tearing away his flesh as he tried to remove it. In unbearable pain, Hercules climbed Mt. Oete, where he convinced a friend of his to burn him to death in a funeral pyre in order to end his suffering.

159: ie. even if the Flower-de-luce were fortified.⁴

= tear, raze.¹

= if. = leave.
Alice. Stay, Adam, stay; thou wert wont to be my friend.

Ask Mosbie how I have incurred his wrath;
Bear him from me these pair of silver dice,
With which we played for kisses many a time,
And when I lost, I won, and so did he; —
Such winning and such losing love send me!
And bid him, if his love do not decline,
[To] come this morning but along my door,
And as a stranger but salute me there:
This may he do without suspect or fear.

Adam. I'll tell him what you say, and so farewell.

[Exit Adam.]

Alice. Do, and one day I'll make amends for all. —
I know he loves me well, but dares not come,
Because my husband is so jealious,
And these my narrow-prying neighbours blab,
Hinder our meetings when we would confer.

But, if I live, that block shall be removed,
And, Mosbie, thou that comes to me by stealth,
Shalt neither fear the biting speech of men,
Nor Arden's looks; as surely shall he die
As I abhor him and love only thee.

Here enters Michael.

Entering Character: Michael is Arden's servant.

How now, Michael, whither are you going?

Mich. To fetch my master's nag.

I hope you'll think on me.

Alice. Ay; but, Michael, see you keep your oath,
And be as secret as you are resolute.

Mich. I'll see he shall not live above a week.

Alice. On that condition, Michael, here is my hand:
None shall have Mosbie's sister but thyself.

Mich. I understand the painter here hard by
Hath made report that he and Sue is sure.

Alice. There's no such matter, Michael; believe it not.

Mich. But he hath sent a dagger sticking in a heart,
With a verse or two stolen from a painted cloth,
The which I hear the wench keeps in her chest.

Well, let her keep it! I shall find a fellow
That can both write and read and make rhyme too.
And if I do – well, I say no more:
I’ll send from London such a taunting letter
[As] she shall eat the heart he sent with salt
And fling the dagger at the painter’s head.

Alice. What needs all this? I say that Susan’s thine.

Mich. Why, then I say that I will kill my master,
Or anything that you will have me do.

Alice. But, Michael, see you do it cunningly.

Mich. Why, say I should be took, I’ll ne’er confess
That you know anything; and Susan, being a maid,
May beg me from the gallows of the shrieve.

Alice. Trust not to that, Michael.

Mich. You cannot tell me, I have seen it, I.
But, mistress, tell her, whether I live or die,
I’ll make her more worth than twenty painters can;
For I will rid mine elder brother away,
And then the farm of Bolton is mine own.

Who would not venture upon house and land,
When he may have it for a right-down blow?

Here enters Mosbie.

Alice. Yonder comes Mosbie. Michael, get thee gone,
And let not him nor any know thy drifts. –

[Exit Michael.]

Mosbie, my love!

Mosb. Away, I say, and talk not to me now.

Alice. A word or two, sweet heart, and then I will.

has given Susan.
painted cloth = cheap substitutes for tapestries, painted cloths were adorned with images, such as depictions of the Nine Worthies, and hung as decorations in homes. They were often also embellished with proverbs or snatches of verse.

= lass. = "in her box of valuables" (or "on her body", if the gift is a broach).
= someone.
= Michael humorously proceeds to say more anyway.
= reproachful.¹
= that.

229-230: Susan…shrieve = it was believed that a virgin (maid) could save a man from execution by promising to marry him.³
shrieve = alternate form of sheriff, the officer charged with administering the law in a given shire.¹

= ie. Susan.
= wealthier.

237-8: Michael would also kill his own brother, to inherit his property in order to support Susan.
Bolton = ie. Boughton, a village just west of Canterbury.³

239-240: who would not take such a risk (venture) to gain property, when he can get it for the price of a simple (right-down) stroke or knock?

Entering Character: Mosbie is Alice's paramour.

= plans.

247: at this point, it appears that only Michael is privy to Alice’s desire to have her husband "eliminated"; but as we shall see, Alice has separately spoken with Mosbie about this as well: the conspiracy will grow ever-wider as the play unfolds.
‘Tis yet but early days, thou need'st not fear.

 Мосб. Where is your husband?

 Алис. ‘Tis now high water, and he is at the key.

 Мосб. There let him be; henceforward know me not.

 Алис. Is this the end of all thy solemn oaths? Is this the fruit thy reconcilement buds?

 Have I for this given thee so many favours, Incurred my husband’s hate, and, out alas! Made shipwreck of mine honour for thy sake?

 And dost thou say “henceforward know me not”? Remember, when I locked thee in my closet, What were thy words and mine; did we not both Decree to murder Arden in the night? The heavens can witness, and the world can tell, Before I saw that falsehood look of thine, ’Fore I was tangled with thy ticing speech, Arden to me was dearer than my soul, – And shall be still: base peasant, get thee gone, And boast not of thy conquest over me, Gotten by witchcraft and mere sorcery!

 For what hast thou to countenance my love, Being descended of a noble house, And matched already with a gentleman Whose servant thou may’st be! – and so farewell.

 Мосб. Ungentle and unkind Alice, now I see That which I ever feared, and find too true: A woman’s love is as the lightning-flame, Which even in bursting forth consumes itself. To try thy constancy have I been strange:

 Would I had never tried, but lived in hope!

 Алис. What needs thou try me whom thou ne’er found false?

 Мосб. Yet pardon me, for love is jealous.

 = high tide.¹ = quay.

 = “going forward you must pretend not to know me.”

 262f: Alice is also very good at improvising drawn-out and overly-dramatic speeches of reproach.

 = an exclamation of reproach or regret.²

 266: ruined her good name by engaging in an adulterous affair.

 = the sense is "hid" or "snuck". = private room.

 = decide.¹

 272-3: ie. "that before I both fell for your sham loving glances and was snared by your flattering words".  

  ticing = ie. enticings.

 = always.

 277: Elizabethan stage-lovers frequently claimed to have been bewitched to excuse their falling in love with those they should have stayed away from.  

 mere = complete, downright.⁸

 278f: Alice, her temper rising, gets nasty: what logical reason would she have to tie herself to Mosbie, who brings nothing other than himself to the relationship? he has no title or rank, or wealth.  

 countenance = support¹ or complement.?  

 being = ie. "I being".  

 of = from.  

 matched = married.

 285-6: a woman's love is ephemeral, like a bolt of lightning.

 287: Mosbie has been so aloof (strange) towards Alice to test (try) her faithfulness (constancy) to him; Elizabethan drama is filled with men stupidly "testing" their lovers' fidelity.

 288: "I wish I had never done this, but instead had gone on existing in (ignorant) expectation (hope) that you were true to me."

 290: Alice is understandably piqued: what was the purpose of Mosbie putting her through such a trial, when she has never given him any reason to doubt her commitment to him?
**Alice.** So *lists* the sailor to the mermaid’s song,  
So looks the traveller to the basilisk:

I am content for to be reconciled,  
And that, I know, will be mine overthrow.

**Mosb.** Thine overthrow? first let the world dissolve.

**Alice.** Nay, Mosbie, let me *still* enjoy thy love,  
And happen what will, I am *resolute.*  
My saving husband hoards up bags of gold  
To make our children rich, and now is he

Gone to unload the goods that shall be thine,  
And he and Franklin will *to* London *straight.*

**Mosb.** To London, Alice? if thou’lt *be ruled* by me,  
We’ll make him sure enough for coming there.

**Alice.** Ah, *would* we could!

**Mosb.** I happened on a painter yesternight,

The only cunning man of Christendom;  
For he can *temper* poison with his oil.

That whoso looks upon the work he draws  
Shall, with the beams that issue from *his sight,*  
Suck venom to his breast and slay himself.

Sweet Alice, he shall draw thy *counterfeit,*  
That Arden may, by gazing on it, perish.

**Alice.** Ay, but Mosbie, that is dangerous,  
For thou, or I, or any other else,  
Coming into the chamber where it hangs, may die.

**Mosb.** Ay, but we’ll have it covered with a cloth  
And hung up in the study for *himself.*

**Alice.** It may not be, for *when* the picture’s drawn,  
Arden, I know, will come and *shew* it me.

**Mosb.** Fear not; we’ll *have that shall serve the turn.*  
This is the painter’s house; I’ll call him forth.
Alice. But Mosbie, I’ll have no such picture, I.

Mosb. I pray thee, leave it to my discretion. –
How! Clarke!

Here enters Clarke.

Oh, you are an honest man of your word! you served me well.

Clark. Why, sir, I’ll do it for you at any time,
Provided, as you have given your word,
I may have Susan Mosbie to my wife.
For, as sharp-witted poets, whose sweet verse
Make heavenly gods break off their nectar draughts
And lay their ears down to the lowly earth,
Use humble promise to their sacred Muse.

So we that are the poets’ favourites
Must have a love: ay, Love is the painter’s Muse,
That makes him frame a speaking countenance.
A weeping eye that witnesses heart’s grief.
Then tell me, Master Mosbie, shall I have her?

Alice. 'Tis pity but he should; he’ll use her well.

Mosb. Clarke, here’s my hand: my sister shall be thine.

Clark. Then, brother, to requite this courtesy.

You shall command my life, my skill, and all.

Alice. Ah, that thou couldst be secret.

Mosb. Fear him not; leave: I have talked sufficient.

Clark. [To Alice] You know not me that ask such questions.
Let it suffice I know you love him well,
And fain would have your husband made away:
Wherein, trust me, you shew a noble mind,
That rather than you’ll live with him you hate,
You’ll venture life, and die with him you love.
The like will I do for my Susan’s sake.

Alice. Yet nothing could enforce me to the deed
But Mosbie’s love. – Might I without control
Enjoy thee still, then Arden should not die:

337: "please, leave it all to me."

Entering Character: Clarke is Feversham’s resident artist.

348-351: "just as great poets (who can even get the gods to put down their cups of nectar, and listen to their verse recited on earth) are inspired by their personal Muse to compose their stuff".

draughts = drinks.
Muse = source of inspiration; a reference to the nine Muses, or goddesses, who acted as patronesses of the arts.

352-3: artists too must have a source of inspiration, and theirs is love.

the poets’ favourites = by suggesting that poets love artists, Clarke emphasizes the close relationship between the two forms of art.?

354-5: Love allows the artist to paint a face (countenance) that expresses in its looks alone the genuine emotions of the subject, such as grief.

= "it would be a pity if he does not (have her)." = treat.

360: Mosbie's handshake and promise here parallel those given by Alice to Michael at line 203 above.

362: brother = ie. brother-in-law; Clarke is jumping the gun a bit.
requisite this courtesy = repay this favour.
363: ie. "I am unreservedly in your service."

365: Alice worries whether the artist can keep their conspiracy a secret.

= "stop (talking)". = ie. said all that needs to be said.

369: "you obviously don't know me, since you ask me such (foolish) questions."

= ie. Mosbie.
= would like to. = dispatched.
= ie. show.

= "risk (your)".

= "induce me to do".

378-9: Might I...still = "if there was a way I could always enjoy our relationship without any restraint (control)".
But seeing I cannot, therefore let him die.

Mosb. Enough, sweet Alice; thy kind words makes me melt. −
Your trick of poisoned pictures we dislike;
Some other poison would do better far.

Alice. Ay, such as might be put into his broth,
And yet in taste not to be found at all.

Clark. I know your mind, and here I have it for you.
Put but a dram of this into his drink,
Or any kind of broth that he shall eat,
And he shall die within an hour after.

Alice. As I am a gentlewoman, Clarke, next day
Thou and Susan shall be married.

Mosb. And I’ll make her dowry more than I’ll talk of.
Clarke.

Clark. Yonder’s your husband. − Mosbie, I’ll be gone.

Here enters Arden and Franklin.

Alice. In good time see where my husband comes. −
Master Mosbie, ask him the question yourself.

[Exit Clarke.]

Mosb. Master Arden, being at London yesternight,
The Abbey lands, whereof you are now possessed,
Were offered me on some occasion
By Greene, one of Sir Antony Ager’s men;
I pray you, sir, tell me, are not the lands yours?
Hath any other interest herein?

Arden. Mosbie, that question we’ll decide anon. −
Alice, make ready my breakfast, I must hence.

[Exit Alice.]

As for the lands, Mosbie, they are mine
By letters patents from his Majesty. −
But I must have a mandate for my wife;

They say you seek to rob me of her love:
Villain, what makes thou in her company?

382: *makes me melt* = common expression for "brings tears to my eyes".

Note also the lack of agreement between subject and verb (*words makes*), another common feature of Elizabethan verse.

389: Clarke hands a vial of poison to Mosbie.

= "I can or dare say".

**Entering Characters:** Arden and Franklin return from the wharf.

404-413: Alice pretends that she and Mosbie have been discussing business, and that Mosbie has just asked her a question that would be more appropriately put to Arden; Mosbie, comprehending, plays right along.

= ie. "I being". = last night.
= "which you now own".
= Barker suggests "pretext".
= Greene will enter the play shortly. = servants.

413: "is there anyone else with any ownership or legal interest in the property?"

= settle. = soon.
= leave.

422: just as Arden has a legal document demonstrating his possession of the Abbey lands, so he requires an order or injunction (mandate) to confirm his exclusive access to his wife.?

423-4: note how Arden dramatically switches pronouns from you to thee. The veneer of formality preserved through line 423 with you is stripped away beginning in line 424, as Arden begins to unreservedly express his contempt for the
She’s no companion for so base a groom.

Mosb. Arden, I thought not on her, I came to thee;

But rather than I pocket up this wrong —

Frank. What will you do, sir?

Mosb. Revenge it on the proudest of you both.

[Then Arden draws forth Mosbie’s sword.]

Arden. So, sirrah: you may not wear a sword,
The statute makes against artificers;

I warrant that I do. Now use your bodkin,
Your Spanish needle, and your pressing iron.

For this shall go with me; and mark my words,
You goodman botcher, ’tis to you I speak:
The next time that I take thee near my house,
Instead of legs I’ll make thee crawl on stumps.

Mosb. Ah, Master Arden, you have injured me:
I do appeal to God and to the world.

Frank. Why, canst thou deny thou wert a botcher once?

Mosb. Measure me what I am, not what I was.

Arden. Why, what art thou now but a velvet drudge,
A cheating steward, and base-minded peasant?

Mosb. Arden, now thou hast belched and vomited
The rancorous venom of thy mis-swoll’n heart,
Hear me but speak: as I intend to live

swine Mosbie.

= low a fellow or servant.

= "I wasn't thinking about her", ie. she is not the reason Mosbie came over; note how Mosbie also uses thee now in addressing Arden, a sure insult when speaking to one's superior.

= meekly submit to this insult;

432: Mosbie may put his hand on his sword here.

434: the stage direction (which appears here as printed in the quarto) seems to require an aggressive move by Arden to overpower or intimidate Mosbie, and strip him of his sword.

436-7: Tudor era statutes banned men of ranks lesser than that of gentleman from wearing a sword. 

sirrah = acceptable form of address to use for one's inferiors.

artificers = artisans, craftsmen.

438: I warrant that I do = could mean either:
(1) "the law authorizes me to do this", ie. take Mosbie's sword, or
(2) "I, however, am authorized to wear this sword."

438-9: Now use...iron = Arden mockingly suggests Mosbie may use the tools of his former trade as alternative weapons. Mosbie will not forget this humiliation.

bodkin = small pointed instrument for piercing cloth.
Spanish needle = sewing needle.
pressing iron = iron for pressing clothes.

= ie. Mosbie's sword.

= title for person of rank below that of gentleman; the term's use here is insulting.

= find, catch.

448: Franklin suggests that Arden's insult lay in his referring to Mosbie's former profession, and not in the embarrassing stripping of his sword; it is hard to say if Franklin was being facetious here, as he doesn't really ever reveal a sense of humour or irony.

= appraise, ie. judge.

= a slave in fine clothes (thanks to his position as steward).

= defrauder (because he has deprived Arden of his wife).

= animosity-filled. = mistakenly inflated with arrogance.

457-8: as I...Heaven = a lengthy oath.
With God and his elected saints in Heaven, I never meant more to solicit her; And that she knows, and all the world shall see. I loved her once; — sweet Arden, pardon me, I could not choose, her beauty fired my heart! But time hath quenched these over-raging coals; And, Arden, though I now frequent thy house, 'Tis for my sister’s sake, her waiting-maid, And not for hers. Mayest thou enjoy her long; Hell-fire and wrathful vengeance light on me, If I dishonour her or injure thee.

Arden. Mosbie, with these thy protestations The deadly hatred of my heart is appeased, And thou and I’ll be friends, if this prove true. As for the base terms [that] I gave thee late, Forget them, Mosbie: I had cause to speak, When all the knights and gentlemen of Kent Make common table-talk of her and thee.

Mosb. Who lives that is not touched with slanderous tongues?

Frank. Then, Mosbie, to eschew the speech of men, Upon whose general brute all honour hangs,

Forbear his house.

Arden. Forbear it! nay, rather frequent it more: To warn him on the sudden from my house Were to confirm the rumour that is grown.

Mosb. By my faith, sir, you say true, And therefore will I sojourn here a while, Until our enemies have talked their fill; And then, I hope, they’ll cease, and at last confess How causeless they have injured her and me.

Arden. And I will lie at London all this term To let them see how light I weigh their words.

Here enters Alice.

Alice. Husband, sit down; your breakfast will be cold.

Arden. Come, Master Mosbie, will you sit with us?

Mosb. I cannot eat, but I’ll sit for company.

Arden. Sirrah Michael, see our horse be ready.

[Arden tastes the broth, then stops eating.]
Alice. Husband, why pause ye? why eat you not?

Arden. I am not well; there’s something in this broth
That is not wholesome: didst thou make it, Alice?

Alice. I did, and that’s the cause it likes not you.

[Then she throws down the broth on the ground.]

There’s nothing that I do can please your taste;
You were best to say I would have poisoned you.

I cannot speak or cast aside my eye.

But he imagines I have stepped awry.

Here’s he that you cast in my teeth so oft:

Now will I be convinced or purge myself. −

[to Mosbie] I charge thee speak to this mistrustful man,
Thou that wouldst see me hang, thou, Mosbie, thou:
What favour hast thou had more than a kiss
At coming or departing from the town?

Mosb. You wrong yourself and me to cast these doubts:
Your loving husband is not jealous.

Arden. Why, gentle Mistress Alice, cannot I be ill
But you’ll accuse yourself? −
Franklin, thou hast a box of mithridate;
I’ll take a little to prevent the worst.

Frank. Do so, and let us presently take horse;
My life for yours, ye shall do well enough.

Alice. Give me a spoon, I’ll eat of it myself;
Would it were full of poison to the brim,
Then should my cares and troubles have an end.
Was ever silly woman so tormented?

Arden. Be patient, sweet love; I mistrust not thee.

Alice. God will revenge it, Arden, if thou dost;
For never woman loved her husband better
Than I do thee.

*Arden.* I know it, sweet Alice; cease to complain,
Lest that in tears I answer thee again.

*Frank.* Come, leave this dallying, and let us away.

*Alice.* Forbear to wound me with that bitter word;
Arden shall go to London in my arms.

*Arden.* Loth am I to depart, yet I must go.

*Alice.* Wilt thou to London, then, and leave me here?
Ah, if thou love me, gentle Arden, stay.
Yet, if thy business be of great import,
Go, if thou wilt, I'll bear it as I may;
But write from London to me every week,
Nay, every day, and stay no longer there
Than *thou must needs* lest that I die for sorrow.

*Arden.* I'll write unto thee *every other tide*.
And so farewell, sweet Alice, till we meet next.

*Alice.* Farewell, husband, seeing you'll have it so;
And, Master Franklin, seeing you take him hence,
In *hope* you'll *hasten him* home, I'll give you this.

[And then she kisseth him.]

*Frank.* And if he stay, the fault shall not be mine.

Mosbie, farewell, and see you keep your oath.

*Mosbie.* I hope he is not jealous of me now.

*Arden.* No, Mosbie, no; hereafter think of me
As of your dearest friend, and so farewell.

[Exeunt Arden, Franklin, and Michael.]

*Alice.* I am glad he is gone; he was about to stay,
But did you mark me then how I brake off?

*Mosbie.* Ay, Alice, and it was cunningly performed.
But what a villain is this painter Clarke!

*Alice.* Was it not a goodly poison that he gave?
Why, he's as well now as he was before.

*Arden's Recovery:* according to the *Chronicles*, after consuming the poisoned breakfast, Arden "*took horse and rode to Canterbury, and by the way fell into extreme purging upwards and downwards* [ie. experienced violent vomiting and diarrhea], *and so escaped for that time.*"

= observe.  = ie. "$broke off (my performance)."
Alice, impressed with herself, senses that if she had carried on her distraught play-acting any longer, Arden would have cancelled his trip!

593: ie. for having prepared a poison that failed to kill Arden.

595: Alice is ironic.

= ie. "$Arden is".  = ie. healthy.
It should have been some fine confection
That might have given the broth some dainty taste:
This powder was too gross and populous.

Mosb. But had he eaten but three spoonfuls more,
Then had he died and our love continued.

Alice. Why, so it shall, Mosbie, albeit he live.

Mosb. It is unpossible, for I have sworn
Never hereafter to solicit thee,
Or, whilst he lives, once more importune thee.

Alice. Thou shalt not need, I will importune thee. —
What? shall an oath make thee forsake my love?
As if I have not sworn as much myself
And given my hand unto him in the church!
Tush, Mosbie; oaths are words, and words is wind.
And wind is mutable: then, I conclude.
'Tis childishness to stand upon an oath.

Mosb. Well proved, Mistress Alice; yet by your leave
I'll keep mine unbroken whilst he lives.

Alice. Ay, do, and spare not, his time is but short;
For if thou beest as resolute as I,
We'll have him murdered as he walks the streets.
In London many alehouse ruffians keep.
Which, as I hear, will murther men for gold.

They shall be soundly fee’d to pay him home.

Here enters Greene.

Mosb. Alice, what’s he that comes yonder? know’st thou him?

= preparation, mixture of (toxic) substances.
= pleasant.¹
= obvious. = perhaps meaning "abundant", ie. there was too much of it; but "vulgar", "perceptible" and "thick" have also been suggested.
= ie. "even if he lives."
= ie. to Arden.
= court.²
= to chase, or more specifically, to pursue or approach for sex.¹
= words are as invisible and ephemeral, and hence of as little importance or weight, as the wind.
615: mutable = inconstant, variable.
conclude = a term from the field of logic; see the next note.
614-6: Alice, like a good philosopher, has used a tautology to prove a point:
(1) a promise is made up of words;
(2) words are like the wind;
(3) the wind is never constant;
(4) ergo, a promise is changeable;
(5) therefore, it is illogical to insist that a promise must be kept.
618: Well proved = Mosbie recognizes Alice's clever impersonation of a logician.
by your leave = "with your permission".
621: "that is fine, then, and don't relent a bit, ie. don't go back on your oath (perhaps sarcastic); but it will be ok, because Arden does not have long to live."
624: an inside-out sentence: many thugs and criminals (ruffians)¹ hang out or lodge (keep)⁶ in London's taverns.
= common alternate form of murder; the quarto more frequently prints murther than murder. We follow the quarto in each case.
= well paid. = punish, ie. kill, Arden.

Entering Character: Dick Greene is a citizen of Feversham who lost his patch of Abbey land when the property was granted to Arden.
= who is.
Alice. Mosbie, be gone: I hope 'tis one that comes
To put in practice our intended drifts.

[Exit Mosbie.]

Greene. Mistress Arden, you are well met.

I am sorry that your husband is from home,
Whenas my purposed journey was to him:
Yet all my labour is not spent in vain,
For I suppose that you can full discourse
And flat resolve me of the thing I seek.

Alice. What is it, Master Greene? If that I may
Or can with safety, I will answer you.

Greene. I heard your husband hath the grant of late,
Confirmed by letters patents from the king,
Of all the lands of the Abbey of Feversham,
Generally intitled, so that all former grants
Are cut off, whereof I myself had one;

But now my interest by that is void.
This is all, Mistress Arden; is it true or no?

Alice. True, Master Greene; the lands are his in state,
And whatsoever leases were before
Are void for term of Master Arden’s life;

He hath the grant under the Chancery seal.

Greene. Pardon me, Mistress Arden, I must speak,
For I am touched. Your husband doth me wrong
To wring me from the little land I have.

My living is my life, [and] only that
Resteth remainder of my portion.

Desire of wealth is endless in his mind,
And he is greedy-gaping still for gain;

Nor cares he though young gentlemen do beg.

So he may scrape and hoard up in his pouch.

But, seeing he hath ta’en my lands, I’ll value life

Alice. Mosbie, be gone: I hope 'tis one that comes
To put in practice our intended drifts.

[Exit Mosbie.]

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And he is greedy-gaping still for gain;

Nor cares he though young gentlemen do beg.

So he may scrape and hoard up in his pouch.

But, seeing he hath ta’en my lands, I’ll value life
As careless as he is careful for to get:

And tell him this from me, I’ll be revenged,
And so as he shall wish the Abbey lands
Had rested still within their former state.

**Alice.** Alas, poor gentleman, I pity you,
And woe is me that any man should want!
God knows ’tis not my fault; but wonder not
Though he be hard to others, when to me, –
Ah, Master Greene, God knows how I am used.

**Greene.** Why, Mistress Arden, can the crabbèd churl

Use you unkindly? respects he not your birth,
Your honourable friends, nor what you brought?

Why, all Kent knows your parentage and what you are.

**Alice.** Ah, Master Greene, be it spoken in secret here.

I never live good day with him alone:
When he is at home, then have I froward looks.
Hard words and blows to mend the match withal:

And though I might content as good a man,
Yet doth he keep in every corner trulls;
And [when he’s] weary with his trugs at home,
Then rides he straight to London; there, forsooth,
He revels it among such filthy ones
As counsels him to make away his wife.
Thus live I daily in continual fear,
In sorrow; so despairing of redress
As every day I wish with hearty prayer
That he or I were taken forth the world.

**Greene.** Now trust me, Mistress Alice, it grieveth me

So fair a creature should be so abused.
Why, who would have thought the civil sir so sullen?

He looks so smoothly. Now, fie upon him, churl!

And if he live a day, he lives too long.
But frolic, woman! I shall be the man
Shall set you free from all this discontent;
And if the churl deny my interest
And will not yield my lease into my hand,
I’ll pay him home, whatever hap to me.

little regard for his own life as Arden places high value on acquiring wealth.

**he is** = pronounce he’s.

= "to such an extent that".

673: had remained in the possession of their former occupants.

= lack, ie. be without necessary material support.

= disagreeable or perverse villain.\(^1\)^\(^2\)

682: **Use** = treat.

682-3: **respects he...brought** = "does not Arden treat you as is fitting for one of your high birth, upper-class friends, and the wealth you brought with you into the marriage?"

= family, ancestry.

= "let us keep what I am about to tell you a secret between us".

= "he gives me hateful looks".

689: Alice also (**withal**) must suffer harsh words and beatings when Arden is home.

**mend the match** = benefit the marriage (ironic).

= satisfy (as a wife).

= tramps, whores.

= prostitutes here in Feversham.

= truly.

= ie. people.

= "who advise him". = kill.

= remedy or solace.\(^2\)

= from, out of.

= beautiful.

703: who would have thought that this seemingly respectable (civil) gentleman was actually of such ill-humor?

704: "he appears so affable (smoothly);\(^1\) shame on him, that knave (churl)!"

= "cheer up!"

708-9: **deny...to me** = "refuses to either acknowledge my legal right to or return to me my lease in the Abbey land".

710: "I will get my revenge on him, no matter the risk."
Alice. But speak you as you think?

Greene. Ay, God’s my witness, I mean plain dealing. For I had rather die than lose my land.

Alice. Then, Master Greene, be counselled by me: Indanger not yourself for such a churl, But hire some cutter for to cut him short, And here’s ten pound to wager them withal: When he is dead, you shall have twenty more, And the lands whereof my husband is possessed Shall be intitled as they were before.

Greene. Will you keep promise with me?

Alice. Or count me false and perjured whilst I live.

Greene. Then here’s my hand, I’ll have him so dispatched. I’ll up to London straight, I’ll thither post, And never rest till I have compassed it. Till then, farewell.

Alice. Good fortune follow all your forward thoughts.

[Exit Greene.]

And whosoever doth attempt the deed, A happy hand I wish, and so farewell. – All this goes well: – Mosbie, I long for thee To let thee know all that I have contrived.

Here enters Mosbie and Clarke.

Mosb. How, now, Alice, what’s the news?

Alice. Such as will content thee well, sweetheart.

Mosb. Well, let them pass a while, and tell me, Alice, How have you dealt and tempered with my sister? What, will she have my neighbour Clarke, or no?

Alice. What, Master Mosbie! let him woo himself! Think you that maids look not for fair words? – Go to her, Clarke; she’s all alone within;

Alice’s Triple Strategy: Alice now has three independent agents whom she has enlisted to murder her husband: (1) Michael her servant, (2) Mosbie her lover, and now (3) the disgruntled Greene.

Greene’s Ire: the Chronicles suggests that Greene had previously, and perhaps repeatedly, confronted Arden about the loss of his land, noting that "there had been blows and great threats passed bewixt them about that matter."

= "let's put aside that news (them) for now".

750-1: Mosbie wants to know if Alice has warmed Susan to the idea of marrying the artist Clarke.tempered with = persuaded, worked on.1,7

753-4: Mosbie should know better: if a girl is to be won, she will want to be courted and flattered by the man who will have her.

fair = a disyllable: FAY-er.
756 Michael my man is clean out of her books.

758 Clarke. I thank you, Mistress Arden, I will in;
And if fair Susan and I can make a gree,
You shall command me to the uttermost,
As far as either goods or life may stretch.

[Exit Clarke.]

764 Mosb. Now, Alice, let’s hear thy news.

766 Alice. They be so good that I must laugh for joy,
Before I can begin to tell my tale.

770 Mosb. Let’s hear them, that I may laugh for company.

772 Alice. This morning, Master Greene, Dick Greene I mean,
From whom my husband had the Abbey land,
Came hither, railing, for to know the truth
Whether my husband had the lands by grant.
I told him all, whereat he stormed amain
And swore he would cry quittance with the churl,
And, if he did deny his interest,
Stab him, whatsoever did befall himself.
Whenas I saw his choler thus to rise,
I whetted on the gentleman with words;
And, to conclude, Mosbie, at last we grew
To composition for my husband’s death.

784 I gave him ten pound [for] to hire knaves,
By some device to make away the churl;
When he is dead, he should have twenty more
And repossess his former lands again.
On this we ’greed, and he is ridden straight
To London, for to bring his death about.

790 Mosb. But call you this good news?

792 Alice. Ay, sweetheart, be they not?

796 Mosb. ’Twere cheerful news to hear the churl were dead;
But trust me, Alice, I take it passing ill
You would be so forgetful of our state
To make recount of it to every groom.

What! to acquaint each stranger with our drifts,
Chiefly in case of murther, why, ’tis the way
To make it open unto Arden’s self
And bring thyself and me to ruin both.
Forewarned, forearmed; who threats his enemy,
Lends him a sword to guard himself withal.

756: Clarke need not worry about Susan marrying Michael:
Michael is completely (clean) out of favour with Susan (out of her books).¹

= go in.
= come to an arrangement.
760-1: Clarke will be at Alice's absolute service.

767: note how Alice treats news as a plural word, just as Mosbie did at line 749 above.

= (also) in order to be sociable."¹

= ranting, raving. = in order to.
= with violence.²
= get even with.¹
= without consideration of what might happen to him.
= when. = anger, ire.
= egged on, further incited.¹

782-3: grew to...death = came to an arrangement regarding bringing about Arden's death.
composition = basically a contract for services in return for payment.¹

= in order to.
= scheme.
= ie. Arden. = ie. Greene.

798: that she would reveal what is going on to every man or servant (groom) she comes across.

= intentions, plans.
800-1: ’tis the...self = this is the way to ensure that Arden himself will learn of their plans.

803: Forewarned, forearmed = to grant one knowledge of impending harm is to give one time to prepare to prevent it;
Alice. I did it for the best.

Mosb. Well, seeing 'tis done, cheerly let it pass. You know this Greene; is he not religious?
A man, I guess, of great devotion?

Alice. He is.

Mosb. Then, sweet Alice, let it pass: I have a drift
Will quiet all, whatever is amiss.

Here re-enters Clarke with Susan.

Alice. How now, Clarke? have you found me false?
Did I not plead the matter hard for you?

Clark. You did.

Mosb. And what? wilt be a match?

Clark. A match, i' faith, sir: ay, the day is mine.
The painter lays his colours to the life,
His pencil draws no shadows in his love.
Susan is mine.

Alice. You make her blush.

Mosb. What, sister, is it Clarke must be the man?

Susan. It resteth in your grant; some words are past.

And haply we be grown unto a match,
If you be willing that it shall be so.

Mosb. Ah, Master Clarke, it resteth at my grant:
You see my sister's yet at my dispose,
But, so you'll grant me one thing I shall ask,
I am content my sister shall be yours.

Clark. What is it, Master Mosbie?

Mosb. I do remember once in secret talk
You told me how you could compound by art
A crucifix impoisonèd,
That whoso look upon it should wax blind
And with the scent be stifled, that ere long
He should die poisoned that did view it well.
I would have you make me such a crucifix.
And then I'll grant my sister shall be yours.

a still familiar proverb.

803-4: who threats...withal = an expanded metaphor re-expressing the point made by the proverb.
threats = threatens.
withal = with.

809-810: Mosbie wonders if Greene, being pious, can be trusted to carry out their plans.

814-5: I have...amiss = Mosbie has an idea which will fix everything, even if the current plans go awry.
drift = scheme.

= ie. "did I lie to you about fixing you up with Susan?"
= earnestly.²

= marriage.
= ie. "I have won the day."

827-9: difficult lines which have yet to be given satisfactory interpretation, but let us try: "since an artist can portray his world realistically, he need not mar his depiction of love with anything less than true colours when he possesses the object of his love."

= ie. "how about it?"

835: It resteth...grant = it only remains for Mosbie to give his consent for Susan to marry Clarke.
some words are past = ie. "we spoke a while".
= perhaps.

840: Mosbie ominously points out that he still controls his sister's future.

= skillfully mix or create.
= grow.
= suffocated. = before.
Clark. Though I am loth, because it toucheth life,

Yet, rather or I'll leave sweet Susan's love,
I'll do it, and with all the haste I may.
But for whom is it?

Alice. Leave that to us. Why, Clarke, is it possible
That you should paint and draw it out yourself,
The colours being baleful and impoisoned,
And no ways prejudice yourself withal?

Mosb. Well questioned, Alice; Clarke, how answer
you that?

Clark. Very easily: I'll tell you straight
How I do work of these impoisoned drugs.
I fasten on my spectacles so close
As nothing can any way offend my sight;

Then, as I put a leaf within my nose,
So put I rhubarb to avoid the smell,
And softly as another work I paint.

Mosb. 'Tis very well; but against when shall I have it?

Clark. Within this ten days.

Mosb. 'Twill serve the turn. —

Now, Alice, let's in and see what cheer you keep.

[Exit Clarke.]

I hope, now Master Arden is from home,
You'll give me leave to play your husband's part.

Alice. Mosbie, you know, who's master of my heart,
He well may be the master of the house.

[Exeunt.]

END OF ACT I.
ACT II.

SCENE I.

Country between Feversham and London.

Enter Greene and Bradshaw.

Greene. Ay, very well: do you know them?

Brad. The one I know not, but he seems a knave chiefly for bearing the other company;

For such a slave, so vile a rogue as he,

Lives not again upon the earth.

Black Will is his name. I tell you, Master Greene,

At Boulogne, he and I were fellow-soldiers,

Where he played such pranks

As all the camp feared him for his villainy.

I warrant you he bears so bad a mind

That for a crown he’ll murther any man.

Greene. The fitter is he for my purpose, marry!

Will. How now, fellow Bradshaw? Whither away so early?

Brad. O Will, times are changed: no fellows now.

Though we were once together in the field:

Yet thy friend to do thee any good I can.

Will. Why, Bradshaw, was not thou and I fellow-soldiers at Boulogne, where I was a corporal, and thou but a base mercenary groom? No fellows now!
because you are a goldsmith and have a little plate in your shop! You were glad to call me ‘fellow Will,’ and with a cursy to the earth, ‘One snatch, good corporal,’ when I stole the half-ox from John the vitler, and domineered with it amongst good fellows in one night.

Brad. Ay, Will, those days are past with me.
Will. Ay, but they be not past with me, for I keep that same honourable mind still. Good neighbour Bradshaw, you are too proud to be my fellow; but were it not that I see more company coming down the hill, I would be fellows with you once more, and share crowns with you too. But let that pass, and tell me whither you go.

Brad. To London, Will, about a piece of service. Wherein haply thou mayest pleasure me.

Will. What is it?

Brad. Of late Lord Cheiny lost some plate, Which one did bring and sold it at my shop, Saying he served Sir Antony Cooke. A search was made, the plate was found with me, And I am bound to answer at the ’size.

Now, Lord Cheiny solemnly vows, if law Will serve him, he’ll hang me for his plate. Now I am going to London upon hope To find the fellow. Now, Will, I know Thou art acquainted with such companions.

Will. What manner of man was he?

Brad. A lean-faced writhen knave, Hawk-nosed and very hollow-eyed, has made some legitimate money, he wants nothing to do with Will.

plate = ie. gold and silver in their various forms, such as utensils, vessels, or even coins.

= ie. "back then you".

32-34: with a…viter = once Bradshaw was pleased to bow deeply and servilely to Will (a cursy to the earth), and ask him if he may partake of the feast which followed after Will stole meat from the man who supplied food for the army (viter, line 34).

cursy = alternate form of curtsey.
snatch = snack, bit of food.

34: vitler = alternate form of victualler.
domineered = reveled or feasted riotously.

= companions.

= approaching persons.

43-44: and share…you too = some editors suggest that Will's assertion here is deliberately ambiguous: while on its face seemingly benign, the clause's subtext is actually "and rob you too."

= elliptical: "regarding a bit of service," ie. "to find some one who can help me".
48: Bradshaw hints that Will might be able to assist him.
haply = perhaps.

52-56: someone had stolen some gold or silver from Lord Cheiny (who, among other offices, held the position of Lord Warden for the Cinque Ports), and brought it all to Bradshaw, claiming he was selling it on behalf of his employer (Sir Antony Cooke). Bradshaw unwittingly purchased the stolen goods, and now investigators have traced them back to Bradshaw, so he must appear in court to explain how it came into his possession.

Sir Antony Cooke may have been a tutor to Edward VI.

’size = ie. assize, a legal proceeding: could be an inquest or a trial.

= ie. for being involved in the theft of.

= ie. the man who brought and sold him the plate.
= low or worthless fellows or scoundrels.

63: "what did he look like?"

= contorted, with twisted or deformed body.
With mighty furrows in his stormy brows;
Long hair down his shoulders curled;
His chin was bare, but on his upper lip
A mutchado, which he wound about his ear.

*Will.* What apparel had he?

*Brad.* A watchet satin doublet all-to torn,
The inner side did bear the greater show;
A pair of thread-bare velvet hose, seam rent,
A wosted stockin rent above the shoe,

A livery cloak, but all the lace was off;
'Twas bad, but yet it served to hide the plate.

*Will.* Sirrah Shakebag, canst thou remember since
we trolled the bowl at Sittingburgh, where I broke
the tapster's head of the Lion with a cudgel-stick?

*Shake.* Ay, very well, Will.

*Will.* Why, it was with the money that the plate was
sold for. — Sirrah Bradshaw, what wilt thou give him
that can tell thee who sold thy plate?

*Brad.* Who, I pray thee, good Will?

*Will.* Why, 'twas one Jack Fitten. He's now in
Newgate for stealing a horse, and shall be arraigned

the next 'size.

*Brad.* Why, then let Lord Cheiny seek Jack Fitten forth,
For I'll back and tell him who robbed him of his plate.
This cheers my heart; — Master Greene, I'll leave you,
For I must to the Isle of Sheppy with speed.

_**Greene.**_ Before you go, let me intreat you
To carry this letter to Mistress Arden of Feversham
And humbly recommend me to herself.

_**Brad.**_ That will I, Master Greene, and so farewell.—
Here, Will, there’s a crown for thy good news.

_[Exit Bradshaw._

_**Will.**_ Farewell, Bradshaw; I’ll drink no water for thy sake whilst this lasts. — Now, gentleman, shall we have your company to London?

_**Greene.**_ Nay, stay, sirs:
A little more I needs must use your help,
And in a matter of great consequence,
Wherein if you’ll be secret and profound,
I’ll give you twenty _angels_ for your _pains_.

_**Will.**_ How? twenty angels? give my fellow George Shakebag and me twenty angels? And if thou’lt have thy own father slain, that thou may’st inherit his land, we’ll kill him.

_**Shake.**_ Ay, thy mother, thy sister, thy brother, or all thy kin.

_**Greene.**_ Well, this it is: Arden of Feversham Hath highly wrongèd me about the Abbey land, That no revenge but death will serve the turn. Will you two kill him? here’s the angels down,

And I will lay the platform of his death.

_**Will.**_ Plat me no platforms; give me the money, and I’ll stab him as he stands pissing against a wall, but I’ll kill him.

_**Shake.**_ Where is he?

_**Greene.**_ He is now at London, in Aldersgate Street.

_**Shake.**_ He’s dead as if he had been condemned by an
Act of Parliament, if once Black Will and I swear his death.

Greene. Here is ten pound, and when he is dead,
Ye shall have twenty more.

Will. My fingers itches to be at the peasant. Ah, that I might be set a-work thus through the year, and that murther would grow to an occupation, that a man might

[follow] without danger of law: − zounds, I warrant I

should be warden of the company! Come, let us be

going, and we’ll bait at Rochester, where I’ll give thee

a gallon of sack to hansel the match withal.

[Exeunt.]

ACT II, SCENE II.

London. A Street near St. Paul’s.

Enter Michael.

Mich. I have gotten such a letter as will touch the painter: And thus it is:

Here enters Arden and Franklin and hears Michael read this letter.

150: fingers itches = another example of the typical Elizabethan lack of concern for agreement between subject and verb.

150-3: that I...law = “if only I could get a job committing murders all year round, and that killing would become considered an acceptable occupation, so that a man could pursue this field without worrying about the law coming down on him.”

153: zounds = an oath; an abbreviation and euphemism for "God's wounds", a reference to Christ's wounds on the cross.

warrant = assure you.

154: should = ie. would.

warden of the company = governor of an imagined Guild of Murderers.

155: bait = stop at an inn for a bite.¹

Rochester = ancient town in Kent, lying between London and Feversham.

156: sack = a white wine from Spain or the Canary Islands.

hansel the match = seal the deal or contract;¹ hansel

is an alternate form of the verb handsel.

withal = therewith.¹

Scene II: Franklin’s house, we remember, is situated on Aldersgate Street, which runs north to south, terminating near St. Paul’s Cathedral, which itself is only 600 feet from the Thames further south.

1-2: Michael has written a letter to Susan.

gotten = composed.²

touch = impact or have a bearing on, or upset.¹

painter = ie. the artist Clarke, who also plans to marry Susan.

5ff: Michael’s letter to Susan is genuinely funny, on two levels:

(1) the lowly, relatively uneducated Michael has attempted to write an erudite and rhetorically sophisticated love-letter, resulting in a missive filled with non-sequiturs and absurd and unintentionally insulting comparisons; note how his similes employ not the versifier's typical weapons of summer and flowers and Helen of Troy, but instead the
earthy and less-flattering concerns of a man of the land.

(2) the letter parodies the style of writing known as "euphuism", popularized by author and playwright John Lyly in the 1580's. The key feature of this stylized manner of writing is its use of parallel phrasing: consider these examples from Lyly's play Campaspe: "O Thebes, thy walls were raised by the sweetness of the harp, but razed by the shrillness of the trumpet. Alexander had never come so near the walls, had Epaminondas walked about the walls: and yet might the Thebans have been merry in their streets, if he had been to watch their towers." Euphuism also incorporated a great deal of alliteration.

Interestingly, at Act I.i.214–5, Michael had hinted that he might be illiterate, or that at a minimum he would find someone else to write a love-letter for him.

My duty remembered, Mistress Susan, hoping in God you be in good health, as I Michael was at the making hereof. This is to certify you that as the turtle true, when she hath lost her mate, sitteth alone, so I, mourning for your absence, do walk up and down Paul's till one day I fell asleep and lost my master's pantofles. Ah, Mistress Susan, abolish that paltry painter, cut him off by the shins with a frowning look of your crabbed countenance, and think upon Michael, who, drunk with the dregs of your favour, will cleave as fast to your love as a plaster of pitch to a galled horse-back. Thus hoping you will let my passions penetrate, or rather impetrate mercy of your meek hands, I end.

Yours, Michael, or else not Michael.'

Why, you paltry knave, Stand you here loitering, knowing my affairs, What haste my business craves to send to Kent?

Faith, friend Michael, this is very ill,
Knowing your master hath no more but you, 
And do ye slack his business for your own?  

**Arden.** Where is the letter, sirrah? let me see it.

[Then he gives him the letter.]

See, Master Franklin, here’s proper stuff: 
Susan my maid, the painter, and my man, 
A crew of *harlots*, all in love, forsooth; −  
Sirrah, let me hear no more of this, 
Nor for thy life once write to her a word.

**Here enters Greene, Will, and Shakebag.**

Wilt thou be married to so base a *trull*? 
’Tis Mosbie’s sister: come I once at home, 
I’ll rouse her from remaining in my house. − 

Now, Master Franklin, let us go walk in Paul’s; 
Come but a *turn* or two, and then away.

[Exeunt Arden, Franklin and Michael.]

**Greene.** The first is Arden, and that’s his man, 
The other is Franklin, Arden’s dearest friend.

**Will.** Zounds, I’ll kill them all three.

**Greene.** Nay, sirs, touch not his man in any case;  
But stand close, and take you fittest standing,

And at his coming forth speed him:

To the *Nag’s Head*, there is *this coward’s haunt*.

But now I’ll leave you till the deed be done.

[Exit Greene.]

**Shake.** If he be not *paid his own*, ne’er trust Shakebag.

**Will.** Sirrah Shakebag, at his coming forth I’ll run him through, and then to the Blackfriars, and there take water and away.

---

29: Michael knows he is Arden's sole assistant.  
= be remiss regarding.  

32: Michael seems to have subtly tried to hide the letter on his person as soon as he sensed the appearance of his employer.  
= knaves, or loose persons of either sex.  
= appropriate form of address used for one's servants.

42: the conspirators arrive in London.  
= whore.  
45-46: *come I…house* = "when we return home, I am going to kick her out of my house.”  
= inside St. Paul's church.  
= word usually used to describe a stroll in a location of finite space, like a park.  

58: *stand close* = hide someplace.  
*take you fittest standing* = "find the best place to position yourself".

59: "and when he comes out (of the church), finish him off."  

60: there seems to be a line missing between lines 59-60.  
*Nag's Head* = a tavern at the corner of Cheapside and Friday Street, a block east of St. Paul's.  
*this coward's haunt* = ie. Arden's usual hangout.  

Scene Change: the scene now shifts to the churchyard of St. Paul's; Will and Shakebag take a position behind one of the shop stalls.

65-66: Shakebag vows to see Arden dead.  
*paid his own* = given what he deserves.  

68-69: *run him through* = ie. with a dagger.  
69: *to* = ie. "we shall go to".  
*the Blackfriar's* = a fashionable district on the north shore of the Thames, about 2000 feet south-west of St. Paul's.  
69-70: *there take…away* = after killing Arden, the murderers plan to immediately escape London by boat.
**Shake.** Why, that’s the best; but see thou miss him not.

**Will.** How can I miss him, when I think on the forty angels I must have more?

Here enters Prentice.

**Prent.** ’Tis very late; I were best shut up my stall, for here will be old filching, when the press comes forth of Paul’s.

[Then lets he down his window, and it breaks Black Will’s head.]

**Will.** Zounds, draw, Shakebag, draw, I am almost killed.

**Prent.** We’ll tame you, I warrant.

**Will.** Zounds, I am tame enough already.

Here enters Arden, Franklin, and Michael.

**Arden.** What troublesome fray or mutiny is this?

**Frank.** ’Tis nothing but some brabbling paltry fray,
Devised to pick men’s pockets in the throng.

**Arden.** Is’t nothing else? come, Franklin, let’s away.

[Exeunt Arden, Franklin and Michael.]

**Will.** What ’mends shall I have for my broken head?

**Prent.** Marry, this ’mends, that if you get you not away all the sooner, you shall be well beaten and sent to the Counter.

[Exit Prentice.]

72-74: with all that money at stake, Will will be sure not to fail!

on = about.

**Entering Character:** the Prentice, or apprentice, works at one of the shops of St. Paul's churchyard. The gardens of the church served as the primary venue for London's booksellers, as well as a central location where London's citizens could gather and loudly gossip.16

80-82: the Prentice recognizes that he should lock up the stall, in order to prevent any pilfering (filching) of his master's inventory when the crowd exits the church.

old = "the customary" or "abundant".3

press = crowd.

84-85: a director will have to cleverly manage the stage business here: the Prentice, without noticing Will's head sticking out through the stall, will pull down the shutter (window)1 onto Will's head; alternately, the Prentice may silently note Will's head, and bring down the shutter so as to deliberately injure the presumed intruder.

87: Will calls on Shakebag to pull out his sword (draw) and punish the Prentice.

89: "we'll cut you to pieces, I guarantee it!"

tame = an aphetic form (meaning that an unstressed syllable at the beginning of a word has been dropped) of the ancient word attame, meaning to "pierce".1

= subdued, thanks to his injured noggin; an easy play on words here.

92-93: = disturbance.2 = tumult.1

= noisy.17 = "contemptible (little)".

98: Franklin means that the scuffle was deliberately designed to attract a crowd of onlookers who, in their distraction, would be easy prey for pickpockets.

99: The Audacious Prentice: Kozlenko10 observes that we should not be surprised by the refusal of the Prentice to be intimidated by Will and Shakebag, as London's apprentices were always ready for a brawl. The familiar cry of "Clubs!
Will. Well, I'll be gone, but look to your signs, for I'll pull them down all. — Shakebag, my broken head grieves me not so much as by this means Arden hath escaped.

Here enters Greene.

I had a glimpse of him and his companion.

Greene. Why, sirs, Arden's as well as I; I met him and Franklin going merrily to the ordinary. — What, dare you not do it?

Will. Yes, sir, we dare do it; but, were my consent to give again, we would not do it under ten pound more.

I value every drop of my blood at a French crown.

I have had ten pound to steal a dog, and we have no more here to kill a man; but that a bargain is a bargain, and so forth, you should do it yourself.

Greene. I pray thee, how came thy head broke?

Will. Why, thou seest it is broke, dost thou not?

Shake. Standing against a stall, watching Arden's coming, a boy let down his shop-window and broke his head; whereupon arose a brawl, and in the tumult Arden escaped us and passed by unthought on. But forbearance is no acquittance; another time we'll do it, I warrant thee.

Greene. I pray thee, Will, make clean thy bloody brow, And let us bethink us on some other place Where Arden may be met with handsomely. Remember how devoutly thou hast sworn To kill the villain; think upon thine oath.

Will. Tush, I have broken five hundred oaths! But wouldst thou charm me to effect this deed, Tell me of gold, my resolution's fee;

Say thou seest Mosbie kneeling at my knees,
Offering me service for my high attempt.

And sweet Alice Arden, with a lap of crowns,

Comes with a lowly cursty to the earth,

Saying ‘Take this but for thy quarterage,
Such yearly tribute will I answer thee.’

Why, this would steel soft-mettled cowardice,
With which Black Will was never tainted yet.

I tell thee, Greene, the forlorn traveller.
Whose lips are glued with summer’s parching heat,
As I to finish Arden’s tragedy.

Seest thou this gore that cleaveth to my face?
Till Arden’s heart be panting in my hand.

Greene. Why, that’s well said; but what saith Shakebag?

Shake. I cannot paint my valour out with words:
But, give me place and opportunity,
Such mercy as the starven lioness,
When she is dry-sucked of her eager young,
Shows to the prey that next encounters her,
On Arden so much pity would I take.

Greene. So should it fare with men of firm resolve.

And now, sirs, seeing that this accident
Of meeting him in Paul’s hath no success,
Let us bethink us on some other place
Whose earth may swallow up this Arden’s blood.

Here enters Michael.

See, yonder comes his man: and wot you what?
The foolish knave is in love with Mosbie’s sister,
And for her sake, whose love he cannot get
Unless Mosbie solicit his suit.
The villain hath sworn the slaughter of his master.
We’ll question him, for he may stead us much, —
How now, Michael, whither are you going?

Mich. My master hath new-supped,
And I am going to prepare his chamber.

Greene. Where supped Master Arden?

Mich. At the Nag’s Head, at the eighteen-pence ordinary. — How now, Master Shakebag? what, Black

153: offering to do anything for Will in return for this worthy and noble endeavor (high attempt).¹

154: comes to Will curseying deeply, signaling a high degree of deference and submission to.

cursy = alternate form of curtsey; Will used the same expression curtsy to the earth act Act II.i.32 above.

155: money will stiffen even the weakest spine.

156: quarterly payment.³

158: as I am eager.

158: money will stiffen even the weakest spine.

162: stuck together.

164: sticks.

166: "here on out", ie. "from this time forward".¹

168: metaphorically, "express how brave I am".

170: paint my valour out with words:

172: "as I am eager".

173: "from time forward".¹

174: pumping or pulsating.¹

176: metaphorically, "express how brave I am".

178: metaphorically, "express how brave I am".

179: an inside-out sentence: Shakebag will show such mercy on Arden as a hungry lioness shows to its prey when her babies need food, and she has no more nourishment to give them through suckling.

182: = by.

184: = know.

186: pronounced as knave ‘s.

188: intercedes on his behalf, ie. sanctions the relationship.

190: = assist, help.²

192: = just eaten his dinner.

194: = bedroom.

196: = a meal could be had at the tavern for this fixed price.
Will! God's dear lady, how chance your face is so bloody?

**Will.** Go to, sirrah, there is a **chance** in it; this sauciness in you will **make you be knocked**.

**Mich.** Nay, an you be offended, I'll be gone.

**Greene.** Stay, Michael, you may not [es]cape us so. Michael, I know you love your master well.

**Mich.** Why, so I do; but **wherefore urge you that**?

**Greene.** Because I think you love your mistress better.

**Mich.** **So think not I;** but say, i'faith, what, if I should?

**Shake.** Come to the purpose, Michael; we hear You have a pretty love in Feversham.

**Mich.** Why, have I two or three, what's that to thee!

**Will.** You deal too mildy with the peasant. Thus it is: − 'Tis known to us that you love Mosbie’s sister; We know besides that you ha't en your oath To **further** Mosbie to your mistress’ bed, And kill your master for his sister’s sake. Now, sir, a poorer coward than yourself Was never fostered in the coast of Kent: How comes it then that such a knave as you Dare **swear** a matter of such consequence?

**Greene.** Ah, Will −

**Will.** Tush, **give me leave**, there’s no more but this: Sith thou hast sworn, we dare **discover all**;

And hadst thou or should'st thou utter it, We have devised a **complat** under hand, Whatever shall betide to any of us, To send thee **roundly** to the devil of hell.

And therefore thus: I am the very man, Marked in my birth-hour by the **Destinies**.

To **give** an end to Arden’s life on earth;

Thou but a **member** but to whet the knife Whose edge must search the **closet** of his **breast**;

---

203: **Go to** = an expression of impatience: "get out of here". **chance** = accident or misfortune;¹ Will again engages in some mild wordplay.

= "earn you a beating."

= if.

211: "why do you make a point of mentioning that?"

= ie. Alice.

= "I do not think that", ie. "that is not true". = truly.

212: "why do you make a point of mentioning that?"

= Shakebag should stop treating Michael so gingerly, and be more direct.

= promote, ie. help.

= raised.

= ie. swear to perform.

232: "give me permission", ie. "let me speak".

= since. = reveal everything.

= ie. "tell anyone about our goings-on".

= secret plan; **complat** is usually emended to **complot**.

238: "that should anything (bad) happen to any of us". 239: briefly, "to kill you."

**roundly** = directly.²

= ie. the Fates, the three sister-goddesses who determined the length of each person's life, cutting the cord of life when an individual's moment of death was at hand.

= put.

243-4: Michael's only job is to metaphorically sharpen the knife that will be used to kill Arden, ie. he should help out with the planning, but Will wants to reserve the actual murder for himself.

**a member** = ie. one part of the conspiracy;¹ though McLuskie suggests "an assistant".
Thy office is but to appoint the place,
And train thy master to his tragedy;
Mine to perform it when occasion serves.
Then be not nice, but here devise with us
How and what way we may conclude his death.

Shake. So shalt thou purchase Mosbie for thy friend,
And by his friendship gain his sister’s love.

Greene. So shall thy mistress be thy favourer,
And thou disburdened of the oath thou made.

Mich. Well, gentlemen, I cannot but confess,
Sith you have urged me so apparently,
That I have vowed my master Arden’s death;
And he whose kindly love and liberal hand
Doth challenge nought but good deserts of me,
I will deliver over to your hands.
This night come to his house at Aldersgate;
The doors I’ll leave unlocked against you come.
No sooner shall ye enter through the latch,
Over the threshold to the inner court,
But on your left hand shall you see the stairs
That leads directly to my master’s chamber;
There take him and dispose him as ye please.
Now it were good we parted company;
What I have promisèd, I will perform.

Will. Should you deceive us, ’twould go wrong with you.

Mich. I will accomplish all I have revealed.

Will. Come, let’s go drink: cholér makes me as dry as a dog.

[Exeunt Will, Greene, and Shakebag. Manet Michael.]

Mich. Thus feeds the lamb securely on the down.

Whilst through the thicket of an arbour brake
The hunger-bitten wolf o'erpries his hant and takes advantage for to eat him up. Ah, harmless Arden, how, how hast thou misdoin.

That thus thy gentle life is levelled at? The many good turns that thou hast done to me. Now must I quittance with betraying thee. I that should take the weapon in my hand And buckler thee from ill-intending foes, Do lead thee with a wicked fraudulent smile, As unsuspected, to the slaughter-house. So have I sworn to Mosbie and my mistress, So have I promised to the slaughtermen; And should I not deal currently with them, Their lawless rage would take revenge on me.

Tush, I will spurn at mercy for this once:

Let pity lodge where feeble women lie,
I am resolved, and Arden needs must die.

[Exit Michael.]

END OF ACT II.
ACT III.

SCENE I.

A Room in Franklin's House, at Aldersgate in London.

Enter Arden and Franklin.

Arden. No, Franklin, no: if fear or stormy threats,
If love of me or care of womanhood,
If fear of God or common speech of men,
Who mangle credit with their wounding words,
And couch dishonour as dishonour buds,

Might join repentance in her wanton thoughts,

No question then but she would turn the leaf
And sorrow for her dissolution;

But she is rooted in her wickedness,
Perverse and stubborn, not to be reclaimed;

Good counsel is to her as rain to weeds,

And reprehension makes her vice to grow
As Hydra's head that plenished by decay.

Her faults, methink, are painted in my face,
For every searching eye to over-read;

And Mosbie's name, a scandal unto mine,
Is deeply trenchéd in my blushing brow.

Ah, Franklin, Franklin, when I think on this,

Act III: according to the New Oxford Shakespeare, the first five Scenes of Act III are thought to have been written by Shakespeare.

1-20: Arden has slipped back into the depression and pessimism which marked his mind at the beginning of our play: Alice is not to be won back.

fear = instilling fear (in Alice).

= the natural care a woman has for her husband.

= talk.

4: who ruin reputations with their slanderous gossiping.

5: an obscure line: assuming an agricultural metaphor is intended, there is a meaning for couch in the OED, "to lay a grain on the ground after soaking it in water to soften it"; the meaning of the line roughly then is "and cultivate dishonour wherever it sprouts", or some such.

6: "(if any of the things mentioned in lines 1-5) could lead Alice to repent (for her past behaviour) in her lascivious (wanton) mind".

join = impose;¹ used frequently in collocation with repentance.

= an early version of the still-common expression, turn over a new leaf.

= a verb. = dissolve or immoral living.¹

= note the return to an agricultural metaphor.

= could mean "won back" or "reformed".¹,²

11: just as needed rain nourishes undesirable weeds in a garden, good advice only encourages Alice's execrable side to flourish.

12-13: and censure (reprehension) drives Alice to be increasingly wicked, just as when one of the hydra's heads is cut off (a good thing), two more grow back to take its place (a bad thing).

Hercules, for his famous Second Labour, had to kill the Hydra, the multi-headed monster of Lerna in Greece.

plenished = replenished; the quarto prints perished, emended to plenished by Bayne; other editors have suggested emending to flourished or nourished.

decay = (its) destruction.¹

14-15: Arden feels that people can see he has been cuck- olded just by looking on his face.

over-read = read over.

= carved or engraved.¹,²
My heart’s grief rends my other powers
Worse than the conflict at the hour of death.

Frank. Gentle Arden, leave this sad lament:
She will amend, and so your griefs will cease;
Or else she’ll die, and so your sorrows end.
If neither of these two do haply fall,

Yet let your comfort be that others bear
Your woes, twice doubled all, with patience.

Arden. My house is irksome; there I cannot rest.
Frank. Then stay with me in London; go not home.
Arden. Then that base Mosbie doth usurp my room
And makes his triumph of my being thence.
At home or not at home, where’er I be,
Here, here it lies, ah Franklin, here it lies
That will not out till wretched Arden dies.

Here enters Michael.

Frank. Forget your griefs a while; here comes your man.
Arden. What a-clock is’t, sirrah?
Arden. See, see, how runs away the weary time!
Come, Master Franklin, shall we go to bed?

[Exeunt Arden and Michael. Manet Franklin.]

Frank. I pray you, go before; I’ll follow you. –
Ah, what a hell is fretful jealousy!

What pity-moving words, what deep-fetched sighs,
What grievous groans and overlading woes
Accompanies this gentle gentleman!
Now will he shake his care-oppressed head,
Then fix his sad eyes on the sullen earth,
Ashamed to gaze upon the open world;

Now will he cast his eyes up towards the heavens,
Looking that ways for redress of wrong:

Sometimes he seeketh to beguile his grief
And tells a story with his careful tongue;

Then comes his wive’s dishonour in his thoughts
And in the middle cutteth off his tale,
Pouring fresh sorrow on his weary limbs.
So woe-begone, so inly-charged with woe,
Was never any lived and bare it so.

Here re-enters Michael.

Mich. My master would desire you come to bed.

Frank. Is he himself already in his bed?

[Exit Franklin. Manet Michael.]

Mich. He is, and fain would have the light away. –

Conflicting thoughts, encampèd in my breast,
Awake me with the echo of their strokes,
And I, a judge to censure either side,
Can give to neither wishèd victory.

My master’s kindness pleads to me for life
With just demand, and I must grant it him:
My mistress she hath forced me with an oath,
For Susan’s sake, the which I may not break,
For that is nearer than a master’s love:

That grim-faced fellow, pitiless Black Will,
And Shakebag, stern in bloody stratagem, –
Two rougher ruffians never lived in Kent, –
Have sworn my death, if I infringe my vow,
A dreadful thing to be considered of.

Methinks I see them with their bolstered hair

Staring and grinning in thy gentle face,
And in their ruthless hands their daggers drawn,
Insulting o’er thee with a peck of oaths,

59: ie. embarrassed to be seen in public.

61: looking to God to rectify the harms done to him.
redress = perhaps a trisyllable: RE-der-ess.

62-63: sometimes Arden will try to divert (beguile) himself
from his worries by telling stories.
careful = anxiety-worn.

= ie. wife’s; wive was sometimes used for wife.
= suddenly stops speaking.

= internally filled.
bore.

79-107 seem particularly Shakespearean.

= "he would like to put out the light."

79-82: Michael considers his two options, to wit, whether or not to participate in the conspiracy to have Arden killed. He views the two possible choices as metaphorically engaged in combat in his mind, and the echoes of their blows (strokes) keep him awake. As the judge of the contest, Michael cannot decide to whom to award victory, ie. which choice to make.

censure either side = judge whom should receive the victory.

87: the combined forces of his promise to Alice and his desire for Susan outweigh Michael’s affection for Arden.

= note the wordplay.

= "break my promise (to help them)".
= think about.

= the meaning here is obscure: bolstered (printed bolstered in the quarto), meaning "raised" or "supported" in some way, doesn’t really make any sense. Jackson suggests emending to bolstered, or balterd, meaning "tangled" or "matted", as if clotted by coagulated blood.

= ie. Arden’s; in an apostrophe, Michael addresses his absent master.

= exulting. = a fourth of a bushel, ie. a great number.
Whilst thou submissive, pleading for relief,
Art mangled by their ireful instruments.
Methinks I hear them ask where Michael is,
And pitiless Black Will cries: ‘Stab the slave!
The peasant will detect the tragedy!’
The wrinkles in his foul death-threatening face
Gapes open wide, like graves to swallow men.
My death to him is but a merriment,
And he will murther me to make him sport. −
He comes, he comes! ah, Master Franklin, help!
Call on the neighbours, or we are but dead!

Here enters Franklin and Arden.

Frank. What dismal outcry calls me from my rest?

Arden. What hath occasioned such a fearful cry?
Speak, Michael: hath any injured thee?

Mich. Nothing, sir; but as I fell asleep,
Upon the threshold leaning to the stairs,
I had a fearful dream that troubled me,
And in my slumber thought I was beset
With murtherer-thieves that came to rifle me.
My trembling joints witness my inward fear:
I crave your pardons for disturbing you.

Arden. So great a cry for nothing I ne’er heard.
What? are the doors fast locked and all things safe?

Mich. I cannot tell; I think I locked the doors.

Arden. I like not this, but I’ll go see myself. −
Ne’er trust me but the doors were all unlocked:
This negligence not half contenteth me.
Get you to bed, and if you love my favour,
Let me have no more such pranks as these. −
Come, Master Franklin, let us go to bed.

Frank. Ay, by my faith; the air is very cold. −
Michael, farewell; I pray thee dream no more.

[Exeunt.]

ACT III, SCENE II.

Outside Franklin’s house.

Here enters Will, Greene, and Shakebag.

Shake. Black night hath hid the pleasures of the day,
And sheeting darkness overhangs the earth,
And with the black fold of her cloudy robe

1-4: a poetic description of the night.
= enfolding or enveloping, as in a sheet.
Obscures us from the eyesight of the world,  
In which sweet silence such as we triumph.

The lazy minutes linger on their time,  
As loth to give due audit to the hour.

Till in the watch our purpose be complete  
And Arden sent to everlasting night. –

Greene, get you gone, and linger here about,  
And at some hour hence come to us again,  
Where we will give you instance of his death.

Greene. Speed to my wish, whose will so e’er says no;  
And so I’ll leave you for an hour or two.

[Exit Greene.]

Will. I tell thee, Shakebag, would this thing were done:  
I am so heavy that I can scarce go;  
This drowsiness in me bodes little good.

Shake. How now, Will? become a precisian?

Nay, then let’s go sleep, when bugs and fears  
Shall kill our courages with their fancy’s work.

Will. Why, Shakebag, thou mistakes me much,  
And wrongs me too in telling me of fear.  
Were’t not a serious thing we go about,  
It should be slipt till I had fought with thee,

To let thee know I am no coward, I.  
I tell thee, Shakebag, thou abusest me.

Shake. Why, thy speech bewrayed an inly-kind of fear,  
And savoured of a weak-relenting spirit.

Go forward now in that we have begun,  
And afterwards attempt me when thou darest.

Will. And if I do not, Heaven cut me off!

But let that pass, and show me to this house,  
Where thou shalt see I’ll do as much as Shakebag.

Shake. This is the door; – but soft, methinks ’tis shut.  
The villain Michael hath deceivèd us.

Will. Soft, let me see, Shakebag; – ’tis shut indeed.  
Knock with thy sword, perhaps the slave will hear.
Shake. It will not be; the white-livered peasant
Is gone to bed, and laughs us both to scorn.
Will. And he shall buy his merriment as dear
As ever coistril bought so little sport:
Ne’er let this sword assist me when I need,
But rust and canker after I have sworn.
If I, the next time that I meet the hind,
Lop not away his leg, his arm, or both.
Shake. And let me never draw a sword again,
Nor prosper in the twilight, cockshut light.
When I would fleece the wealthy passenger,
But lie and languish in a loathsome den,
Hated and spit at by the goers-by.
And in that death may die unpitièd,
If I, the next time that I meet the slave,
Cut not the nose from off the coward’s face
And trample on it for this villainy.
Will. Come, let’s go seek out Greene; I know he’ll swear.
Shake. He were a villain, an he would not swear.
’Twould make a peasant swear amongst his boys,
That ne’er durst say before but ‘yea’ and ‘no’,
To be thus flouted of a coistril.
Will. Shakebag, let’s seek out Greene, and in the morning
At the alehouse butting Arden’s house
Watch the out-coming of that prick-eared cur.
And then let me alone to handle him.

[Exeunt.]

ACT III, SCENE III.

A room in Franklin’s house as before.

Here enters Arden, Franklin, and Michael.
Arden. Sirrah, get you back to Billingsgate

And learn what time the tide will serve our turn;
Come to us in Paul's. First go make the bed,
And afterwards go hearken for the flood.

[Exit Michael.]

Come, Master Franklin, you shall go with me. This night I dreamed that, being in a park,
A toil was pitched to overthrow the deer,
And I upon a little rising hill
Stood whistly watching for the herd's approach.

Even there, methoughts, a gentle slumber took me,
And summoned all my parts to sweet repose;
But in the pleasure of this golden rest
An ill-thewed foster had removed the toil,

And rounded me with that beguiling home
Which late, methought, was pitched to cast the deer.

With that he blew an evil-sounding horn,
And at the noise another herdsman came,

With fauchon drawn, and bent it at my breast,
Crying aloud, 'Thou art the game we seek!'
With this I waked and trembled every joint,
Like one obscured in a little bush,
That sees a lion foraging about,
And, when the dreadful forest-king is gone,
He pries about with timorous suspect
Throughout the thorny casements of the brake,

And will not think his person dangerless.

But quakes and shivers, though the cause be gone:

So, trust me, Franklin, when I did awake,
I stood in doubt whether I waked or no:
Such great impression took this fond surprise.

God grant this vision bedeem me any good.

Frank. This fantasy doth rise from Michael’s fear,
Who being awakèd with the noise he made,
His troubled senses yet could take no rest;
And this, I warrant you, procured your dream.

Arden. It may be so, God frame it to the best:
But oftentimes my dreams presage too true.

Frank. To such as note their nightly fantasies,
Some one in twenty may incur belief;
But use it not, ’tis but a mockery.

Arden. Come, Master Franklin; we’ll now walk in
Paul’s
And dine together at the ordinary,
And by my man’s direction draw to the key.
And with the tide go down to Feversham.
Say, Master Franklin, shall it not be so?

Frank. At your good pleasure, sir; I’ll bear you company.

[Exeunt.]

ACT III, SCENE IV.

Aldersgate.

Here enters Michael at one door.

Here enters Greene, Will, and Shakebag at another door.

Will. Draw, Shakebag, for here’s that villain Michael.

Greene. First, Will, let’s hear what he can say.

Will. Speak, milksop slave, and never after speak.

Mich. For God’s sake, sirs, let me excuse myself:
For here I swear, by Heaven and earth and all,
I did perform the utmost of my task,
And left the doors unbolted and unlocked.
But see the chance: Franklin and my master

= ie. really was awake.
= ie. "had been made on me by this foolish (fond) and unexpected event", though surprise could refer more specifically to a surprise attack.¹
= ie. be a good omen, ie. not bode any evil.
bedeem = likely meaning "bode"; interestingly, the word does not appear in the OED; bedeem also adds a superfluous syllable to the line.
= assure. = brought about.
= ie. may God cause all to turn out for the best.
= accurately predict what will happen.
44: "for those people who recall their dreams each morning". = are believable.
46: "but don't engage a dream, it is only something to be ridiculed."¹

50: "and then head down to the wharf (key, or quay) when Michael (my man) advises us to go".
51: the men will return to Kent by boat rather than by horse.

¹: ie. "draw your sword".

5: milksop = the sense is "feeble, cowardly and effeminate". never after speak = ie. because he will be dead.

= to the utmost.¹

= (bad) luck.
Were very late conferring in the porch,
And Franklin left his napkin where he sat
With certain gold knit in it, as he said.

Being in bed, he did bethink himself,
And coming down he found the doors unshut:
He locked the gates, and brought away the keys,
For which offence my master rated me.
But now I am going to see what flood it is,
For with the tide my master will away:
Where you may front him well on Rainham Down,
A place well-fitting such a stratagem.

Will. Your excuse hath somewhat mollified my choler.

Why now, Greene, 'tis better now nor e'er it was.

Greene. But, Michael, is this true?

Mich. As true as I report it to be true.

Shake. Then, Michael, this shall be your penance,
To feast us all at the Salutation.

Where we will plat our purpose th[o]roughly.

Greene. And, Michael, you shall bear no news of this tide,
Because they two may be in Rainham Down
Before your master.

Mich. Why, I'll agree to anything you'll have me,
So you will except of my company.

[Exeunt.]

ACT III, SCENE V.

Arden’s House at Feversham.

Scene V: here is a scene that seems like a particularly good candidate to have been written by Shakespeare: the language
Here enters Mosbie.

Mosb. Disturbed thoughts drives me from company
And dries my marrow with their watchfulness:
Continual trouble of my moody brain
Feebles my body by excess of drink.
And nips me as the bitter north-east wind
Doth check the tender blossoms in the spring.
Well fares the man, howe’er his cates do taste,
That tables not with foul suspicion:
And he but pines amongst his delicates,
Whose troubled mind is stuffed with discontent.
My golden time was when I had no gold;
Though then I wanted, yet I slept secure;
My daily toil begat me night’s repose,
My night’s repose made daylight fresh to me.
But since I climbed the top-bough of the tree
And sought to build my nest among the clouds,
Each gentle starry gale doth shake my bed,
And makes me dread my downfall to the earth.

is noticeably denser than we have encountered heretofore, weaving in and out from one metaphor to the next; there is also a noticeable increase in the number of gardening and agricultural allusions, a signal feature of the Bard's writing.

1-2: Mosbie's restless thoughts deprive him of energy, and even drive him to avoid the company of others.


marrow = considered the seat of courage or spirit.

watchfulness = vigilance or wakefulness, ie. his troubled thoughts never rest.

3-4: excessive brooding causes Mosbie to suffer from melancholia, which weakens his body.


excess of drink = ceaseless drinking (a metaphor for thinking, or consuming) of his thoughts (Bourus, p. 151).

5-6: Mosbie's troubled thoughts pinch at him just as a cold wind prevents or stops the further growth of vulnerable plants which are beginning to bloom in the spring-time.

7-8: no matter how his food (cates) tastes (good or bad), a man is doing well if he does not have to eat (table) while possessed of a mind filled with anxiety and doubts (suspicion).

9-10: but if that man has a troubled mind, he is destined to remain tormented (he pines) even when he is trying to enjoy his favourite dishes (delicates).

11-12: a common refrain: Mosbie was happiest when he had nothing!


wanted = lacked material goods and wealth.

13-14: working hard all day allowed him to sleep easily at night, and a good night's sleep permitted him to wake up feeling refreshed each day.

15-16: metaphorically and proverbially, "but since I began to imagine myself climbing the social ladder and becoming wealthy".


16: an early version of the more familiar idea of "building castles in the air".

17-18: ie. every little thing causes Mosbie to fret over the entire plan coming apart. These lines continue the complex metaphor of lines 15-16: every breeze (gentle gale) causes him to fear falling from the top of line 15's tree, where he built his nest.


starry = a word which has caused much puzzlement, since there is no reason for a gale to be starry; Hopkinson emends starry to stirring, while Bayne changes it to stirry, a word which does not exist. A common collocation of the era was sturdy gale, presenting us with yet another possible emendation.


shake my bed = shake his bough or nest, hence meaning "disturbs my peace of mind".
But whither doth contemplation carry me?

The way I seek to find, where pleasure dwells,
Is hedged behind me that I cannot back,
But needs must on, although to danger’s gate.

Then, Arden, perish thou by that decree;
For Greene doth ear the land and weed thee up
To make my harvest nothing but pure corn.

And for his pains I'll heave him up a while,
And after smother him to have his wax:

Such bees as Greene must never live to sting.
Then is there Michael and the painter too,
Chief actors to Arden’s overthrow;
Who when they shall see me sit in Arden’s seat,
They will insult upon me for my meed,
Or fright me by detecting of his end.

I'll none of that, for I can cast a bone
To make these curs pluck out each other’s throat,
And then am I sole ruler of mine own.

Yet Mistress Arden lives; but she’s myself,
And holy Church rites makes us two but one.
But what for that? I may not trust you, Alice:
You have supplanted Arden for my sake,
And will extirpen me to plant another.

19: "but to where is all this reflection leading to?"

20-22: it is too late for Mosbie to change the course of events. Mosbie is actually blocked (hedged) from reversing the metaphoric direction he is travelling: his chosen path, at the end of which he hopes to find joy and gratification, will more likely lead him to the precipice of danger.

Mosbie’s path represents his decisions to tie his fortune together with Alice’s and to eliminate Arden.

Then is there Michael and the painter too,
Chief actors to Arden’s overthrow;
Who when they shall see me sit in Arden’s seat,
They will insult upon me for my meed,
Or fright me by detecting of his end.

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To make these curs pluck out each other’s throat,
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Yet Mistress Arden lives; but she’s myself,
And holy Church rites makes us two but one.
But what for that? I may not trust you, Alice:
You have supplanted Arden for my sake,
And will extirpen me to plant another.

= decision.²

24-25: literally, Mosbie, the property owner, will reap the benefit of Greene’s farming the land; Mosbie means that he will let Greene do the grunt work involved in eliminating Arden, but it is he, Mosbie, who will gain the most from it.

ear the land = plough the fields.¹²

26-27: another metaphor: Greene will have to die.

pains = efforts or work (on Mosbie’s behalf).

heave him up = "extol him",⁸ but Bayne interestingly emends this to hive him up, meaning "to enclose or shelter Greene in a hive", like a bee,¹ in order to fill out the metaphor of lines 27-28.

smother him = ie. smother him out; the allusion is to the practice of smoking bees out of their hives in order to safely collect the wax and honey within.⁸

have his wax = ie. reap the benefit of Greene’s work.

28: ie. if Greene is permitted to live, he may later on bring trouble onto Mosbie, because he knows too much!

= ruin, destruction.
= ie. home.

32: "my reward (meed)¹ for my efforts will be to be scorned by Michael and Clarke (who know how I got here)".

33: or try to scare Mosbie (presumably via blackmail) by threatening to reveal (detect) everything they know.

34-35: Mosbie can prevent any of this from happening by getting Michael and Clarke the painter to focus on fighting each other over Susan; the image is of a bone tossed into a pack of dogs who tear each other apart as each attempts to collect the bone for itself.

36: ie. only then will Mosbie finally be in complete control of his own destiny.

37-39: for a moment, Mosbie wonders if he can trust Alice: what if she turns on him? but then Mosbie remembers that after Arden is dead, he and Alice will be married, so he will not have to worry on that score – or will he?

makes us two but one = ie. "transforms the two of us into a single entity."

40-41: another planting metaphor: after all, if Alice has replaced her first husband (Arden) with Mosbie, might she not one day do the same to him?
'Tis fearful sleeping in a serpent's bed,  
And I will cleanly rid my hands of her.  

Here enters Alice.  

But here she comes, and I must flatter her.—  
How now, Alice? what, sad and passionate?  
Make me partaker of thy pensiveness:  

Fire divided burns with lesser force.  

Alice.  But I will dam that fire in my breast  
Till by the force thereof my part consume.  
Ah, Mosbie!  

Mosb.  Such deep pathaires, like to a cannon’s burst  
Discharged against a ruined wall,  
Breaks my relenting heart in thousand pieces.  

Ungentle Alice, thy sorrow is my sore;  

Thou know’st it well, and ’tis thy policy  
To forge distressful looks to wound a breast  
Where lies a heart that dies when thou art sad.  
It is not love that loves to anger love.  

Alice.  It is not love that loves to murther love.  

Mosb.  How mean you that?  

Alice.  Thou knowest how dearly Arden loved me.  

Mosb.  And then?  

Alice.  And then—conceal the rest, for ’tis too bad,  
Lest that my words be carried with the wind,  
And published in the world to both our shames.  

I pray thee, Mosbie, let our springtime wither;  

Our harvest else will yield but loathsome weeds.  
Forget, I pray thee, what hath passed betwix us,  
For now I blush and tremble at the thoughts!  

Mosb.  What? are you changed?
Alice. Ay, to my former happy life again,
From title of an odious strumpet’s name
To honest Arden’s wife, not Arden’s honest wife.

Ha, Mosbie! ’tis thou has rifled me of that
And made me slanderous to all my kin;
Even in my forehead is thy name ingraven,
A mean artificer, that low-born name.

I was bewitched: woe worth the hapless hour
And all the causes that enchanted me!

Mosb. Nay, if thou ban, let me breathe curses forth,
And if you stand so nicely at your fame,
Let me repent the credit I have lost.

I have neglected matters of import
That would have stated me above thy state.
Forslowed advantages, and spurned at time:

Ay. Fortune’s right hand Mosbie hath forsook
To take a wanton giglot by the left.

I left the marriage of an honest maid,
Whose dowry would have weighed down all thy wealth,
Whose beauty and demeanour far exceeded thee:

This certain good I lost for changing bad,
And wrapt my credit in thy company.

I was bewitched, – that is no theme of thine,
And thou unhallowed has enchanted me.

But I will break thy spells and exorcisms,
And put another sight upon these eyes
That shewed my heart a raven for a dove.

84: not = ie. if not.
   honest = Alice engages in a bit of wordplay: the line's first honest carries its modern meaning, while the second honest means "chaste".

85: plundered, robbed. = ie. her former happy life (line 83).

86: A source of disgrace or shame.

88: Alice's disgrace can be seen on her face.

90: I was bewitched = for the second time in the play.

92: = curse.

94: "and if you are going to dwell so scrupulously (nicely) on your reputation (fame)"; Mosbie is sarcastic.

96-98: Mosbie has wasted his time (spurned at time) on Alice, time that he could have spent working to improve his own standing in the world.

   stated...state = punning, "raised my rank to a level above yours."

   Forslowed advantages = put off taking advantage of opportunities that could have greatly benefited him.

   spurned at time = ie. treated time with contempt.

99-100: Mosbie has refused the hand of Fortune, who was poised to bring him great gains, in order to take that of Alice, the slutty harlot (wanton giglot).

   Fortune was frequently personified.

101-3: Mosbie claims to have been in a position to marry a woman of great wealth and beauty.

   honest maid = chaste and previously unmarried woman, ie. a virgin.

   weighed down = ie. outweighed.

105: "and linked my reputation to yours by my associating with you."

   = ie. "exclusive theme (ie. explanation) of yours".

   = wickedly.

   = summoning of spirits (for purposes of bewitching).

109: ie. "and look elsewhere".

110: Mosbie's eyes deceived him: he thought he was falling in love with a turtle-dove (dove) instead of a (black and ugly) raven.
Thou art not fair, I viewed thee not till now; Thou art not kind, till now I knew thee not; And now the rain hath beaten off thy gilt.

Thy worthless copper shows thee counterfeit.

It grieves me not to see how foul thou art, But mads me that ever I thought thee fair. Go, get thee gone, a copesmate for thy hinds; I am too good to be thy favourite.

Alice. Ay, now I see, and too soon find it true, Which often hath been told me by my friends, That Mosbie loves me not but for my wealth, Which too incredulous I ne'er believed. Nay, hear me speak, Mosbie, a word or two; I'll bite my tongue if it speak bitterly. Look on me, Mosbie, or I'll kill myself: Nothing shall hide me from thy stormy look.

If thou cry war, there is no peace for me; I will do penance for offending thee, And burn this prayer-book, where I here use The holy word that had converted me. See, Mosbie, I will tear away the leaves, And all the leaves, and in this golden cover Shall thy sweet phrases and thy letters dwell; And thereon will I chiefly meditate, And hold no other sect but such devotion.

Wilt thou not look? is all thy love overwhelmed? Wilt thou not hear? what malice stops thine ears? Why speaks thou not? what silence ties thy tongue?

Thou hast been sighted as the eagle is, And heard as quickly as the fearful hare, And spoke as smoothly as an orator,

When I have bid thee hear or see or speak, And art thou sensible in none of these?

Thou art not fair, I viewed thee not till now; Thou art not kind, till now I knew thee not; And now the rain hath beaten off thy gilt.

Thy worthless copper shows thee counterfeit.

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Thou hast been sighted as the eagle is, And heard as quickly as the fearful hare, And spoke as smoothly as an orator,

When I have bid thee hear or see or speak, And art thou sensible in none of these?
Weigh all thy good turns with this little fault.
And I deserve not Mosbie’s muddy looks.
A fence of trouble is not thickened still:
Be clear again, I’ll ne’er more trouble thee.

Mosb. O no, I am a base artificer:
My wings are feathered for a lowly flight.
Mosbie? fie! no, not for a thousand pound.
Make love to you? why, ’tis unpardonable;
We beggars must not breathe where gentiles are.

Alice. Sweet Mosbie is as gentle as a king,
And I too blind to judge him otherwise.
Flowers do sometimes spring in fallow lands,
Weeds in gardens, roses grow on thorns;

So, whatsoever my Mosbie’s father was,
Himself is valued gentle by his worth.

Mosb. Ah, how you women can insinuate,
And clear a trespass with your sweet-set tongue!

I will forget this quarrel, gentle Alice,
Provided I’ll be tempted so no more.

Here enters Bradshaw.

Alice. Then with thy lips seal up this new-made match.

Mosb. Soft, Alice, here comes somebody.

Alice. How now, Bradshaw, what’s the news with you?

145: an imperative: “balance all the good things (turns) I have done for you against this one minor offense (fault) of mine”.¹

147: an obscure line: Hopkinson suggests, “our quarrel has not thickened into such an impossible barrier as to prevent a reconciliation” (p. 52):² thickened is likely used to mean “opaque” or “muddied”, and clear (line 148) is intended to be its antonym.

Alternately, Hopkinson proposes emending the end of line 147 to thickened; ’twill.

Barker emends fence to fount, changing the meaning of line 147 to, "a disturbed pool will not remain muddy forever."

still = forever, always.

= lowly craftsman; Mosbie, bitter and sarcastic, recalls Alice's words of line 89 above.

151: ie. Mosbie may not fly as high as do (ie. associate with) those of noble background.

= gentle people, ie. those of high birth; gentle was an alternate form of gentle.

156f: Alice relents.

gentle = honourable, noble.²

158-9: the sense is that birth alone does not determine or unalterably fix one's path in life; Mosbie, like the flowers and roses of these lines, can have the characteristics of those of high birth, even if he was not born and raised in genteel surroundings.

Weeds in gardens = if the point is that beautiful things can appear in unexpected places, then this clause must be incorrect, as it makes the opposite point! For this reason, Bourus emends it to Weed breeds gardens.

fallow = unproductive, uncultivated.¹

163-4: Mosbie harshly condemns the ability of women to talk themselves out of any difficulty, especially when they are trying to excuse their own bad behaviour or disparaging verbal assaults.

ingratiate yourselves”.¹

excuse a transgression.

= tested.²

170: Alice prepares to kiss Mosbie.

= "hold on".
Brad. I have little news, but here’s a letter
That Master Greene importuned me to give you.

Alice. Go in, Bradshaw; call for a cup of beer;
’Tis almost supper-time, thou shalt stay with us.

Then she reads the letter.

‘We have missed of our purpose at London, but shall perform it by the way. We thank our neighbour Bradshaw. –

Yours, Richard Greene.’

How likes my love the tenor of this letter?

Mosb. Well, were his date completed and expired.

Alice. Ah, would it were! Then comes my happy hour:
Till then my bliss is mixed with bitter gall.

Come, let us in to shun suspicion.

Mosb. Ay, to the gates of death to follow thee.

[Exeunt.]

ACT III, SCENE VI.

Rainham Down, Kent.

Here enters Greene, Will, and Shakebag.

Shake. Come, Will, see thy tools be in a readiness!

Is not thy powder dank, or will thy flint strike fire?

Scene VI: the scene takes place in the rolling countryside surrounding Rainham, a town located five miles east of Rochester, on the road to Feversham, which lies another twelve miles away.

The scholars who prepared The New Oxford Shakespeare (2016) remark that the Bard’s authorship of Scene vi is “disputed”.

Entering Characters: having left London, our conspirators prepare for their third attempt on Arden’s life.

1-2: Shakebag wants Will to confirm that his pistols will work properly; not unexpectedly, Will will react poorly to the suggestion he does not know his business.

2: Shakebag describes the problems associated with the typical flintlock ignition system of a 16th century handgun. To fire, the pulled trigger releases a spring-action which causes a frizzen, or striker, to hammer onto a fragment of...
stone called a flint; the resulting sparks ignite the gunpowder, causing it to explode, propelling the ball, or bullet.\textsuperscript{19}

If the powder is wet (\textit{dank}), it will not ignite, and the weapon will not fire.

4-5: the sense is, "the answer to your questions is a self-evident 'yes'."

\textit{frozen} = the sense seems to be, "affixed permanently in".

= fuss.

7: "you better make me take an oath as to the truth of my answers to the (following) questions"; Will is no stranger to heavy sarcasm.

\textit{intergatories} = abbreviated form of \textit{interrogatories}, referring to questions put to an accused;\textsuperscript{1} the word was also used by Spencer and Shakespeare in this period. The omission of a syllable in the middle of a word is called a \textit{syncopation}.\textsuperscript{1}

= ie. can tolerate. = name for a late-16th century pistol.\textsuperscript{1}

= "shut my eyes". = firing of the gun.

12: Will is ironically formal for a moment.

= on these hills.

16: "well, perhaps (\textit{haply}) it is true that you have picked more pockets in a crowd (\textit{throng}) than I have."

= the plural form of \textit{booty} was used to refer to items taken from another by force.\textsuperscript{1}

18-20: the difference between the value of the two thieves' lifetimes worth of plunder is greater than all the wealth possessed by Will and his entire family.

\textit{overplus} = surplus, excess.\textsuperscript{1}

21-23: Shakebag hates those people (to the same degree that he hates toads) whose speech can be biting, but who have never actually physically harmed another.

\textit{muscado} = the OED guesses this word to be a variation of "musket"; the OED further notes that in this era, the ending "-ado" was sometimes grafted onto the ends of words which originally possessed different endings, e.g. \textit{ambuscedo}, first appearing in the 1580's, was created out of thin air from \textit{ambuscade}.

25f: Will cannot bear Shakebag's insults.

= superfluous word which may be omitted for the sake of the meter.\textsuperscript{4}

30-33: Shakebag is unimpressed: even a coward like this fellow Jack could go around bragging that he had served
When he that gave it him holloed in his ear, 
And he supposed a cannon-bullet hit him.

Then they fight.

Greene. I pray you, sirs, list to Aesop’s talk:

Whilst two stout dogs were striving for a bone, 
There comes a cur and stole it from them both;

So, while you stand striving on these terms of manhood, 
Arden escapes us, and deceives us all.

Shake. Why, he begun.

Will. And thou shalt find I’ll end;
I do but slip it until better time:
But, if I do forget —

Then he kneels down and holds up his hands to Heaven.

Greene. Well, take your fittest standings, and once more

Lime well your twigs to catch this weary bird.

I’ll leave you, and at your dag’s discharge

Make towards, like the longing water-dog
That coucheth till the fowling-piece be off,
Then seizeth on the prey with eager mood.

Ah, might I see him stretching forth his limbs,
As I have seen them beat their wings ere now!

Shake. Why, that thou shalt see, if he come this way.

Greene. Yes, that he doth, Shakebag, I warrant thee:

in the army; Jack had been knocked out by a punch on his nose by another soldier, who then revived him by yelling in his ear; Jack subsequently thought he had been pulverized by a cannon-ball.

sounded = swooned, ie. passed out.
fillip = blow or punch.

Then they fight.

37f: Greene tries to stop the fight.
list…talk = "listen to one of Aesop's fables."

38-39: while two dogs were busy fighting over a bone, a third dog passing by took the unattended bone for itself. The lesson is obvious.

The story by Aesop actually involved a fox who carried away the carcass of a fawn after a lion and bear had nearly killed each other fighting over it. stout = fierce or stubborn.
cur = contemptuous term for "dog." = "arguing over which of you is more of a man". terms = words, = gets the better of.

= ie. started it.
= ie. end it.
46: "I will let this pass for now, but we will settle this issue at a more suitable time."

49-50: Will prepares to take another of his elaborate vows, but is interrupted by Greene.
= most advantageous position or place to stand from which to ambush Arden.

53: metaphorically, "set your trap"; lime, or bird-lime, is a sticky substance spread on the branches of trees or bushes, by which means birds may be captured.
weary = ie. wearisome, though some editors emend weary to wary.

55: make towards = ie. "I will come to you".
55-57: like the mood = like a hunting dog who eagerly waits for his master to shoot a water-bird, so it can jump into the water to retrieve the prey.
water-dog = hunting dog trained to retrieve waterfowl.
coucheth = remains lying down.
fowling-piece = light gun for shooting birds.

= expression used to describe the throes of a dying man.
= ie. like dying birds futilely trying to fly away after having been shot.

= assure.
But brawl not when I am gone in any case.  
But, sirs, be sure to speed him when he comes,  
And in that hope I’ll leave you for an hour.  

[Exit Greene.]

Here enters Arden, Franklin, and Michael.

Mich. 'Twere best that I went back to Rochester:  
The horse halts downright: it were not good  
He travelled in such pain to Feversham;  
Removing of a shoe may haply help it.  

Arden. Well, get you back to Rochester; but, sirrah, see  
Ye overtake us ere we come to Rainham Down,  
For 't will be very late ere we get home.  

Mich. [Aside] Ay, God he knows, and so doth Will and Shakebag,  
That thou shalt never go further than that down;  
And therefore have I pricked the horse on purpose,  
Because I would not view the massacre.  

[Exit Michael.]

Arden. Come, Master Franklin, onwards with your tale.  

Frank. I [do] assure you, sir, you task me much:  
A heavy blood is gathered at my heart,  
And on the sudden is my wind so short  
As hindereth the passage of my speech;  
So fierce a qualm yet ne'er assailed me.  

Arden. Come, Master Franklin, let us go on softly:  
The annoyance of the dust or else some meat  
You eat at dinner cannot brook you.  

I have been often so, and soon amended.  

Frank. Do you remember where my tale did leave?  

Arden. Ay, where the gentleman did check his wife.
Frank. She being reprehended for the fact, Witness produced that took her with the deed, Her glove brought in which there she left behind, And many other assured arguments, Her husband asked her whether it were not so. 

Arden. Her answer then? I wonder how she looked, Having forsworn it with such vehement oaths, And at the instant so approved upon her. 

Frank. First did she cast her eyes down to the earth, Watching the drops that fell amain from thence; Then softly draws she forth her handkercher, And modestly she wipes her tear-stained face; Then hemmed she out, to clear her voice should seem, And with a majesty addressed herself T'encounter all their accusations. –

Pardon me, Master Arden, I can no more; This fighting at my heart makes short my wind. 

Arden. Come, we are almost now at Rainham Down: Your pretty tale beguiles the weary way; I would you were in state to tell it out.

Shake. Stand close, Will, I hear them coming. Here enters Lord Cheiny with his men. 

Will. Stand to it, Shakebag, and be resolute. 

Cheiny. Is it so near night as it seems, Or will this black-faced evening have a shower? –

What, Master Arden? you are well met, I have longed this fortnight's day to speak with you: You are a stranger, man, in the Isle of Sheppy. 

= censured, criticized.² = deed. 

106: and a witness was procured who had caught her in doing the act. 

= strong pieces of evidence. 

112-3: considering she had so intensely vowed that she had not done it, but so suddenly proven to have in fact been guilty. 

116: ie. "we all watching the great volume of tears that fell from her eyes". 

"amain" = in full force, in great numbers.¹ 

= slowly. = alternate and regional form of handkerchief.¹ 

= ie. "ahemmed". 

= great dignity. = prepared herself, made ready.¹ 

= meet. 

123: the distress of telling the story cuts Franklin's breath short. 

126: Franklin's story-telling helps pass the time. 

"beguiles" = charms away.² 

127: "I wish you were in a condition to finish your story." 

= "let's hide". 

Entering Characters: Will and Shakebag, emerging from their hiding place as Arden comes near, are about to strike their prey, when Lord Cheiny, also travelling these roads, suddenly appears with his entourage of servants. 

We have for a moment perhaps a unique situation in Elizabethan drama, in which three separate parties are present on the stage, yet none of them can see the others; in fact, except for Will and Shakebag's hearing Arden approaching, none of the parties is even aware that any of the others is present. 

135-6: Cheiny comments on the rapid approach of darkness: is it already twilight, or did it suddenly cloud-up, as if it were about to rain? 

Sunset in Kent in February, which is when the events of our play took place, is around 17:30 (5:30 in the afternoon). 

= "how nice to run into you". 

= "I have been hoping for two weeks". 

139: Arden rarely visits, or perhaps has never visited, Cheiny at his home on Sheppy, off the northern coast of Kent's mainland.
Arden. Your honour’s always! bound to do you service.

Cheiny. Come you from London, and ne’er a man with you?

Arden. My man’s coming after, but here’s My honest friend that came along with me.

Cheiny. My Lord Protector’s man I take you to be.

Frank. Ay, my good lord, and highly bound to you.

Cheiny. You and your friend come home and sup with me.

Arden. I beseech your honour pardon me; I have made a promise to a gentleman, My honest friend, to meet him at my house; The occasion is great, or else would I wait on you.

Cheiny. Will you come to-morrow and dine with me, And bring your honest friend along with you? I have divers matters to talk with you about.

Arden. To-morrow we’ll wait upon your honour.

Cheiny. [To his men] One of you stay my horse at the top of the hill. — What! Black Will? for whose purse wait you? Thou wilt be hanged in Kent, when all is done.

Will. Not hanged, God save your honour; I am your bedesman, bound to pray for you.

Cheiny. I think thou ne’er said’st prayer in all thy life. — [To his men] One of you give him a crown: — And, sirrah, leave this kind of life;

If thou beest tainted for a penny-matter, And come in question, surely thou wilt truss. —

Come, Master Arden, let us be going; Your way and mine lies four miles together.

[Exeunt. Manet Black Will and Shakebag.]

man = this superfluous word may be omitted for the sake of the meter.

143: ne'er a man with you = ie. unaccompanied by his servant.

= a little later.

148: Cheiny recognizes and addresses Franklin; as described in the note located by our play's opening speech, Franklin is a follower (man) of the Duke of Somerset, who in 1551 was actually the ex-Lord Protector for Edward VI.

155-6: Arden stretches the truth a bit; he just wants to get home to see his wife as soon as possible. = it is a very important engagement.

= various.

171: one who prays, or is paid to pray, for another.¹

= appropriate form of address to one's inferior.

176-7: "if you are ever accused of even the most petty crime (penny-matter), and are brought to court, you will surely hang (truss)!"¹

tainted = aphetic form of attainted (see attaint, OED sense 7), meaning "accused".

179: here at Rainham, the parties are about 8 miles from Feversham; halfway between, Cheiny will catch a ferry to cross to Sheppy.

Stage Direction: all exit except for the two would-be murderers.

Lord Cheiny: Sir Thomas Cheyne (1482/87-1558) first came to notice as a henchman of Henry VII. Knighted in 1513, Cheyne served his government both as a soldier and diplomat, and was apparently famous for his proficiency in
the French language. After falling briefly out of favour with Henry VIII due to his quarreling with one Sir John Russell, the king forgave Cheyne and even deigned to stay with him at his house on the Isle of Sheppy for two days, along with Anne Boleyn, who was distantly related to Cheyne.

At Henry’s death, Cheyne was asked to make the arrangements for the coronation of Edward VI. Cheyne later supported the ascension of Lady Jane Grey to the throne, and even served on her Privy Council. Cheyne remained an active figure in English public life up to his death when he was somewhere in his 70’s.²⁷

Will. The devil break all your necks at four miles’ end! Zounds, I could kill myself for very anger!

Shake. Arden, thou hast wondrous holy luck. Did ever man escape as thou hast done?

Greene. What, is he down? is he dispatched?

Shake. Ay, in health towards Feversham, to shame us all.

Greene. The devil he is! why, sirs, how escaped he?

Shake. When we were ready to shoot,

Greene. The Lord of Heaven hath preserved him.

Will. Preserved a fig! The Lord Cheiny hath preserved him,

And bids him to a feast to his house at Shorlow.

Shake. But by the way once more I’ll meet with him,

Greene. Ay, and excuse ourselves to Mistress Arden: O, how she’ll chafe when she hears of this!

= Barker may be right to emend this clause to "The Lord of Heaven a fig!", ie. "The Lord of Heaven was not the one who preserved him!"

The word fig was used to express deep contempt, and was often accompanied by a rude gesture.

= invites. = the residence of Lord Cheiny, properly Shurland Hall, according to Barker.

= along the way, ie. on Arden's way to Cheiny's house the next day for dinner.

= ie. even if.

= ie. apologize on our behalves.¹ = fret or rage.
Shake. Why, I'll warrant you she'll think we dare not do it.

Will. Why, then let us go, and tell her all the matter,
And plat the news to cut him off to-morrow.

[Exeunt.]

END OF ACT III.

217: warrant = guarantee.
we dare not do it = ie. "we are afraid to do this."

= ie. plot a new plan.¹
ACT IV.

SCENE I.

Arden's House at Feversham.

Here enters Arden, Alice, Franklin, and Michael.

Arden. See how the Hours, the guardian of Heaven's gate,

Have by their toil removed the darksome clouds,
That Sol may well discern the trampled pace
Wherein he wont to guide his golden car.

The season fits; come, Franklin, let's away.

Alice. I thought you did pretend some special hunt,
That made you thus cut short the time of rest.

Arden. It was no chase that made me rise so early,
But, as I told thee yesternight, to go
To the Isle of Sheppy, there to dine with my Lord Cheiny;
For so his honour late commanded me.

Alice. Ay, such kind husbands seldom want excuses;
Home is a wild-cat to a wandering wit.

The time hath been, − would God it were not past, −
That honour's title nor a lord's command
Could once have drawn you from these arms of mine.
But my deserts or your desires decay.

Scene I: Arden, Franklin and Michael arrived at Arden's home in Feversham late in the evening after the end of the previous scene. It is now sunrise the next morning.

1-4: poetically, Arden announces the brightening of the sky and the rising of the sun.
1: the reference is to the Horae (usually translated to Hours), the three sister-goddesses of the seasons and the division of time; one of their jobs was to protect the gates of Mt. Olympus.  
guardant = protector, guardian.  
2: briefly, "so that the sun god may see his path (pace)  
3-4: Sol, the Roman Helios, is the god of the sun; the god was imagined to bear the sun across the sky each day as he drove a chariot (car) pulled by four winged horses. 
discern = Bayne replaces the original quarto's deserve with the third edition's discern. 
wont = is accustomed.
7: Alice thought Arden was getting up early to go hunting. 
pretend = intend.
13: an "invitation" to share a meal with a man of such importance as Lord Cheiny is not to be refused. 
late = recently.
15f: Alice is caustic, but of course everything she says to Arden is part of an act. 
kind = possessing naturally tender feelings towards one's family. 
want = lack.
16: a cynical sentiment: men who spend a lot of time away from home do so because their wives are shrews. 
wild-cat = common term used to describe a savage or ill-tempered woman. 
= "I wish to".
18: "that neither a high-ranking official nor the invitation of a nobleman".
20: deserts = deservings or merit, or perhaps "good qualities." deserts = the earliest editions printed deserves and discerns here, but most editors emend to desires, as shown.
Or both; yet if true love may seem desert,
I merit still to have thy company.

Frank. Why, I pray you, sir, let her go along with us;
I am sure his honour will welcome her
And us the more for bringing her along.

Arden. Content; — [To Michael] sirrah, saddle your
mistress’ nag.

[Exit Michael.]

Alice. No, begged favour merits little thanks;
If I should go, our house would run away,
Or else be stolen; therefore, I’ll stay behind.

Arden. Nay, see how mistaking you are! I pray thee, go.

Alice. No, no, not now.

Arden. Then let me leave thee satisfied in this,
That time nor place nor persons alter me,
But that I hold thee dearer than my life.

Alice. That will be seen by your quick return.

Arden. And that shall be ere night, and if I live.

Farewell, sweet Alice, we mind to sup with thee.

[Exit Alice.]

Re-enter Michael.

Frank. Come, Michael, are our horses ready?

Mich. Ay, your horse are ready, but I am not ready,
for I have lost my purse, with six and thirty shillings
in it, with taking up of my master’s nag.

Frank. [To Arden] Why, I pray you, let us go before,
Whilst he stays behind to seek his purse.

Arden. Go to, sirrah, see you follow us to the Isle of
Sheppy
To my Lord Cheiny’s, where we mean to dine.
[Exeunt Arden and Franklin. Manet Michael.]

Mich. So, fair weather after you, for before you lies
Black Will and Shakebag in the broom close, too close for you: they’ll be your ferrymen to long home.

Here enters Clarke (the Painter).

But who is this? the painter, my corrival, that would needs win Mistress Susan.

Clark. How now, Michael? how doth my mistress and all at home?

Mich. Who? Susan Mosbie? she is your mistress, too?

Clark. Ay, how doth she and all the rest?

Mich. All’s well but Susan; she is sick.

Clark. Sick? Of what disease?

Mich. Of a great fear.

Clark. A fear of what?


Clark. A fever? God forbid!

Mich. Yes, faith, and of a lوردaine, too, as big as
yourself.

Clark. O, Michael, the spleen prickles you. Go to, you

carry an eye over Mistress Susan.

Mich. I’ faith, to keep her from the painter.

Clark. Why more from a painter than from a serving-creature like yourself?

Mich. Because you painters make but a painting table of a pretty wench, and spoil her beauty with blotting.

Clark. What mean you by that?

Mich. Why, that you painters paint lambs in the lining of wenches’ petticoats, and we serving-men put horns to them to make them become sheep.

Clark. Such another word will cost you a cuff or a knock.


Clark. Would Susan’s love lay upon this stroke.

[Then he breaks Michael’s head.]

Here enters Mosbie, Greene, and Alice.

Alice. I’ll lay my life, this is for Susan’s love. – Stayed you behind your master to this end? Have you no other time to brabble in But now when serious matters are in hand? – Say, Clarke, hast thou done the thing thou promised?

Clark. Ay, here it is; the very touch is death.

Alice. Then this, I hope, if all the rest do fail, Will catch Master Arden, And make him wise in death that lived a fool. –

[To Mosbie] Why should he thrust his sickle in our corn, Or what hath he to do with thee, my love, Or govern me that am to rule myself? –

(lordaine, usually modernized to lurdan) as great as yourself."¹ Michael's joke required the audience to have been familiar with the term fever-lurden, a regionalism that describes laziness as a medical condition.¹

98: the spleen prickles you = "your temper (spleen) is causing you to get all riled up (prickles you);" the spleen was thought to be the center of various emotions, including joy and melancholia.¹

Go to = "get out of here".

 ordinances = watch over, ie. "keep your eye on".¹

103-4: serving-creature = ie. servant.

112-3: and we...sheep = ie. "and we servants seduce them;" Michael humorously alludes to the old conceit that horns grow on the foreheads of cuckolded husbands.

115-6: cuff and knock both mean "blow".

122: "if only Susan's love depended on this blow."

134: Clarke hands over the poisoned cross that he promised to make for Alice back at Act I.846ff.

139-141: Alice rues Arden's interference in her relationship with Mosbie, with a brief return to some agricultural imagery; the expression, "to put or thrust one's sickle to the corn" was proverbial, and used in various literal and
Forsooth, for credit sake, I must leave thee! –
Nay, he must leave to live that we may love,
May live, may love; for what is life but love?
And love shall last as long as life remains,
And life shall end before my love depart.

Mosb. Why, what is love without true constancy?
Like to a pillar built of many stones,
Yet neither with good mortar well-compact
Nor with cement to fasten it in the joints,
But that it shakes with every blast of wind,
And, being touched, straight falls unto the earth,
And buries all his haughty pride in dust.
No, let our love be rocks of adamant,
Which nor time nor tempest can asunder.

Greene. Mosbie, leave protestations now,
And let us bethink us what we have to do.
Black Will and Shakebag I have placed in the broom,
Close watching Arden’s coming; let’s to them
And see what they have done.

[Exeunt.]

ACT IV, SCENE II.

The Kentish Coast opposite the Isle of Sheppy.

Here enters Arden and Franklin.

Arden. Oh, ferryman, where art thou?

Here enters the Ferryman.

Ferrym. Here, here, go before to the boat, and I will
follow you.

Arden. We have great haste; I pray thee, come away.

Ferrym. Fie, what a mist is here!

Arden. This mist, my friend, is mystical,
Like to a good companion’s smoky brain,
That was half drowned with new ale overnight.

Ferrym. ’Twere pity but his skull were opened to
make more chimney room.

Frank. Friend, what’s thy opinion of this mist?

Ferrym. I think 'tis like to a curt wife in a little
house, that never leaves her husband till she have
driven him out at doors with a wet pair of eyes; then
looks he as if his house were a-fire, or some of his
friends dead.

Arden. Speaks thou this of thine own experience?

Ferrym. Perhaps, ay; perhaps, no: for my wife is as
other women are, that is to say, governed by the moon.

Frank. By the moon? how, I pray thee?

Ferrym. Nay, thereby lies a bargain, and you shall not
have it fresh and fasting.

Arden. Yes, I pray thee, good Ferryman.

Ferrym. Then for this once; let it be midsummer
moon, but yet my wife has another moon.

Frank. Another moon?

Ferrym. Ay, and it hath influences and eclipses.

Arden. Why, then, by this reckoning you sometimes
play the man in the moon?

Ferrym. Ay, but you had not best to meddle with that
moon, lest I scratch you by the face with my bramble-
bush.

suggested the moisture-filled air may be compared to the
alcohol-saturated brain of a man who drank too much the
night before.

smoky = the OED suggests "steaming, reeking; rising in
fine spray;" see def. 8.

new ale = ie. "ale in corns", which the OED defines as
"ale as drawn off the malt".

15-16: the Ferryman puns on smoky, suggesting Arden's
drunken man's head should be opened up to clear the smoke,
as from a chimney.

= ie. "it is like a". = vexatious.
= ie. "leaves her husband alone".
= ie. her crying.

= fickle, especially in love; in Christopher Marlowe's Dido,
Queen of Carthage, we find the line, "o. cruel women's
hearts, that imitate the moon in every change."

33-34: the sense is, "I won't tell you for nothing", ie. without
getting something in return.

fresh and fasting = common expression literally
meaning "eager and hungry", ie. ready to eat and drink.

36: ie. "please do tell us."

38: Then for this once = "alright, just this once."

38-39: midsummer moon = a full moon that appears
in mid-summer; such a moon was thought to cause a greater
than normal level of madness.

another moon = the Ferryman's exact meaning, and his
subsequent joke, is a bit unclear. Some modern editors see
moon here as referring to "her genitals".

43: it = ie. the wife's moon, the "other" moon.
influences = an astrological term, describing an imagined
etereal fluid flowing from the heavenly bodies and
affecting one's character.

45-46: if the bawdy interpretation of "another moon" de-
scribed in line 39 above is accepted, then the sexual
innuendo of the two lines here is more obvious.

reckoning = reasoning.

48-50: the Ferryman alludes to an old superstition that the
man on the moon appeared, at least to some observers, to
be carrying a bundle of sticks or brush.
"Arden. I am almost stifled with this fog; come, let's away.

Frank. And, sirrah, as we go, let us have some more of your bold yeomanry.

Ferrym. Nay, by my troth, sir, but flat knavery.

[Exeunt.]

ACT IV, SCENE III.

The Kentish coast, as before.

Here enters Will at one door, and Shakebag at another.

Shake. Oh, Will, where art thou?

Will. Here, Shakebag, almost in hell's mouth, where I cannot see my way for smoke.

Shake. I pray thee speak still that we may meet by the sound, for I shall fall into some ditch or other, unless my feet see better than my eyes.

Will. Didst thou ever see better weather to run away with another man's wife, or play with a wench at pot-finger?

Shake. No; this were a fine world for chandlers, if this weather would last; for then a man should never dine nor sup without candle-light. But, sirrah Will, what horses are those that passed?

Will. Why, didst thou hear any?

Shake. Ay, that I did.

Will. My life for thine, 'twas Arden, and his companion, and then all our labour's lost.

Shake. Nay, say not so, for if it be they, they may haply lose their way as we have done, and then we may chance meet with them.

Will. Come, let us go on like a couple of blind pilgrims.

[Then Shakebag falls into a ditch.]
Shake. Help, Will, help, I am almost drowned.

Here enters the Ferryman.

Ferrym. Who’s that that calls for help?
Will. ’Twas none here, ’twas thou thyself.
Ferrym. I came to help him that called for help. – Why, how now? who is this that’s in the ditch? You are well enough served to go without a guide, Such weather as this.
Will. Sirrah, What companies hath passed your ferry this morning?
Ferrym. None but a couple of gentlemen, that went to dine at my Lord Cheiny’s.
Will. Shakebag, did not I tell thee as much?
Ferrym. Why, sir, will you have any letters carried to them?
Will. No, sir; get you gone.
Ferrym. Did you ever see such a mist as this?
Will. No, nor such a fool as will rather be hought than get his way.

Ferrym. Why, sir, this is no Hough-Monday; you are deceived. – What’s his name, I pray you, sir?

Shake. His name is Black Will.

Ferrym. I hope to see him one day hanged upon a hill.

[Exit Ferryman.]

Shake. See how the sun hath cleared the foggy mist, Now we have missed the mark of our intent.

Here enters Greene, Mosbie, and Alice.

Mosb. Black Will and Shakebag, what make you here? What, is the deed done? is Arden dead?
Will. What could a blinded man perform in arms? Saw you not how till now the sky was dark, That neither horse nor man could be discerned?
Yet did we hear their horses as they passed.

**Greene.** Have they escaped you, then, and passed the ferry?

**Shake.** Ay, for a while; but here we two will stay, And at their coming back meet with them once more. Zounds, I was ne’er so toiled in all my life In following so slight a task as this.

**Mosb.** [To Shakebag] How cam’st thou so berayed?

**Will.** With making false footing in the dark; He needs would follow them without a guide.

**Alice.** Here’s to pay for a fire and good cheer: Get you to Feversham to the Flower-de-luce, And rest yourselves until some other time.

**Greene.** Let me alone; it most concerns my state.

**Will.** Ay, Mistress Arden, this will serve the turn, In case we fall into a second fog.

[Exeunt Greene, Will, and Shakebag.]

**Mosb.** These knaves will never do it, let us give it over.

**Alice.** First tell me how you like my new device: Soon, when my husband is returning back, You and I both marching arm in arm, Like loving friends, we’ll meet him on the way, And boldly beard and brave him to his teeth.

When words grow hot and blows begin to rise, I’ll call those cutters forth your tenement.

Who, in a manner to take up the fray, Shall wound my husband Hornsby to the death.

**Mosb.** A fine device! why, this deserves a kiss.

[Exeunt.]
ACT IV, SCENE IV.

The open country.

Here enters Dick Reede and a Sailor.

Sailor. Faith, Dick Reede, it is to little end:

His conscience is too liberal, and he too niggardly

To part from any thing may do thee good.

Reede. He is coming from Shorlow as I understand;

Here I’ll intercept him, for at his house

He never will vouchsafe to speak with me.

If prayers and fair entreaties will not serve,

Or make no battery in his flinty breast,

Here enters Franklin, Arden, and Michael.

I’ll curse the carle, and see what that will do.

See where he comes to further my intent! —

Master Arden, I am now bound to the sea;

My coming to you was about the plat

Of ground which wrongfully you detain from me.

Although the rent of it be very small,

Yet it will help my wife and children.

Which here I leave in Feversham, God knows,

Needy and bare: for Christ’s sake, let them have it!

Arden. Franklin, hearest thou this fellow speak?

That which he craves I dearly bought of him,

Although the rent of it was ever mine. —

Sirrah, you that ask these questionings,

If with thy clamorous impeaching tongue

Entering Characters: Dick Reede is another citizen who has lost his land to Arden. Reede is a sailor, and he enters the stage with one of his mates.

1: "truly, Dick, this is going to get you nowhere."

2: His conscience...liberal = here liberal means "unrestrained by decorum", so the sense of the clause is, "Arden's conscience does not lead him to do right by others", or, more specifically, "he is too indifferent to be troubled by your words" (Kozlenko, p. 87). niggardly = miserly; in the play's opening Act, Alice noted how Arden "hoards up bags of gold".

3: "to part from any of his possessions just to help you out."

= Lord Cheiny's house.

6-7: Reede figures to challenge Arden in the open where Arden cannot avoid him.

vouchsafe = deign.

8: "if earnest appeals and polite requests fail to get me what I want".

9: "or fail to break through or make an impression on his hard heart", a military metaphor.

battery = breach.

flinty = made of stone.

Entering Characters: having concluded their visit to Lord Cheiny's, Arden and his companions have returned to the Kentish mainland.

= base fellow. = Reede will provoke Arden into a fight.

= from where, ie. here. = "assist me in my plan."

= headed, going. 1

16-17: plat of ground = ie. patch of ground, for growing vegetables. 1

18: Reede's family leases the property.

= a trisyllable: CHIL-der-en.

= needy and bare are essentially synonyms; this type of redundancy, a figure of speech known as a pleonasm, was ubiquitous in Elizabethan drama.

= "I purchased from him at great expense".

= income (from renting out the land). = always.

27: clamorous = vociferous and importunate. 1

impeaching = accusing or disparaging. 1
Thou rail on me, as I have heard thou dost.
I'll lay thee up so close a twelve-month's day,
As thou shalt neither see the sun nor moon.
Look to it, for, as surely as I live,
I'll banish pity if thou use me thus.

Reede. What, wilt thou do me wrong and threat me too,
Nay, then, I'll tempt thee, Arden, do thy worst. —
God, I beseech thee, show some miracle
On thee or thine, in plaguing thee for this.
That plot of ground which thou detains from me,
I speak it in an agony of spirit,
Be ruinous and fatal unto thee!
Either there be butchered by thy dearest friends,
Or else be brought for men to wonder at,
Or thou or thine miscarry in that place,
Or there run mad and end thy cursèd days!

Frank. Fie, bitter knave, bridle thine envious tongue;
For curses are like arrows shot upright,
Which falling down light on the shooter's head.

Reede. Light where they will! Were I upon the sea,
As oft I have in many a bitter storm,
And saw a dreadful southern flaw at hand,
The pilot quaking at the doubtful storm,
And all the sailors praying on their knees,
Even in that fearful time would I fall down,
And ask of God, whate'er betide of me,
Vengeance on Arden or some misevent
To show the world what wrong the carle hath done.
This charge I'll leave with my distressful wife,
My children shall be taught such prayers as these;
And thus I go, but leave my curse with thee.

[Exeunt Reede and Sailor.]

Arden. It is the railingest knave in Christendom,
And oftentimes the villain will be mad;
It greatly matters not what he says,
But I assure you I ne'er did him wrong.

Frank. I think so, Master Arden.

Arden. Now that our horses are gone home before,
My wife may haply meet me on the way.
For God knows she is grown passing kind of late,
And greatly changed from
The old humour of her wonted frowardness.

= ie. "that you regularly do".
29: "I will have you imprisoned so securely and in such isolation for a year"; Arden seems to have it in mind to prosecute Reede for slander.
= the sense is, "you can bank on it".
= show no mercy. = treat. = in this manner.
= harm, injury. = ie. threaten.
= provoke; see line 13 above.
= ie. Arden and his family and dependents.

30: "I will have you imprisoned so securely and in such isolation for a year"; Arden seems to have it in mind to prosecute Reede for slander.
= come to harm, meet death.
38-44: there is an element of foreshadowing in Reede's curse.
= "for shame". = malicious.
= land.
= often.
= squall of wind. = close by.
= ship's navigator. = ie. causing apprehension or dread.
= ie. "no matter what happens to me".
= mishap.
= boor, low fellow.
= ie. "these standing orders". = sorely distressed.

= he.
= frequently. = is lunatic.

= ie. "I believe you".
= ie. "ahead of us"; the ensuing scene with Alice and Mosbie requires Arden and Franklin to be on foot.
= perhaps. = "come out to meet us on the road".
= pronounced she's. = "exceedingly kind (to me) recently."

76: humour = moods or temperament.
wonted frowardness = accustomed willfulness or perversity.
And seeks by fair means to redeem old faults.

Frank. Happy the change that alters for the best!
But see in any case you make no speech
Of the cheer we had at my Lord Cheiny’s,
Although most bounteous and liberal.
For that will make her think herself more wronged,
In that we did not carry her along;
For sure she grieved that she was left behind.

Arden. Come, Franklin, let us strain to mend our pace,
And take her unawares playing the cook;

Here enters Alice and Mosbie.

For I believe she’ll strive to mend our cheer.

Frank. Why, there’s no better creatures in the world,
Than women are when they are in good humours.

Arden. Who is that? Mosbie? what, so familiar?
Injurious strumpet, and thou ribald knave,
Untwine those arms.

Alice. Ay, with a sugared kiss let them untwine.

Arden. Ah, Mosbie! perjured beast! bear this and all!

Mosb. And yet no hornèd beast; the horns are thine.

Frank. O monstrous! Nay, then 'tis time to draw.

[Arden and Franklin draw their swords.]

Alice. Help, help! they murther my husband!

Shake. Zounds, who injures Master Mosbie?

[They fight. Shakebag and Mosbie are wounded.]

Help, Will! I am hurt.

Mosb. I may thank you, Mistress Arden, for this wound.

[Exeunt Mosbie, Will, and Shakebag.]
Alice. Ah, Arden, what folly blinded thee?
Ah, jealous harebrain man, what hast thou done!
When we, to welcome thy intended sport,
Came lovingly to meet thee on thy way,
Thou drew’st thy sword, enraged with jealousy,
And hurt thy friend whose thoughts were free from harm:
All for a worthless kiss and joining arms,
Both done but merrily to try thy patience.
And me unhappy that devised the jest,
Which, though begun in sport, yet ends in blood!

Frank. Marry, God defend me from such a jest!

Alice. Could’st thou not see us friendly smile on thee,
When we joined arms, and when I kissed his cheek?
Hast thou not lately found me over-kind?
Did’st thou not hear me cry ‘they murther thee’?
Called I not help to set my husband free?
No, ears and all were witched; ah, me accursed
To link in liking with a frantic man!

Henceforth I’ll be thy slave, no more thy wife,
For with that name I never shall content thee.

If I be merry, thou straightways thinks me light;
If sad, thou sayest the sullens trouble me;
If well-attired, thou thinks I will be gadding;
If homely, I seem slutish in thine eye:

Thus am I still, and shall be while I die.
Poor wench abused by thy misgovernment!

Arden. But is it for truth that neither thou nor he
Intendedst malice in your misdemeanour?

Alice. The heavens can witness of our harmless thoughts!

Arden. Then pardon me, sweet Alice, and forgive this fault!
Forget but this and never see the like.
Impose me penance, and I will perform it,
For in thy discontent I find a death, –
A death tormenting more than death itself.

Alice. Nay, had’st thou loved me as thou dost pretend,
Thou wouldst have marked the speeches of thy friend.
Who going wounded from the place, he said

= used sometimes as an adjective, as here.¹
= ie. "you with a practical joke".
= ie. Mosbie.
= meaningless.
= test.
= unlucky.
= recently. = ie. "to be exceedingly kind (to thee)"
= ie. "you could neither see nor hear what was really going on!" Alice too is bitter.
witched = bewitched.
144: "to link myself to a madman (frantic man)"
in liking = in favour.¹
146: "because as your wife (with that name), I am unable to satisfy you."
= immediately. = frivolous.
= ie. "I am sulking."¹
= "(going out) gallivanting."¹
150: there seems to have been a linking between dressing plainly (homely) and being thought dirty and slovenly (sluttish);¹ Nares' 1901 Glossary of 16th century language quotes a 1681 work, Riche his Farewell: "If plaine, or homely, we saie she is a doudie, or a slut."
= always. = until.⁶
= mismanagement or misbehaviour.¹
= misconduct.¹
His skin was pierced only through my device;
And if sad sorrow taint thee for this fault,
Thou would’st have followed him, and seen him dressed,
And cried him mercy whom thou hast misdone:
Ne’er shall my heart be eased till this be done.

_Arden._ Content thee, sweet Alice, thou shalt have thy will,
Whate’er it be. For that I injured thee,
And wronged my friend, _shame scourgeth my offence;_

Come thou thyself, and go along with me,
And be a mediator ’twixt us two.

_Frank._ Why, Master Arden! know you what you do?
Will you follow him _that hath dishonoured you?

_Alice._ Why, canst thou prove I have been disloyal?

_Frank._ Why, Mosbie _taunt_ you[r] husband with the horn.

_Alice._ Ay, after he had reviled him
By the injurious name of "perjured beast":
He knew no wrong could spite _an jealous_ man
More than the hateful naming of the horn.

_Frank._ Suppose ’tis true; yet is it dangerous
To follow him whom he hath _lately hurt_

_Alice._ A fault confessed is more than half amends;
But men of such ill-spirit as yourself
Work _crosses_ and _debates_ ’twixt man and wife.

_Arden._ I pray thee, gentle Franklin, _hold thy peace:
I know my wife counsels me for the best.
I’ll seek out Mosbie where his wound is _dressed,
And _salve_ [t]his hapless quarrel if I may.

[Exeunt Arden and Alice.]

_Frank._ He whom the devil drives _must_ go _perforce._
Poor gentleman, how _soon_ he is bewitched!
And yet, because his wife is the _instrument,
His friends must not be _lavish_ in their speech.

[Exit Franklin.]
END OF ACT IV.
ACT V.

SCENE I.

A Street in Feversham.

Here enters Will, Shakebag, and Greene.

Entering Characters: Shakebag's shoulder or arm is bandaged.

1 | Will. Sirrah Greene, when was I so long in killing a man?
2 | Greene. I think we shall never do it; let us give it over.
6 | Shake. Nay, Zounds! we'll kill him, though we be hanged at his door for our labour.
10 | Will. Thou knowest, Greene, that I have lived in London this twelve years, where I have made some go upon wooden legs for taking the wall on me; divers with silver noses for saying 'There goes Black Will!' I have cracked as many blades as thou hast done nuts.

Greene. O monstrous lie!

Will. Faith, in a manner I have. The bawdy-houses have paid me tribute; there durst not a whore set up, unless she have agreed with me first for opening her shop-windows. For a cross word of a tapster I have pierced one barrel after another with my dagger, and held him by the ears till all his beer hath run out. In Thames Street a brewer’s cart was like to have run over me: I made no more ado, but went to the clerk

Entering Characters: Shakebag's shoulder or arm is bandaged.

9-13: Will brags about how many people he has crippled over the past dozen years.
10-11: where I...on me = when two pedestrians, traveling in opposite directions, met on a city street, the lower-ranking fellow was supposed to let the other take the wall, ie. pass him on the side that put him closer to the wall, which was the cleaner and safer path. Will claims to have cut off the legs of many men who have failed to let him "take the wall", forcing them to go through life on wooden legs.
11-12: divers...Will = Will has also sliced off the noses of various other persons (divers) for referring to him so cavalierly, sending them to procure false noses.
13: with wordplay, "I have been in as many sword fights in my life as you have cracked nuts."

The expressions to crack blades and crack a blade were used to mean to "engage in a sword fight".

17: Faith = truly. in a manner = likely means "to a considerable degree", suggesting that Will is acknowledging he has been slightly exaggerating.

17-18: The bawdy-houses...tribute = Will suggests that whore-houses pay him "protection money".

18-20: there durst...shop-windows = literally, a prostitute does not begin marketing herself without Will's permission, perhaps paying him off; but as Bourus explains, the line is really a bawdy metaphor for Will being always the first to enjoy a new whore's services. opening her shop-windows = ie. opening her legs, or something even bawdier.

20-22: For a cross...run out = should any tapster (a pourer of ale) insult him, Will dumps out all the man's stock.

23: brewer's cart = cart used to deliver barrels of ale.

23-24: was like...over me = "almost ran over me".

24-26: I made...his head = Will made no fuss (ado) about
and cut all the notches of his tallys and beat them about his head. I and my company have taken the constable from his watch, and carried him about the fields on a coltstaff. I have broken a sergeant’s head with his own mace, and baile whom I list with my sword and buckler. All the tenpenny-alehouses[-men] would stand every morning with a quart-pot in their hand, saying, ‘Will it please your worship drink?’

He that had not done so, had been sure to have had his sign pulled down and his lattice borne away the next night. To conclude, what have I not done? Yet cannot do this; doubtless, he is preserved by miracle.

Here enters Alice and Michael.

Greene. Hence, Will! here comes Mistress Arden.

Alice. Ah, gentle Michael, art thou sure they’re friends?

Mich. Why, I saw them when they both shook hands. When Mosbie bled, he even wept for sorrow, And railed on Franklin that was cause of all. No sooner came the surgeon in at doors, But my master took to his purse and gave him money, And, to conclude, sent me to bring you word That Mosbie, Franklin, Bradshaw, Adam Fowle, With divers of his neighbours and his friends, it at the moment, but later beat the shop assistant or account-keeper (clerk)¹ on the head with his tallys. The reference is to an unusual method of tracking a debt: notches were carved into a piece of wood, called a tally, which was then split into two pieces, one of which was held by the debtor and creditor each. The notches would match up when the two halves were brought together.¹

28: coltstaff = ie. cowlstaff, a large and strong stick used to carry a cowl (a large vessel), or any other large and unwieldy object; the cowlstaff was carried by two persons, each bearing one of its ends on his shoulder.

sergeant’s = a sergeant was an officer with authority to make arrests.⁸

29: mace = club or staff of office.

bailed…buckler = Will has "bailed out", or freed, his friends from arrest by visiting violence on the arresting officer.

list = wished.

30: buckler = shield.

30-32: All the…drink = all the tavern-keepers so respect – or fear – Will that they are always armed with a full tankard of ale to offer him.

tenpenny-alehouses-men = tavern owners who serve ale for ten pence. Bayne added "men".

quart-pot = vessel holding a quart of liquid.

31-32: their hand = the quarto prints his hand, which is universally emended to their hand.

33-35: He that…night = Will punishes those tavern-keepers who fail to offer him a free drink.

33-34: had his sign pulled down = we remember that Will threatened to pull down the signs of the stall at which the Prentice of Act II.ii worked.

lattice = a tavern-keeper would usually paint one of his lattice windows red to identify his establishment as an alehouse.

35-36: Yet cannot do this = ie. "yet for some reason I am unable to get this job done."

= ie. Arden. = ie. kept alive.

= "get out of here": the conspirators do not want to have to face Alice to explain their failure.

42: Alice asks if Arden and Mosbie have made up after the altercation.

= ie. Arden.

46: Arden even blamed Franklin for causing the fracas.

= doctor.

= Arden.

= various others.
Will come and sup with you at our house this night.

**Alice.** Ah, gentle Michael, run thou back again,
And, when my husband walks into the fair,

Bid Mosbie steal from him and come to me;
And this night shall thou and Susan be made sure.

**Mich.** I'll go tell him.

**Alice.** And as thou goest, tell John cook of our guests,
And bid him lay it on, spare for no cost.

[Exit Michael.]

**Will.** Nay, and there be such cheer, we will bid ourselves.

Mistress Arden, Dick Greene and I do mean to sup with you.

**Alice.** And welcome shall you be. Ah, gentlemen,
How missed you of your purpose yesternight?

**Greene.** 'Twas long of Shakebag, that unlucky villain.

**Shake.** Thou dost me wrong; I did as much as any.

**Will.** Nay then, Mistress Arden, I'll tell you how it was:
When he should have locked with both his hilts,
He in a bravery flourished over his head;

With that comes Franklin at him lustily,
And hurts the slave; with that he slinks away.

Now his way had been to have come hand and feet,

one and two round, at his costard; he like a fool bears

his sword-point half a yard out of danger. I lie here for my life;

[Will demonstrates a defensive posture.]

if the devil come, and he have no more strength than I have] fence, he shall never beat me from this ward.

= Alice alludes to Feversham's St. Valentine's Fair, held annually beginning February 14th, and running for seven days.\(^{22}\)

= "ask Mosbie to sneak away".

= (officially) engaged.

= ie. John the cook.

62: "and tell him to get to work (lay it on)\(^3\) and spare no expense (to provide a lavish meal)."

= if. = ask, invite.

Some editors make line 66 an aside.

70: ie. "how is it you failed in your mission (to kill Arden) last night?"

72: Greene blames Shakebag for the fiasco.

'long of = on account of.\(^2\)

77-78: when Shakebag should have been attacking Arden, he instead, engaging in a show of bravado (bravery), stood waving his sword around above his head. locked…hilts = literally, interlocking his sword with those of Arden and Franklin up to the handles.

= vigorously.

= ie. Shakebag. = ie. Shakebag.

81-82: Now his…costard = what Shakebag should have done was come at his opponents in a fully committed attack, holding nothing back (come hand and feet),\(^4\) and struck them on the head (costard) once or twice.

82-83: he like…danger = Shakebag instead foolishly was holding his sword in such a manner that it could do no harm.

83-84: I lie…my life = "to save my own life, I stood like so"; Will suggests the situation was desperate.

86: stage direction added by McLuskie.

88-89: Will's defensive position (ward) was so strong, that even if the devil himself were to attack Will, so long as Will's defensive strength at least matched the devil's offensive power, the devil could not overcome him. fence = defense, or fencing skill.\(^{7,8}\)
I'll stand to it, a buckler in a skilful hand is as good as a castle; nay, 'tis better than a sconce, for I have tried it.

Mosbie, perceiving this, began to faint: With that comes Arden with his arming-sword. And thrust him through the shoulder in a trice.

Alice. Ay, but I wonder why you both stood still.

Will. Faith, I was so amazed, I could not strike.

Alice. Ah, sirs, had he yesternight been slain, For every drop of his detested blood I would cram in angels in thy fist, And kissed thee, too, and hugged thee in my arms.

Will. Patient yourself, we cannot help it now. Greene and we two will dog him through the fair, And stab him in the crowd, and steal away.

Alice. It is unpossible; but here comes he That will, I hope, invent some surer means. − Sweet Mosbie, hide thy arm, it kills my heart.

Mosb. Ay, Mistress Arden, this is your favour.

Alice. Ah, say not so; for when I saw thee hurt, I could have took the weapon thou let'st fall, And run at Arden; for I have sworn That these mine eyes, offended with his sight, Shall never close till Arden’s be shut up. This night I rose and walked about the chamber, And twice or thrice I thought to have murthered him.

Mosb. What, in the night? then had we been undone.

90: I'll stand to it = "I hold the opinion that."
90-91: a buckler...castle = "a properly-employed shield (buckler) will protect a man as well as does a castle."

buckler = small, round shield, used primarily to deflect blows.¹

90-91: = literally, a skillfully-used shield is better than a small fort (sconce),¹ but some editors suggest that sconce, which also can refer to a person's head,¹ here actually means "helmet" by extension.

92: = watching all of this. = lose heart or swoon.¹

94: = two-armed sword, ie. a sword so heavy as to require two hands to wield it.²¹

96: = in a second.

102: would cram = usually emended to would have cramped.

angels = ie. gold coins.

104 = "be patient".

106 = "follow him closely". = see the note at line 55 above.

108 = Alice dismisses Will's plan.

110: Alice cannot bear to look at Mosbie's injury.

112: more bitter sarcasm from Mosbie, who still blames Alice for the fiasco of the night before.

this = ie. Mosbie indicates his wound or dressing.⁷

your favour = a favour was a personal possession, such as a glove or handkerchief, one gave to one's lover to wear or carry as a token of his or her love.

114 = ruuned; had Alice actually slain Arden in their bedroom, she would have been easily caught.
Alice. Why, how long shall he live?

Mosb. Faith, Alice, no longer than this night. — Black Will and Shakebag, will you two perform The complot that I have laid?

Will. Ay, or else think me as a villain.

Greene. And rather than you shall want, I’ll help myself.

Mosb. You, Master Greene, shall single Franklin forth, and hold him with a long tale of strange news, That he may not come home till supper-time. I’ll fetch Master Arden home, and we like friends Will play a game or two at tables here.

Alice. But what of all this? how shall he be slain?

Mosb. Why, Black Will and Shakebag locked within the counting-house Shall at a certain watchword given rush forth.

Will. What shall the watchword be?

Mosb. ‘Now I take you’; that shall be the word: But come not forth before in any case.

Will. I warrant you. But who shall lock me in?

Alice. That will I do; thou’st keep the key thyself.

Mosb. Come, Master Greene, go you along with me. — See all things ready, Alice, against we come.

Alice. Take no care for that; send you him home.

[Exeunt Mosbie and Greene.]

And if he e’er go forth again, blame me. Come, Black Will, that in mine eyes art fair; Next unto Mosbie do I honour thee;

Instead of fair words and large promises My hands shall play you golden harmony: How like you this? say, will you do it, sirs?

Will. Ay, and that bravely, too. Mark my device:

Place Mosbie, being a stranger, in a chair,

And let your husband sit upon a stool, That I may come behind him cunningly.
And with a towel pull him to the ground,
Then stab him till his flesh be as a sieve;
That done, bear him behind the Abbey,
That those that find him murthered may suppose
Some slave or other killed him for his gold.

Alice. A fine device! you shall have twenty pound,
And, when he is dead, you shall have forty more,
And, lest you might be suspected staying here,
Michael shall saddle you two lusty geldings;
Ride whither you will, to Scotland, or to Wales,
I’ll see you shall not lack, where’er you be.

Will. Such words would make one kill a thousand men!
Give me the key: which is the counting-house?

Alice. Here would I stay and still encourage you;
But that I know how resolute you are.

Shake. Tush, you are too faint-hearted; we must do it.

Alice. But Mosbie will be there, whose very looks
Will add unwonted courage to my thought,
And make me the first that shall adventure on him.

Will. Tush, get you gone; ‘tis we must do the deed.
When this door opens next, look for his death.

[Exeunt Will and Shakebag into the counting-house.]

Alice. Ah, would he now were here that it might open!

I shall no more be closed in Arden’s arms,
That like the snakes of black Tisiphone

Sting me with their embracings! Mosbie’s arms
Shall compass me, and, were I made a star,
I would have none other spheres but those.

There is no nectar but in Mosbie’s lips!
Had chaste Diana kissed him, she, like me,
Would grow love-sick, and from her watery bower

176 178 180 182 184 186 188 190 192 194 196 198 200 202 204 206 208 210 212

= like.
= carry.
= rascal, a term of contempt.
= vigorous. = castrated horses.
= "to wherever you desire".
= ie. be without money or material means of support.

191-2: Alice knows it is unnecessary for her to remain with Will to keep up his courage, because his determination to see this through is obvious.

194: you = ie. Alice.

we must do it = ie. "it is up to us to do this", or "we must be the ones to do this."

= unaccustomed.
= ie. "dare attack him."

203: by now, the scene setting has subtly changed to the inside of Arden’s home.

205: would = if only.

it might open = ie. the door to the counting-house might open and allow Will and Shakebag to go about their work.

= enclosed, enfolded.

207: Tisiphone was one of the avenging female spirits known as the Furies. The ladies were imagined to be with hair of snakes and dressed in black, and sometimes possessed of wings.

209: compass = surround.

209-210: were I…but those = Alice alludes to the conventional view of the cosmos, in which the earth, sitting in the center of the universe, was surrounded by a series of concentric crystal spheres; in each sphere was embedded a planet (star), and the spheres rotated around the earth, giving the planets the appearance of revolving around the earth.

= drink of the gods.

212-4: Diana, goddess of the hunt, was famous for maintaining her virginity. Diana was also associated with
Fling down Endymion and snatch him up:

Then blame not me that slay a silly man
Not half so lovely as Endymion.

Here enters Michael.

Mich. Mistress, my master is coming hard by.

Alice. Who comes with him?


Alice. That's well, Michael. Fetch in the tables, and when thou hast done, stand before the counting-house door.

Mich. Why so?

Alice. Black Will is locked within to do the deed.

Mich. What? shall he die to-night?

Alice. Ay, Michael.

Mich. But shall not Susan know it?

Alice. Yes, for she'll be as secret as ourselves.

Mich. That's brave. I'll go fetch the tables.

Alice. But, Michael, hark to me a word or two: When my husband is come in, lock the street-door; He shall be murthered or the guests come in.

[Exit Michael.]

Here enters Arden and Mosbie.

Husband, what mean you to bring Mosbie home?
Although I wished you to be reconciled,
'Twas more for fear of you than love of him.

the moon, which is referred to as watery here for its effect on the earth's tides.

bower = shady retreat, arbour.¹

Endymion (stressed on its second syllable: en-DY-mi-on) was a handsome shepherd-prince beloved by the moon-goddess Selene (here the moon-goddess is identified as Diana); Jupiter granted Endymion's wish to be given eternal youth and immortality, which he could spend in perpetual slumber. Every night the moon-goddess visited Endymion in his eternal bed in a cave on Mount Latmus in Caria.²

Alice's point is that if Diana had been given a chance to kiss Mosbie, she would have dumped even Endymion to possess him.

= who would. = foolish or simple.²

= near.

= great, splendid.

= listen.

246: Arden is to be murdered in the presence of Mosbie, Michael, Will and Shakebag; Alice wants to make sure the other expected guests – Franklin, Adam Fowle, Greene and Bradshaw – do not enter the house unexpectedly and prematurely.

or = ere, ie. before.

253-4: Alice wanted Arden and Mosbie to make up, but it was more out of worry that Arden might get hurt than out of any feelings of friendship towards Mosbie.
Black Will and Greene are his companions.

And they are cutters, and may cut you short: Therefore I thought it good to make you friends. But wherefore do you bring him hither now? You have given me my supper with his sight.

Mosby. Master Arden, methinks your wife would have me gone.

Arden. No, good Master Mosby; women will be prating. — Alice, bid him welcome; he and I are friends.

Alice. You may enforce me to it, if you will; But I had rather die than bid him welcome. His company hath purchased me ill friends, And therefore will I ne’er frequent it more.

Mosby. [Aside] Oh, how cunningly she can dissemble!

Arden. Now he is here, you will not serve me so.

Alice. I pray you be not angry or displeased; I’ll bid him welcome, seeing you’ll have it so. — You are welcome, Master Mosbie; will you sit down?

Mosby. I know I am welcome to your loving husband; But for yourself, you speak not from your heart.

Alice. And if I do not, sir, think I have cause.

Mosby. Pardon me, Master Arden; I’ll away.

Arden. No, good Master Mosbie.

Alice. [To Mosbie] We shall have guests enough, though you go hence.

Mosby. I pray you, Master Arden, let me go.

Arden. I pray thee, Mosbie, let her prate her fill.

Alice. The doors are open, sir, you may be gone.

Michael. [Aside] Nay, that’s a lie, for I have locked the doors.

Arden. Sirrah, fetch me a cup of wine, I’ll make them friends. —

[Michael brings a cup of wine.]
And, gentle Mistress Alice, seeing you are so stout,
You shall begin! – frown not, I’ll have it so.

*Alice.* I pray you meddle with that you have to do.

*Arden.* Why, Alice! how can I do too much for him
Whose life I have endangered without cause?

*Alice.* 'Tis true; and, seeing 'twas partly through my
means,
I am content to drink to him for this once. –

[Alice drinks from cup.]

Here, Master Mosbie! and I pray you, henceforth
Be you as strange to me as I to you.

Your company hath purchased me ill friends,
And I for you, God knows, have undeserved
Been ill-spoken of in every place;
Therefore henceforth frequent my house no more.

*Mosb.* I’ll see your husband in despite of you. –
Yet, Arden, I protest to thee by Heaven,
Thou ne’er shalt see me more after this night,

I’ll go to Rome rather than be forsworn.

*Arden.* Tush, I’ll have no such vows made in my house.

*Alice.* Yes, I pray you, husband, let him swear; –
And, on that condition, Mosbie, pledge me here.

*Mosb.* Ay, as willingly as I mean to live.

*Arden.* Come, Alice, is our supper ready yet?

*Alice.* It will by then you have played a game at tables.

*Arden.* Come, Master Mosbie, what shall we play for?

*Mosb.* Three games for a French crown, sir, and please you.

*Arden.* Content.

[Then they play at the tables.]

Enter Will and Shakebag from the counting-room.

*Will.* [Aside to Alice]
Can he not take him yet? what a spite is that!

304: Arden insists Alice take the first drink, but Alice is unwilling; the cup of wine would then be passed around to the other members of the company.

317: *through my means* = "through my agency", ie. "my fault".

318: Alice repeats her sentiment of line 268 above.

325: Will wittily foreshadows!

326: *I'll go to Rome* = a distasteful thought for a good Protestant! Bourus understands Will's statement to mean that he will turn Catholic if he breaks this promise (*be forsworn*).
352 Alice. [Aside to Will]
Not yet, Will; take heed he see thee not.

354 Will. I fear he will spy me as I am coming.

356 Michael. To prevent that, creep betwixt my legs.

358 Mosb. One ace, or else I lose the game.

[Mosbie throws dice.]

362 Arden. Marry, sir, there's two for failing.

364 Mosb. Ah, Master Arden, now I can take you.

[Then Will pulls him down with a towel.]

368 Arden. Mosbie! Michael! Alice! what will you do?

370 Will. Nothing but take you up, sir, nothing else.

372 Mosb. There’s for the pressing iron you told me of.

[Stabs him.]

376 Shake. And there’s for the ten pound in my sleeve.

[Stabs him.]

380 Alice. What! groans thou? nay, then give me the weapon!
Take this for hindering Mosbie's love and mine.

[She stabs him.]

384 Mich. O, mistress!

386 Will. Ah, that villain will betray us all.

388 Mosb. Tush, fear him not; he will be secret.

390 Mich. Why, dost thou think I will betray myself?

392 Shake. In Southwark dwells a bonny northern lass,
The widow Chambly; I’ll to her house now,
And if she will not give me harbour,

from backgammon, and Mosbie cannot utter them until he is able to take Arden's pieces from the board.

what a spite is that = "what an aggravating thing this is!"

= be careful.

356: the Chronicles notes that Michael "stood at his master's back, holding a candle in his hand, to shadow Black Will, [so that] Arden might by no means perceive him coming forth."

= Mosbie must roll a one.36

36: Gassner suggests "if one is not sufficient" (p. 62).

376: Shakebag refers to the wound Arden gave him in the fight at Act IV.iv.117.

383: the Chronicles tells us that Alice, "with a knife, gave [Arden] seven or eight pricks in the breast."

= ie. Michael.

391: Southwark = town on the southern bank of the Thames opposite London.
bonny = beautiful.

= harbour, ie. safe haven; trisyllabic Middle-English form used here for the sake of the meter.
I’ll make booty of the quean even to her smock.

Will. Shift for yourselves; we two will leave you now.

Alice. First lay the body in the counting-house.

[Then they lay the body in the Counting-house.]

Will. We have our gold; Mistress Alice, adieu;
Mosbie, farewell, and Michael, farewell too.

[Exeunt Will and Shakebag.]

Enter Susan.

Susan. Mistress, the guests are at the doors.

Hearken, they knock: what, shall I let them in?

Alice. Mosbie, go thou and bear them company.

[Exit Mosbie.]

And, Susan, fetch water and wash away this blood.

[Susan washes the floor.]

Susan. The blood cleaveth to the ground and will not out.

[Alice kneels and scrapes the floor.]

Alice. But with my nails I’ll scrape away the blood; —
The more I strive, the more the blood appears!

Susan. What’s the reason, Mistress, can you tell?

Alice. Because I blush not at my husband’s death.

Here enters Mosbie.

Mosb. How now? what’s the matter? is all well?

Alice. Ay, well, if Arden were alive again.

In vain we strive, for here his blood remains.
**Mosb.** Why, strew rushes on it, can you not?

This wench doth nothing: fall unto the work.

**Alice.** 'Twas thou that made me murther him.

**Mosb.** What of that?

**Alice.** Nay, nothing, Mosbie, so it be not known.

**Mosb.** Keep thou it close, and 'tis impossible.

**Alice.** Ah, but I cannot! was he not slain by me? My husband's death torments me at the heart.

**Mosb.** It shall not long torment thee, gentle Alice; I am thy husband, think no more of him.

_Here enters Adam Fowle and Bradshaw._

**Brad.** How now, Mistress Arden? what ail you weep?

**Mosb.** Because her husband is abroad so late. A couple of ruffians threatened him yesternight. And she, poor soul, is afraid he should be hurt.

**Adam.** Is't nothing else? tush, he'll be here anon.

_Here enters Greene._

**Greene.** Now, Mistress Arden, lack you any guests?

**Alice.** Ah, Master Greene, did you see my husband lately?

**Greene.** I saw him walking behind the Abbey even now.

_Here enters Franklin._

**Alice.** I do not like this being out so late. Master Franklin, where did you leave my husband?

**Frank.** Believe me I saw him not since morning. Fear you not, he'll come anon; meantime You may do well to bid his guests sit down.

**Alice.** Ay, so they shall; -- Master Bradshaw, sit you there; -- I pray you, be content, I'll have my will. -- Master Mosbie, sit you in my husband's seat.

**Michael.** [Aside to Susan] Susan, shall thou and I wait on them?

**Susan.** Or, an thou sayest the word, let us sit down too.

**Susan.** [Aside to Michael] 440: it was common, even typical, in the 16th century to strew rushes on the floor of one's home when guests were expected.

441: _This wench_ = probably meaning Susan. _fall unto the work_ = ie. "you do it."

= "so long as no one finds out."

= secret. = ie. that anyone will ever know who did it.

442: _fall unto the work_ = ie. "you do it."

444: _This wench_ = probably meaning Susan.

446: _This wench_ = probably meaning Susan.

448: _This wench_ = probably meaning Susan.

454: _This wench_ = probably meaning Susan.

456: _This wench_ = probably meaning Susan.

458: _This wench_ = probably meaning Susan.

462: _This wench_ = probably meaning Susan.

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484: _This wench_ = probably meaning Susan.

486: _This wench_ = probably meaning Susan.

488: _This wench_ = probably meaning Susan.

490: _This wench_ = probably meaning Susan.

492: _This wench_ = probably meaning Susan.
Peace, we have other matters now in hand.
I fear me, Michael, all will be bewrayed.

Michael. Tush, so it be known that I shall marry thee in the morning, I care not though I be hanged ere night. But to prevent the worst, I’ll buy some ratsbane.

Susan. Why, Michael, wilt thou poison thyself?
Michael. No, but my mistress, for I fear she'll tell.
Susan. Tush, Michael; fear not her, she’s wise enough.
Mosb. Sirrah Michael, give’s a cup of beer. — Mistress Arden, here’s to your husband.
Alice. My husband!
Frank. What ails you, woman, to cry so suddenly?
Alice. Ah, neighbours, a sudden qualm came over my heart; My husband being forth torments my mind. I know something’s amiss, he is not well; Or else I should have heard of him ere now.

Mosbie. [Aside] She will undo us through her foolishness.
Greene. Fear not, Mistress Arden, he’s well enough.
Alice. Tell not me; I know he is not well: He was not wont for to stay thus late. — Good Master Franklin, go and seek him forth, And if you find him, send him home to me, And tell him what a fear he hath put me in.
Franklin. [Aside] I like not this; I pray God all be well. — I’ll seek him out, and find him if I can.

[Exeunt Franklin, Mosbie, and Greene.]

Alice. [Aside to Michael]
Michael, how shall I do to rid the rest away?

Michael. [Aside to Alice]
Leave that to my charge, let me alone. — 'Tis very late, Master Bradshaw, And there are many false knaves abroad, And you have many narrow lanes to pass.

Brad. Faith, friend Michael, and thou sayest true. Therefore I pray thee light’s forth and lend’s a link.

[Exeunt Bradshaw, Adam, and Michael.]
fact that the guests, having just arrived, are already being encouraged to leave, even though they have not been given any of the supper they had been promised.

The Chronicles asserts that after Arden’s body had been stored in the counting-house, the remaining guests entered the house, and everyone sat down for supper; upon the completion of the meal, Alice’s daughter played the virginal (a small early piano) while the guests all danced.

Alice. Michael, bring them to the doors, but do not stay;
You know I do not love to be alone. —
Go, Susan, and bid thy brother come:
But wherefore should he come? Here is nought but fear;
Stay, Susan, stay, and help to counsel me.

Susan. Alas, I counsel! fear frights away my wits.

[Then they open the counting-house door, and look upon Arden.]

Alice. See, Susan, where thy quondam master lies,
Sweet Arden, smeared in blood and filthy gore.

Susan. My brother, you, and I shall rue this deed.

Alice. Come, Susan, help to lift his body forth,
And let our salt-tears be his obsequies.

[Alice and Susan drag out Arden’s body.]

Here enters Mosbie and Greene.

Mosb. How now, Alice, whither will you bear him?

Alice. Sweet Mosbie, art thou come? Then weep that will:
I have my wish in that I joy thy sight.

Greene. Well, it hooves us to be circumspect.

Mosb. Ay, for Franklin thinks that we have murthered him.

Alice. Ay, but he cannot prove it for his life.
We’ll spend this night in dalliance and in sport.

Here enters Michael.

Mich. O mistress, the Mayor and all the watch
Are coming towards our house with glaives and bills.

Alice. Make the door fast; let them not come in.

Mosb. Tell me, sweet Alice, how shall I escape?

Alice. Out at the back-door, over the pile of wood,
And for one night lie at the Flower-de-luce.

Mosb. That is the next way to betray myself.

Greene. Alas, Mistress Arden, the watch will take me here, And cause suspicion, where else would be none.

Alice. Why, take that way that Master Mosbie doth; But first convey the body to the fields.

[Then Michael and Susan bear the body into the fields.]

Mosb. Until to-morrow, sweet Alice, now farewell: And see you confess nothing in any case.

Greene. Be resolute, Mistress Alice, betray us not, But cleave to us as we will stick to you.

[Exeunt Mosbie and Greene.]

Alice. Now, let the judge and juries do their worst: My house is clear, and now I fear them not.

Re-enter Michael and Susan.

Susan. As we went, it snowed all the way, Which makes me fear our footsteps will be spied.

Alice. Peace, fool, the snow will cover them again.

Susan. But it had done before we came back again.

[A knocking is sounded.]

Alice. Hark, hark, they knock! go, Michael, let them in.

Here enters the Mayor and the Watch.

How now, Master Mayor, have you brought my husband home?

Mayor. I saw him come into your house an hour ago.

Alice. You are deceived; it was a Londoner.

Mayor. Mistress Arden, know you not one that is called Black Will?

Alice. I know none such: what mean these questions?

Mayor. I have the Council’s warrant to apprehend him.

Alice. [Aside] I am glad it is no worse. —

Why, Master Mayor, think you I harbour any such?

602-3: the Chronicles here states that Michael, Susan and "one of mistress Arden's daughters" took the "dead body and carried it out to lay it in a field next to the churchyard, and joining [adjoining] to his garden wall."

= nearest, ie. fastest. = ie. "give myself away."

= find.

609: ie. "we must all stick (cleave) together!"

= no matter what.

610: ie. "we must all stick (cleave) together!

= seen.

= quiet.

= ie. it had stopped snowing.

635: the Chronicles states that after Arden was murdered, Alice sent for "two Londoners", a pair of grocers named Prune and Cole, "to supper".

= arrest.

647: Alice is relieved that it appears only Will is being formally accused of anything. = "am protecting and hiding any such person?"
Mayor. We are informed that here he is;  
And therefore pardon us, for we must search.  

Alice. Ay, search, and spare you not, through every room:  
Were my husband at home, you would not offer this.  

Here enters Franklin.

Master Franklin, what mean you come so sad?

Frank. Arden, thy husband and my friend, is slain.

Alice. Ah, by whom? Master Franklin, can you tell?

Frank. I know not; but behind the Abbey  
There he lies murthered in most piteous case.

Mayor. But, Master Franklin, are you sure 'tis he?

Frank. I am too sure; would God I were deceivèd.

Alice. Find out the murtherers, let them be known.

Frank. Ay, so they shall: come you along with us.

Alice. Wherefore?

Frank. Know you this hand-towel and this knife?

Susan. [Aside to Michael]

Ah, Michael, through this thy negligence  
Thou hast betrayed and undone us all.

Michael. [Aside to Susan]

I was so afraid I knew not what I did:  
I thought I had thrown them both into the well.

Alice. It is the pig’s blood we had to supper.  
But wherefore stay you? find out the murtherers.

Mayor. I fear me you’ll prove one of them yourself.

Alice. I one of them? what mean such questiöns?

Frank. I fear me he was murthered in this house  
And carried to the fields; for from that place  
Backwards and forwards may you see  
The print of many feet within the snow.  
And look about this chamber where we are,  
And you shall find part of his guiltless blood;  
For in his slipshoe did I find some rushes,  
Which argueth he was murthered in this room.
Mayor. Look in the place where he was wont to sit. — See, see! his blood! it is too manifest.

Alice. It is a cup of wine that Michael shed.


Frank. It is his blood, which, strumpet, thou hast shed. But if I live, thou and thy ’complices Which have conspired and wrought his death shall rue it.

Alice. Ah, Master Franklin, God and Heaven can tell I loved him more than all the world beside. But bring me to him, let me see his body.

Frank. Bring that villain and Mosbie’s sister too; And one of you go to the Flower-de-luce, And seek for Mosbie, and apprehend him too.

[Exeunt.]

ACT V, SCENE II.

An obscure street in London.

Here enters Shakebag solus.

Shake. The widow Chambly in her husband’s days I kept; and now he’s dead, she is grown so stout she will not know her old companions. I came thither, thinking to have had harbour as I was wont, and she was ready to thrust me out at doors; but whether she would or no, I got me up, and as she followed me, I spurned her down the stairs, and broke her neck, and cut her tapster’s throat, and now I am going to fling them in the Thames. I have the gold; what care I though it be known! I’ll cross the water and take sanctuary.

[Exit.]
ACT V, SCENE III.

Arden's House at Feversham.

Here enters the Mayor, Mosbie, Alice, Franklin, Michael, and Susan.

Mayor. See, Mistress Arden, where your husband lies;
Confess this foul fault and be penitent.

Alice. Arden, sweet husband, what shall I say? —
The more I sound his name, the more he bleeds;
This blood condemns me, and in gushing forth
Speaks as it falls, and asks me why I did it. —

Forgive me, Arden: I repent me now,
And, would my death save thine, thou should'st not die.
Rise up, sweet Arden, and enjoy thy love,
And frown not on me when we meet in Heaven:
In Heaven I'll love thee, though on earth I did not.

Mayor. Say, Mosbie, what made thee murther him?

Frank. Study not for an answer; look not down:
His purse and girdle found at thy bed's head
Witness sufficiently thou didst the deed;
It bootless is to swear thou didst it not.

Mosb. I hired Black Will and Shakebag, ruffians both,
And they and I have done this murtherous deed.

But wherefore stay we? Come and bear me hence.

Frank. Those ruffians shall not escape; I will up to London,
And get the Council's warrant to apprehend them.

[Exeunt.]

ACT V, SCENE IV.

The Kentish Coast.

Here enters Will.

Will. Shakebag, I hear, hath taken sanctuary,
But I am so pursued with hues and cries
For petty robberies that I have done,
That I can come unto no sanctuary.

Scene III: Arden's body has been returned to his home.

5-7: Alice alludes to an old superstition that a corpse can identify its killer by bleeding anew in the perpetrator's presence.

sound = speak.

9: if Alice could bring Arden back to life by dying, she would do so.

= "don't stand there trying to think up".
= is useless.

21-22: as noted by Barker, the killers had actually been hired by Greene; Mosbie, disgusted with the whole affair, and recognizing his irretrievable position, just wants to get the process over with as quickly as possible.

23: wherefore stay we = "why are we delaying", ie. "why are we just standing around here?"

hence = away from here.

= is. Will and Shakebag. = ie. go up.

= arrest.

2-4: there are so many outstanding warrants for his arrest (considering his lifetime of crime) that Will can find no safe refuge anywhere in Kent, or in England for that matter.

hues and cries = hue and cry was the traditional shout of
Therefore must I, in some oyster-boat,
At last be fain to go on-board some hoy.

And so to Flushing. There is no staying here.

At Sittingburgh the watch was like to take me,
And had not I with my buckler covered my head,
And run full blank at all adventures.

I am sure I had ne’er gone further than that place;
For the constable had twenty warrants to apprehend me,
Besides that, I robbed him and his man once at Gadshill.
Farewell, England; I’ll to Flushing now.

[Exit Will.]

ACT V, SCENE V.

Justice-room at Feversham.

Here enters the Mayor, Mosbie, Alice, Michael, Susan, and Bradshaw.

Mayor. Come, make haste and bring away the prisoners.

Brad. Mistress Arden, you are now going to God,
And I am by the law condemned to die
About a letter I brought from Master Greene.
I pray you, Mistress Arden, speak the truth:
Was I ever privy to your intent or no?

Alice. What should I say? You brought me such a letter,
But I dare swear thou knewest not the contents.
Leave now to trouble me with worldly things,
And let me meditate upon my saviour Christ,
Whose blood must save me for the blood I shed.

Mosb. How long shall I live in this hell of grief?
Convey me from the presence of that strumpet.

Alice. Ah, but for thee I had never been [a] strumpet.
What cannot oaths and protestations do,
When men have opportunity to woo?

I was too young to sound thy villainies,
But now I find it and repent too late.

Susan. Ah, gentle brother, wherefore should I die?
I knew not of it till the deed was done.

Mosb. For thee I mourn more than for myself;
But let it suffice, I cannot save thee now.

Mich. [To Susan] And if your brother and my mistress
Had not promised me you in marriage,
I had ne’er given consent to this foul deed.

Mayor. Leave to accuse each other now,
And listen to the sentence I shall give. –
Bear Mosbie and his sister to London straight,
Where they in Smithfield must be executed;

Bear Mistress Arden unto Canterbury,
Where her sentence is she must be burnt;
Michael and Bradshaw in Feversham must suffer death.

Alice. Let my death make amends for all my sins.

Mosb. Fie upon women! this shall be my song;
But bear me hence, for I have lived too long.

Susan. Seeing no hope on earth, in Heaven is my hope.

Mich. Faith, I care not, seeing I die with Susan.

Brad. My blood be on his head that gave the sentence.

Mayor. To speedy execution with them all!

[Exeunt.]

EPILOGUE.

Here enters Franklin.
Frank. Thus have you seen the truth of Arden’s death. As for the ruffians, Shakebag and Black Will, The one took sanctuary, and, being sent for out, Was murtherèd in Southwark as he passed To Greenwich, where the Lord Protector lay.

Black Will was burned in Flushing on a stage; Greene was hanged at Osbridge in Kent; The painter fled and how he died we know not. But this above the rest is to be noted: Arden lay murthered in that plot of ground Which he by force and violence held from Reede; And in the grass his body’s print was seen Two years and more after the deed was done.

Gentlemen, we hope you’ll pardon this naked tragedy, Wherein no filed points are foisted in To make it gracious to the ear or eye; For simple truth is gracious enough, And needs no other points of glosing stuff.

FINIS.

POSTSCRIPT I: The End of the Conspirators.

For those keeping score, seven conspirators in our play were formally sentenced to death: Alice, Michael, Susan, Mosbie, Black Will, Greene and Bradshaw; Shakebag was killed as he was hunted down in Southwark.

Our author generally remained true to the actual punishments meted out to the defendants, but there were a few minor differences:

1. Greene actually successfully escaped Feversham in 1551, only being caught some years later, at which time he was "hanged in chains in the highway betwixt Ospring and Boughton".
2. Shakebag, the Chronicles tells us, was not in fact killed as he was being pursued; having escaped Feversham, he was never heard of again.
3. An extra maid of Alice’s, unmentioned in the play, was also burned in Feversham.
4. The innkeeper Adam Fowle was imprisoned for his role in the conspiracy.
POSTSCRIPT II: The Chronicles Returns to the Story of Edward VI’s Reign.

At the conclusion of its recounting of the story of Arden, the Chronicles quietly resumes its proper history of England with the following words: "And thus farre touching this horrible and haynous murther of master Arden. To returne then where we lefte."

Just two paragraphs later, we find this terrible pair of paragraphs about the return of the plague to England in 1551:

"And it seemed that God hadde appoynted the sayde sickness onely for the plague of Englishmenne, for the most that dyed thereof were men, and not women nor children. And so it folowed the Englishmen, that suche Merchants of England as were in Flaunders and Spayne, and other Countreys beyonde the Sea, were visited therewithall, and none other nation infected therewith.

And it began first in Aprill in ye North parts, and so came through the Realme, and continued vntill September nexte following."
Anonymous' Invented Words.

Here is a list of some words and expressions which research suggests made their first published appearance in *Arden of Feversham*:

- cockshut
- misevent
- muscado
- pathaire
- sheeting (as an adjective)
- "cut off by the shin(s)"
- soft-mettled
- dry-sucked
- sweet-set
FOOTNOTES.

The footnotes in the annotations correspond as follows:

1. Oxford English Dictionary (OED) online.