

The Country Wife

A Comedy
by William Wycherley

Edited and adapted
by David Jacklin

FINAL

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The Persons in the Play

The Gentlemen Players

Mr. Horner, *a gentleman*
Mr. Harcourt, *his acquaintance, enamoured of Alithea*
Mr. Dorilant, *friend to Mr. Harcourt*
Mr. Pinchwife, *an older newlywed gentleman*
Mr. Sparkish, *engaged to Alithea*
Sir Jaspar Fidget, *an older noble gentleman of business*

The Lady Players

Mrs. Margery Pinchwife, *a newlywed country lass (A Cornish or Somerset accent is perfect.)*
Alithea, *sister to Pinchwife and engaged to Mr. Sparkish*
Lady Fidget, *wife of Sir Jaspar*
Mrs. Dainty, *sister to Sir Jaspar, granddaughter to Old Lady Squeamish*
Old Lady Squeamish
Lucy, *Alithea's Maid*

The Setting

London, 1675

Mr. Horner's Lodging in Covent Garden

Mr. Pinchwife's Lodging, elsewhere in London

A street in London

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(NOTE: to be played without breaks between scenes.

Furniture changes alone should denote scene changes.)

Some Notes

When the English monarchy was restored in 1660, along with it came a restoration of the playhouses, banned since the end of the English Civil War. After the epic dramas of Shakespeare and the bloody melodramas of his successors, Charles II's and, more importantly, James II's new courts brought back from France a taste for the fast wordplay and frankness of Molière and his contemporaries; in fact, for a new theatre based on French, rather than British, tradition. This new style of theatre introduced the domestic situation to British drama. In addition, for the first time in British history, women were allowed on the stage. The result was the creation of the sex farce.

William Wycherly's 1675 hit, **The Country Wife**, was perhaps both the apotheosis and nadir of the Restoration Comedy, as it stretched what was allowable to, and beyond, the limit and, at the same time, caused a reaction that resulted in the show being largely banned, both in print and on stage, from the early 1700s until the 1920s – when it suddenly seemed in tune with the times. Interestingly, one of the items that most made **The Country Wife** unacceptable to 18th and 19th century tastes was Mrs. Pinchwife's stated preference for “the Player Men” – actors! With the rise of “movie stars” in the 1920s, actors became much more acceptable to the general population. The play also dwells on a number of the new trends of the time: the first importation of “china”; the first importation of tropical fruit; and the creation of both modern advertising (the references to “signs”) and the shopping trip. Today, **The Country Wife** is rightly regarded as an entertaining, highly original and, still, a little bit scandalous comedy that remains refreshingly funny and is very much worth staging today.

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THE COUNTRY WIFE
ACT I

The SCENE: London, about 1670.

(Early morning, Horner's Lodging. There is a doorway downstage, right and left, a window mid-stage, right and left, and a large screen upstage, concealing another doorway, centre.)

(Enter HORNER.)

HORNER: *(To the audience.)* Well, my dear Doctor has done what I asked and *undone* me forever with Women. He reports me throughout all London as . . . an Eunuch. He has told all the Chambermaids and Old Gossips of his acquaintance, so that 'twill certainly spread, and I will be as odious to the handsome young Women as . . . as their own Husbands. He told them 'twas by a French disease and a French Surgeon that this antidote to love has come upon me and my late journey into France makes it the more credible. I am the first Gallant I know who wishes to be thought a Man unfit for Women. Let vain Rogues be contented to be thought abler Men than they are. Generally, 'tis all the pleasure they have, but my pleasure lies another way. Women, no more than honour, are won by bragging.

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A Pox! Two Ladies and a Gentleman are coming up. Some unbelieving Sisters who, I expect, wish to be satisfied of the report.

(Enter SIR JASPAR FIDGET, LADY FIDGET and MRS. DAINTY FIDGET.)

SIR JASPAR: My Coach breaking just now before your door, Sir, I look upon as a reprimand to me, Sir, for not kissing your hand, Sir, since your coming out of France, Sir. And so my disaster, Sir, has been my good fortune, Sir. And this is my Wife and Sister, Sir. Wife, this is Master Horner.

LADY FIDGET: Master Horner.

SIR JASPAR: My Lady Fidget, Sir.

HORNER: *(Bowing with aloofness.)* So, Sir.

SIR JASPAR: Won't you be acquainted with her, Sir? *(Aside.)* So, by his aversion to the Sex, I find the report of his French disease is true. *(Aloud)* Pray, salute my Wife, Sir.

HORNER: I will kiss no Man's Wife for him, Sir. I have taken eternal leave of the Sex

already, Sir.

SIR JASPAR: Not know my Wife, Sir?

HORNER: I do know your Wife, Sir. She's a Woman, Sir.

LADY FIDGET: Sir Jaspar, let us be gone from this rude fellow.

DAINTY: From his manners, who would think he had ever been in France?

LADY FIDGET: Foh, he's too much a French fellow; he hates Women of virtue because they love their Husbands.

HORNER: Madam, I have nothing that you came for. I have brought over not so much as a Bawdy Picture, new Postures, nor even the second act of the *School For Wives* . . .

SIR JASPAR: Hah, hah! He hates Women perfectly, I find.

DAINTY: What pity.

LADY FIDGET: Aye, he's a base rude Fellow or so is his affectation.

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HORNER: And Virtue, Madam, is your greatest affectation.

LADY FIDGET: Saucy Fellow, would you wrong my honour?

HORNER: If I could.

LADY FIDGET: How do you mean, Sir?

SIR JASPAR: Hah, hah, hah! No, he can't wrong your Ladyship's honour, upon my honour. He, poor Man— hark you, in your ear— a mere Eunuch.

LADY FIDGET: Filthy French Beast! Foh, foh; why do we stay? I can't endure the sight of him.

SIR JASPAR: Nor can I stay longer. The Council will have sat. I must away.

LADY FIDGET: What, leave us with a filthy Man alone in his lodgings?

SIR JASPAR: He's an innocent Man now, you know. Pray stay. Mr. Horner, your Servant. Pray, dine with me and play at Cards with my Wife after dinner. You may still play *that* game with Women, hah, hah! Farewell.

HORNER: Your Servant, Sr. Jaspar.

(Exit SIR JASPAR.)

LADY FIDGET: I will not stay with him, foh—

HORNER: Nay, Madam, I can be as civil to Ladies as they would desire.

DAINTY: As Ladies would desire?

LADY FIDGET: No, no, no, foh, foh, foh.

(Exeunt LADY FIDGET and DAINTY.)

HORNER: Now, do you see already upon the mere report of my ... French disease, this grave Man of business, who before would not be *acquainted* with me out of jealousy, leaves his Wife in my lodgings and invites me to his house to *play* with his wife. If I can abuse the Husbands, I'll soon disabuse the Wives. She shows an unusually strong aversion, which means she loves the sport as well as I. 'Tis scandal they would avoid, not Men. Now with the reputation of an Eunuch, I may be seen in a Lady's Chamber as early as her Husband, kiss Virgins before their Parents or Lovers, and be, in short, the *Passe-partout* of the Town.

Perusal Copy Only ~~(Enter HARCOURT and DORILANT)~~ Contact Author For Rights

HARCOURT: Well, I hope your reception at the Play yesterday has hardened you for the Women's contempt and the Men's raillery.

HORNER: But what say the Ladies? Have they no pity?

HARCOURT: The Ladies never pity a Man who has lost all, though he lost it all in their Service.

HORNER: Well, a Pox on love and wenching. Women serve but to keep a Man from better Company.

HARCOURT: Mistresses are like Books. If you gaze at them too much, they tire you and make you unfit for Company.

DORILANT: A Mistress should be like a little Country house, dwelt in for a night and away.

HORNER: From now, I will have only those manly pleasures of being very drunk and very slovenly.

DORILANT: Gad, he's in the right on it.

(HORNER looks out the window again.)

HORNER: Sparkish is below.

HARCOURT: What! The more we abuse him, the fonder he is of us.

DORILANT: And to pass for a wit, shows himself a fool every night.

(Enter SPARKISH to them.)

HORNER: How is it, Sparks, how is it?

SPARKISH: Well Faith, Harry, I must rally thee a little, ha, ha, ha, upon the rumours I hear, ha, ha, ha, which I can't hold, in Faith. Shall I speak?

HORNER: I'm certain you will. But be not bitter.

SPARKISH: Honest Dick and Frank shall answer for me, I will not be bitter, by the Universe.

HARCOURT: Ten thousand pound, he shall not be bitter at all.

DORILANT: Nor sour nor sweet.

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HORNER: What, downright insipid?

SPARKISH: Nay then, since you are so brisk and provoke me, take what follows. You must know I was discoursing and rallying with some Ladies yesterday, and they happened to talk of the fine new signs in Town. *(Editor's note: each time he says "sign", he waves his hand like a hanging sign waving in the wind.)* Said I, "I know where the best new sign is." "Where?" says one of the Ladies. "In Covent-Garden," I replied. "Lord," says another, "there was never a new sign there yesterday." "Yes, but there was," said I again, "and it came out of France."

DORILANT: A Pox! I can bear no more.

SPARKISH: Nay faith, I'll make you laugh. "Did you never see Mr. Horner?" quoth I. "He lodges in Covent Garden, and he's but a 'sign' of a Man, since he came out of France." Heh, hah, he! *(Ed.: with "sing", he waves his hand at crotch level.)*

HORNER: Devil take me!

SPARKISH: With that they all fell a-laughing till they be-pissed themselves. Well, come, Sparks, where do we dine? I have left an Earl to come dine with you.

DORILANT: I thought you loved a title better than a Suit with French trimming to it.

SPARKISH: No, Sir, a wit to me is the greatest title in the World.

HARCOURT: *(Pushing him out the door.)* But, go dine with your Earl, Sir. We will not take it ill, I assure you.

SPARKISH: *(Returning.)* Nay, pray Gentlemen.

DORILANT: *(Pushing him out the door.)* We'll thrust you out, if you would not.

SPARKISH: *(Returning.)* Nay, dear Gentlemen, hear me. Where do we dine?

HORNER: *(Pushing him out the door.)* Even where you will.

SPARKISH: *(Returning.)* Pshaw, with your fooling, we shall miss the new Play, and I would no more miss a new Play the first day than I would setting in Wits' Row. Therefore I'll go fetch my Mistress and away.

(Exit SPARKISH. Enter PINCHWIFE.)

HORNER: Who have we here? Pinchwife!

PINCHWIFE: Gentlemen, your humble Servant

HORNER: Now, judging by your long absence from Town, the grimness of your humour and the slovenliness of your coat, should I give you joy of your recent Marriage?

PINCHWIFE: My long stay in the Country will excuse my suit of dress, and I have a suit of Law that brings me up to Town, and *that* puts me out of humour.

HORNER: Well, I heard you were married but I did not expect it from one that knew London so much and Women so well.

PINCHWIFE: Why, I have married no London Wife.

HORNER: Pshaw, that's all one. Is she handsome and young?

PINCHWIFE: No, no, she has no beauty but her youth, no attraction but her modesty. Homely and housewifely, that's all. She's too awkward and silly to bring to Town.

HARCOURT: Then me-thinks you should bring her to be taught . . . breeding.

PINCHWIFE: Breeding? No, Sir, I thank you. Good Wives and private Soldiers should be ignorant.

HORNER: If she be ill favoured, there is more danger leaving her in the Country. In Town, we have such variety of dainties that we are seldom hungry.

PINCHWIFE: Just so, Gentlemen.

HORNER: But, why would you marry her if she be ugly, ill bred and silly? She must be rich.

PINCHWIFE: She has brought twenty thousand pound to me, for she'll *not* spend her moderate portion as sure as a London Baggage *would* spend hers. If she's ugly, she'll not be bothered by – (*casting an eye at HORNER.*) – the rakes; and being ill bred, she'll hate their wit; and if silly, will not know the difference betwixt a Man of one and twenty and one of — forty — five.

HORNER: Fifty — five — to my knowledge. But if she be silly, she'll expect as much from a Man of — forty — five as from one of one and twenty.

PINCHWIFE: He's a Fool that marries, but he's a greater that does not marry a Fool. My Wife shall make me no Cuckold, though she had your help, Mr. Horner.

DORILANT: His help!

HARCOURT: He's come newly to Town, and has not heard how things are

HORNER: But tell me, did I see you yesterday in the upper box with a pretty Country-wench? What, dost thou blush at five and forty for having been seen with a Wench?

DORILANT: No Faith, I warrant 'twas his Wife which he seated there out of sight.

HARCOURT: He blushes! More ashamed to be seen with his wife than with a Wench!

PINCHWIFE: (*Aside.*) Hell and damnation!

HORNER: But was it thy Wife? She was exceedingly pretty. I was in love with her at that distance.

PINCHWIFE: You are like never to be nearer to her. Your Servant, Gentlemen. (*Starts to exit.*)

HORNER: Nay, prithee stay.

PINCHWIFE: I cannot.

HORNER: Come, you shall dine with us.

PINCHWIFE: I have dined already.

HORNER: Come, I know thou hast not. I'll treat thee, dear Rogue, thou shall spend none of thy Hampshire Money today.

PINCHWIFE: I have business at home.

(Exit PINCHWIFE.)

HARCOURT: To lock up his Wife. He's as jealous as a Cheapside Husband of a Covent Garden Wife.

(Exeunt.)

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ACT II.

(Later that morning. PINCHWIFE's Lodging. Enter MRS. PINCHWIFE and ALITHEA.)

MRS. PINCHWIFE: *(With a strong country accent.)* Sister, tell me why my Husband looks so glum here in Town and keeps me up so close and will not let me go a-walking nor let me wear my best Gown?

ALITHEA: Oh, he's jealous, Sister. He's afraid you should love another Man.

MRS. PINCHWIFE: How should he be afraid of my loving another man when he will not let me see any but himself?

ALITHEA: Did he not carry you yesterday to a Play?

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Aye, but we sat amongst ugly People. The Gentry sat under us, so that I could not see them. He told me none but naughty Women sat there. But I would have ventured there for all that.

ALITHEA: But how did you like the Play?

MRS. PINCHWIFE: I was a-weary of the Play, but I liked huge-wisly the Actors. They are the goodliest proper-est Men, Sister.

ALITHEA: O, but you must not like the Actors, Sister.

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Aye, how should I help it, Sister?

(Enter PINCHWIFE.)

ALITHEA: But here comes your Husband.

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Oh my dear, dear Bud, welcome home. Why dost thou look so fropish?

PINCHWIFE: You're a Fool.

(MRS. PINCHWIFE turns upstage and cries loudly.)

ALITHEA: Faith, so she is for crying for no fault, poor tender Creature!

PINCHWIFE: You would have her as impudent as yourself? An errant Jill-flirt, a Magpie?

ALITHEA: Brother, the honour of your Family shall sooner suffer in your Wife, there, than in me, though I take the innocent liberty of the Town.

PINCHWIFE: Hark you, Mistress, do not talk so before my Wife!

ALITHEA: What man boasts of any intrigue with me? What woman of scandalous reputation keeps Company with me?

PINCHWIFE: No, you keep Company with Men of scandalous reputations.

ALITHEA: Where? In a Box at the Plays? In the drawing room at Whitehall? In St. James's Park? Mulberry Garden? Or—

PINCHWIFE: Hold, do not teach my Wife where Men are to be found!

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Be not angry, Bud. She will tell me nothing of the Town, though I ask her a thousand times a day.

PINCHWIFE: A thousand times a day? Are you that anxious to traipse about the Town?

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Not I, indeed, Dear. I hate London. Our house in the Country is worth a thousand of it. Would I were there, again.

PINCHWIFE: So you shall be, I warrant. But you were talking of Plays and Players when I came in. *(To ALITHEA.)* You encourage her in this.

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MRS. PINCHWIFE: No indeed, Dear, she chid me just now for liking the Player Men.

PINCHWIFE: You like the Players? But none better than me?

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Yes, indeed, I do. The Player Men are fine men.

PINCHWIFE: But you love none better than me?

MRS. PINCHWIFE: You are mine own Dear Bud.

PINCHWIFE: Aye, but you must love only me, not like these Town Women who love every Man *but* their husbands. They'd have Plays, Visits, Coaches, Clothes, Fiddles, Balls, Treats, and all the wicked Town-life.

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Husband, do the Town-women love the Player Men too?

PINCHWIFE: Ha — Mrs. Minx, ask me no more about Plays.

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Why, Love? I did not care for it; but when you forbid me, you make me desire it.

ALITHEA: *(Aside.)* As 'twill be in other things, I warrant.

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Pray, let me go to a Play, Dear.

PINCHWIFE: Hold your Peace, I will not.

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Why, Love?

PINCHWIFE: First, *you* like the Actors, and, second, they may like *you*.

MRS. PINCHWIFE: What, a homely Country Girl? Nobody will like me.

PINCHWIFE: They will.

MRS. PINCHWIFE: No, no, you jest — I won't believe you.

PINCHWIFE: I tell you that one of the lewdest Fellows in Town, who saw you there, told me he was in love with you.

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Indeed! Who, who was it?

PINCHWIFE: *(Aside.)* That slipped out before I was aware.

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Was it any of our Neighbours?

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PINCHWIFE: I promise you, he would but ruin you as he has done hundreds.

MRS. PINCHWIFE: If he loves me, why should he ruin me? *(Smiling slyly.)* I would do him no harm.

ALITHEA: Ha, ha, ha!

PINCHWIFE: Well, I'll keep him from doing you any harm – or me either. But here comes Company. Get you in, get you in. *(Pushing her through a door.)*

MRS. PINCHWIFE: But Pray, Husband, is he a pretty Gentleman that loves me?

PINCHWIFE: In, baggage, in! *(Thrusts her in: shuts the door)* What, all the lewd Libertines of the Town brought to my Lodging! S'death, I'll not suffer it.

(Enter SPARKISH and HARCOURT.)

SPARKISH: *(To ALITHEA.)* Dear little Rogue, I told you I'd make you acquainted with all my Friends, and this is one of those that are to dance at your Wedding tomorrow, and him you must bid welcome ever to what you and I have.

PINCHWIFE: *(Aside.)* Monstrous! —

(HARCOURT kisses her hand.)

SPARKISH: Harcourt how do you like her, Faith? Nay, Dear, do not look down. I should hate to have a Wife of mine out of countenance at anything.

PINCHWIFE: *(Aside.)* Wonderful!

SPARKISH: I say, Harcourt, you have stared upon her enough to draw her.

HARCOURT: So that I might draw me a Mistress, too, differing from her in nothing but her love and engagement to you.

ALITHEA: Sir, Master Sparkish has often told me that his Acquaintance were all Wits and Railers, and now I find it.

SPARKISH: No, by the Universe, I assure you he is a man of perfect honour. He would say nothing to a Lady he does not mean.

PINCHWIFE: *(Aside.)* Praising another Man to his Betrothed!

HARCOURT: Sir, you are so obliging, that—

SPARKISH: Nay, I am sure you admire her extremely. I see it in your eyes. By the World, he does admire you, Madam!

HARCOURT: Above the World. And till now I never thought I should have envied any Man about to marry, but you, Madam, are the best excuse for Marriage I ever knew.

ALITHEA: Indeed, Sir, you are of the Society of Wits and Railers, for I hear they hate Marriage as much as bad Wine.

HARCOURT: Truly, Madam, I never was an Enemy to Marriage till now, because, before now, Marriage was never an Enemy to me.

ALITHEA: But why, Sir, is Marriage an Enemy to you now? Because it robs you of your Friend here?

HARCOURT: Because you marry him. I wish it were in my power to break the Match, by Heavens, I would.

ALITHEA: Would you be so unkind?

SPARKISH: No, gad, 'tis only his kindness to me!

PINCHWIFE: *(Aside.)* Insensible Fop! Let a Man make love to his Wife before his face.

SPARKISH: Do you think my Wife-to-be a fine Person?

HARCOURT: I could gaze upon her till I become as blind as you are.

SPARKISH: As I am!

HARCOURT: Because you are a Lover, and true Lovers are blind.

SPARKISH: True, true; but by the World, she has wit as well as beauty. Go, go with her into a corner and try if she has wit. Talk to her anything, she's bashful before me.

(HARCOURT takes ALITHEA aside.)

PINCHWIFE: Sir, if you are not concerned for the honour of a wife, I am for that of a Sister. He shall not debauch her. *(He tries to draw his sword, but it is rusted in its scabbard.)*

SPARKISH: *(Struggles with PINCHWIFE to keep him from HARCOURT and ALITHEA.)*
Nay, you shall not disturb them.

ALITHEA: The writings are drawn, Sir, settlements made. 'Tis past all revocation.

HARCOURT: Then so is my death.

ALITHEA: I would not be unjust to him.

HARCOURT: Then why to me?

ALITHEA: I have no obligation to you.

HARCOURT: You have my love.

ALITHEA: I had his before.

HARCOURT: Marrying you is no more sign of his love than bribing your Woman is a sign of his generosity.

ALITHEA: In short, Sir, I will marry him. My reputation would suffer in the World, else.

HARCOURT: If you marry *him*, your reputation would indeed suffer in the World.

ALITHEA: Nay, now you are rude, Sir. — Mr. Sparkish, your Friend here is very troublesome and very loving.

PINCHWIFE: Do you hear that?

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SPARKISH: Do you think I'll be jealous like a Country Bumpkin?

PINCHWIFE: No, I think you'll be a Cuckold, like a credulous Chit.

ALITHEA: Hold, do not rail at him, brother. Since he is to be my Husband, I am trying to like him. Master Sparkish!

SPARKISH: Now dear Rogue, has she not wit?

HARCOURT: (*Speaks with surly-ness.*) Not so much as I hoped she had.

ALITHEA: He has been making love to me.

SPARKISH: Pshaw, to show his parts— we wits make love often but to show our parts.

ALITHEA: He said you were a Wretch, below an injury.

SPARKISH: Pshaw.

ALITHEA: A Coward.

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SPARKISH: Pshaw, pshaw.

ALITHEA: Witless.

SPARKISH: How, did he disparage my Wit? Nay, then my honour's concerned. I can't put up with that, Sir. (*Starts to draw.*)

ALITHEA: Hold, hold. Indeed to tell the truth, the Gentleman said that what he spoke was but out of friendship to you.

SPARKISH: How! Say I am a Fool out of friendship?

ALITHEA: Yes, to try whether I was concerned enough for you, and made love to me only to be satisfied of my virtue, for your sake.

SPARKISH: Nay, my dear Rogue, I ask thee pardon. Harcourt, let's be gone to the new Play. — Come Madam.

ALITHEA: Not if you intend to leave me alone in the Box and run into the pit as you do.

SPARKISH: Pshaw, I'll leave Harcourt with you in the Box, and that's as good. If I sat in the Box, I should be thought no Wit. Come away! Harcourt, lead her down.

(*Exeunt SPARKISH, HARCOURT, and ALITHEA.*)

PINCHWIFE: Well, go thy ways. A Cuckold before married! But to my own Free-hold —

(Enter LADY FIDGET, and MISTRESS DAINTY.)

LADY FIDGET: Your Servant, Sir. We are come to take your Lady to the new Play.

PINCHWIFE: New Play!

LADY FIDGET: And my Husband will wait upon you presently.

PINCHWIFE: Madam, by no means. I will not see Sir Jasper here till I have waited upon him at home, nor shall my Wife see you till she has waited upon your Ladyship at your lodgings.

DAINTY: We will not stir till we see her.

PINCHWIFE: *(Aside.)* A Pox on 'em all! *(Goes to the door, and returns)* She has locked the door . . . and she is not at home.

LADY FIDGET: No, you have locked the door, and she's within.

DAINTY: You servants below told us she was at home.

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PINCHWIFE: *Did* they? Well, to tell you the truth, Ladies, my Wife has just now — the Small Pox come upon her! Do not be frightened, but pray, be gone, Ladies, you must not stay here in danger of your lives.

LADY FIDGET: No, no, we have had them!

DAINTY: Come, come, we must see how it goes with her. I understand the disease.

LADY FIDGET: Come.

PINCHWIFE: *(Aside.)* Well, you cannot beat Women at lying, therefore I'll quit the Field.

(Exit PINCHWIFE.)

DAINTY: Here's jealousy.

LADY FIDGET: As the World goes, I wonder there are not more

DAINTY: Pshaw, as the World goes, to what end should they be jealous?

LADY FIDGET: True, Men of parts never visit Women of honour as they used to do, but treat us with as much indifference as if we were married to them.

DAINTY: I suppose the blot against our honour would be the same with a Man of quality as with a common one. But then the pleasure should be the less.

LADY FIDGET: Fie, fie, fie, for shame, Sister, whither shall we ramble?

DAINTY: Besides an intrigue is so much the more notorious for the man's quality.

LADY FIDGET: But still, my dear, dear Honour.

(Enter SIR JASPAR, HORNER, DORILANT.)

LADY FIDGET: Oh, what do you mean, Sir Jaspar, to bring in these upon us?

DAINTY: Foh, these are as bad as Wits.

LADY FIDGET: Let us leave the Room.

SIR JASPAR: Stay, stay! To tell you the naked truth . . .

LADY FIDGET: Fie, Sir Jaspar, do not use that word!

SIR JASPAR: What word?

LADY FIDGET: "Naked."

SIR JASPAR: Well, well, in short I have business at Whitehall and cannot go to the play with you, therefore would have you go . . .

LADY FIDGET: With those two to a Play?

SIR JASPAR: *(Pushing DORILANT back.)* No, not with *that* one. But with Mr. Horner. There can be no scandal to go with *him*.

LADY FIDGET: With that nasty Fellow! No, no.

SIR JASPAR: Nay, prithee, Dear, hear me.

(Whispers to LADY FIDGET. His explanation includes SPARKISH's 'hanging sign' hand movement. HORNER and DORILANT drawing near DAINTY.)

HORNER: Lady.

DAINTY: Stand off. Do not approach. You are obscenity all over. I would as soon look upon a Picture of Adam and Eve without fig leaves as you. Therefore keep off.

DORILANT: *(Aside to HORNER.)* What a Devil is she railing about?

HORNER: *(Aside to DORILANT.)* Why, this lady is but a pretender to honour, as is a critic to wit.

SIR JASPAR: Mr. Horner, I desire you to go with these Ladies to the Play, Sir.

HORNER: I! Sir.

SIR JASPAR: Aye, aye. Come, Sir.

HORNER: I must beg your pardon, Sir, and theirs. I will not be seen in Women's Company in public again for the World.

SIR JASPAR: Ha, ha, strange Aversion!

DAINTY: No, he's for Women's company in private.

SIR JASPAR: He— poor Man— he? Hee, hee!

DAINTY: Is it shame, amongst lewd fellows, to be seen in virtuous Women's company?

HORNER: Indeed, Madam, time was I hated virtuous Women, but now I hate the other kind, too.

LADY FIDGET: You are very obliging, Sir.

SIR JASPAR: In sober sadness, he shall go.

DORILANT: I am ready to wait upon the Ladies, and I think I am the fitter Man.

SIR JASPAR: You, Sir? Master Horner is a privileged Man amongst the Ladies, heh, he, he!

DORILANT: That same privilege will admit him into the great Turk's Hareem. I should talk to Pinchwife about his wife.

(Exit DORILANT.)

SIR JASPAR: Come, come, Man! What, avoid that sweet, soft, gentle, tame, noble Creature Woman, made for Man's Companion . . .

HORNER: So is that soft, gentle, tame, and more noble Creature, the Spaniel, and with all their ticks: can fawn, lie down, bark at your Friends, give you Fleas. The only difference is the Spaniel fawns but upon one Master.

DAINTY: Insolent brute.

LADY FIDGET: Brute! Stinking, mortified, rotten French . . .

SIR JASPAR: Hold, your Ladyship. A word. *(He takes her aside.)* What if he be a little rude? Gamesters may be rude with Ladies, you know.

LADY FIDGET: Gamesters?

SIR JASPAR: He's a poor Gambler but he loves to play.

LADY FIDGET: Are you sure?

SIR JASPAR: He loves play as much as you, and has money as much as I.

LADY FIDGET: I am content. Losing Gamesters may be rude, in proportion to their loss.

SIR JASPAR: Heh, he, he, well, win or lose, Horner, you shall have your liberty with her.

LADY FIDGET: For your sake, I'll give him admittance and freedom.

HORNER: All sorts of freedom, Madam?

SIR JASPAR: Aye, aye, aye, all sorts of freedom. *(Heedle her, jest with her and be better acquainted one with another.)*

HORNER: Very well, Sir. Lady, a word with you. *(Aside.)* I know her already. I think may venture with her my secret for hers . . .

(HORNER and LADY FIDGET whisper aside.)

SIR JASPAR: Sister-Coz, I have provided an innocent Play-fellow for you there.

DAINTY: Who, he? Foh, we'll have no such Play-fellows.

SIR JASPAR: Nay, pray hear me. *(Whispering to her.)*

LADY FIDGET: *(Aside to HORNER.)* Poor Gentleman, to cause yourself to be reported as suffering the greatest shame that could fall a Man – that no shame might fall upon us? You are a Gallant, Sir. But are you, indeed, Sir, as perfectly, perfectly the same Man as before your going into France, Sir? As perfectly, perfectly, Sir?

HORNER: As perfectly, perfectly, Madam. Nay, I desire to come to the test, Madam.

LADY FIDGET: All Men of honour desire to come to the test. But you'll not tell, dear Sir?

HORNER: If I did, who would believe me. My reputation is ruined more soundly than if I'd been tainted with cowardice, dear Madam.

LADY FIDGET: Nay, then, as one may say, do your worst, dear, dear Mr. Horner.

SIR JASPAR: *(Aloud.)* Come, is your Ladyship reconciled to him yet?

LADY FIDGET: Master Horner is a thousand, thousand times a better Man than I thought him.

SIR JASPAR: Well, well, all the Town knows he – hee, hee, hee! Therefore get you gone to your business: pleasure, whilst I go to my pleasure: business.

LADY FIDGET: Come then, dear Gallant.

HORNER: Come away, my dearest . . . Mistress.

SIR JASPAR: So, so, why 'tis as I'd have it.

HORNER: And as I'd have it.

(Exit SIR JASPAR. HORNER and LADY FIDGET exchange a glance.)

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LADY FIDGET: *(To audience.)* Who, for his business, from his Wife will run,
Should take care first to have *her* business done.

(Exeunt.)

ACT III
SCENE 1.

(Pinchwife's Lodging)
(Later that day)

(ALITHEA and MRS. PINCHWIFE revealed.)

ALITHEA: You are grown melancholy, sister. What ails you?

MRS. PINCHWIFE: It would make anyone melancholy to see you go fluttering about abroad every day, while I must stay at home like a poor lonely Bird in a cage.

ALITHEA: But you came young and just from the nest to your cage. I thought you liked it.

MRS. PINCHWIFE: I confess I was quiet enough till my Husband told me what lives the London Ladies live with their dancing, meetings and junketings, and dressed in their best gowns, and I think, play at bowls every day of the week, so they do.

(Enter PINCHWIFE.)

PINCHWIFE: What's here? You put the Town in her head and leave her unsatisfied.

ALITHEA: When none but you are to leave her unsatisfied?

PINCHWIFE: Come Mistress Flippant, she has been in Town a week and never desired till this afternoon to go abroad.

ALITHEA: Was she not at a Play yesterday?

PINCHWIFE: Yes, but she never asked me. I was the cause of her going.

ALITHEA: Then if she asks again, *you* are the cause of her asking, not my example.

PINCHWIFE: Tomorrow night I shall be rid of you, and the next day before light, she and I will be rid of the Town. Come, be not melancholy, for you shall go into the Country day after tomorrow, Dearest.

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Let me alone, I am not well.

PINCHWIFE: Oh, if that be all. What ails my dearest?

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Truly, I have not been well since you told me there was a Gallant at the Play in love with me.

PINCHWIFE: Ha?

ALITHEA: *That's* by my example, too.

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Pray Bud, let's go to a Play tonight.

PINCHWIFE: Why are you so eager to see a Play?

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Faith, I would see, if I could, the Gallant you say loves me, that's all, dear Bud.

ALITHEA: This proceeds from *my* example.

PINCHWIFE: Come, have patience and you shall go into the Country on Friday.

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Then, I would see some sights first to tell my Neighbours of.

ALITHEA: I'm the cause of *this* desire, too.

PINCHWIFE: But now I think on it, who was the cause of Horner's coming to my Lodging today? That was you.

ALITHEA: No, you, because you would not let him see her outside of your Lodging.

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Oh, Lord! Did the Gentleman come hither to see me, indeed?

PINCHWIFE: No, no!

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Come, pray Bud, let's go abroad before 'tis late. For I *will* go, that's flat and plain.

PINCHWIFE: Already! The obstinacy of a Town-wife. Sister, how may she not be known?

ALITHEA: Let her put on a Mask.

PINCHWIFE: Pshaw, a Mask is as ridiculous a disguise as a stage-beard. Horner would insist on speaking with us, wish her joy, kiss her, talk to her, leer upon her, and the Devil and all. No! No mask, 'tis dangerous.

ALITHEA: How, then?

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Nay, shall we go? The Exchange will be shut, and I have a mind to see that.

PINCHWIFE: I have it! I'll dress her up in the Suit I've bought for her Brother, little Sir James. Nay, I'll out-trick Mr. Horner. Come let's go dress her. A Mask! No, a Woman masked, like a covered Dish, but gives a Man curiosity – and appetite.

(Exeunt.)

ACT III
SCENE 2

(An Exterior Setting)
(That Night)

(Enter HORNER, HARCOURT, DORILANT)

DORILANT: Harry! Not Sup with us but with Women?

HORNER: Aye, a Pox on them all.

DORILANT: Did I ever think to see you keep company with Women in vain? I would no more Sup with Women, unless I could lie with them, than Sup with a rich Fool unless I could cheat him.

HARCOURT: But hark you, Sir, before you go, a little of your advice. I am in love with Sparkish's Mistress whom he is to marry tomorrow. How shall I get her?

(Enter SPARKISH, looking about.)

HORNER: Why, here comes one will help you to her.

HARCOURT: *(Aside to HORNER.)* He is my Rival!

HORNER: *(Aside to HARCOURT.)* A foolish Rival and a jealous Husband assist the Lover's designs, for they are sure to make their Women hate them.

HARCOURT: *(Aside to HORNER.)* But I cannot come near his Mistress except in his company.

HORNER: *(Aside to HARCOURT.)* Still the better for you. A Fool may best be bubbled of his Mistress and his Money by keeping him company.

SPARKISH: Who is to be bubbled? Faith, I haven't met with a bubble since Christmas. Gad, they must go out with the cold weather.

HARCOURT: *(Aside to HORNER.)* A Pox, he did not hear all, I hope.

SPARKISH: Come, you bubbling Rogues, you, where do we sup? Oh, Harcourt, my Mistress tells me you were making fierce love to her all through the Play long, hah, ha!

HARCOURT: Did she tell you so? Women are like the Exchange: to enhance the price of their commodity, they report offers which were never made.

HORNER: But hast thou a Mistress, Sparkish? As hard for me to believe as thou hadst a bubble.

SPARKISH: Are you at your raillery, Sir? But we were beforehand something bold with you today at the Play. Did you not hear we Wits laugh?

HARCOURT: I thought you had gone to the Play to laugh at the Poet's wit, not at your own.

SPARKISH: Gad, we speak more wit than the Poets, and so laugh louder than his audience.

HARCOURT: But, who comes here, Sparkish?

(Enter PINCHWIFE, MRS. PINCHWIFE in Man's Clothes, ALITHEA, LUCY.)

SPARKISH: Oh hide me, there's my Mistress too.

(SPARKISH hides himself behind HARCOURT.)

HARCOURT: She sees you.

SPARKISH: But I'll not see her, 'tis time to go to Whitehall. Faith, the King will have
suppd.

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HORNER: Your Servant, Pinchwife . . . What? He knows us not—

PINCHWIFE: Come along.

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Pray, may I buy some Ballads? Six-penny worth?

PINCHWIFE: No, Plays are not for your reading. Come along, will you unmask yourself?

HORNER: Who is that pretty Youth with him, Sparkish?

SPARKISH: I believe his Wife's Brother. He's something like her.

HORNER: I have seen a face like it too. Let us follow them.

(Exeunt PINCHWIFE, MRS. PINCHWIFE, ALITHEA, LUCY; HORNER, and DORILANT following them.)

HARCOURT: Come, Sparkish, your Mistress saw you and will be angry. Besides I would fain be reconciled to her, which none but you can do, dear Friend.

SPARKISH: Well, that's a better reason. Not for her's or my sake. But I can deny you nothing.

HARCOURT: I am obliged to you indeed, dear Friend.

(Exit SPARKISH, and HARCOURT following. Re-enter PINCHWIFE, MRS. PINCHWIFE in Man's Clothes, ALITHEA, LUCY.)

PINCHWIFE: *(To ALITHEA.)* Sister, if you will stay, we must leave. *(To MRS. PINCHWIFE.)* Come, let's be gone, Mistress Margery.

MRS. PINCHWIFE: I haven't half my belly full of sights, yet. Lord, what a power of brave signs are here! Look – the Bull's-head, the Stag's-head, the Ram's-head . . .

PINCHWIFE: Nay, if every Husband's proper sign were here, they would be all alike.

MRS. PINCHWIFE: What do you mean by that, Bud?

PINCHWIFE: They would be all Ram's heads.

(Exeunt PINCHWIFE, MRS. PINCHWIFE. Re-enter SPARKISH, HARCOURT at the other door.)

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SPARKISH: Come, dear Madam, for my sake you shall be reconciled to him.

ALITHEA: I hate him because he is your Enemy, and, if you love me, you ought to hate him, too, for making love to me.

SPARKISH: I hate a Man for loving you! If he love you, 'tis but what he can't help. How can I hate a Man for being of my opinion?

ALITHEA: You suffer a Man to make love to me, who am to marry you tomorrow?

SPARKISH: That he makes love to you is a sign you are handsome, and that I am not jealous is a sign you are virtuous. That, I think, bespeaks your honour.

ALITHEA: 'Tis your honour I am concerned for.

HARCOURT: But why, dearest Madam? Let his honour alone for my sake.

SPARKISH: Aye, aye, you make me giddy, Madam, with your virtue and honour.

ALITHEA: Monstrous!

LUCY: *(Aside.)* Well, to see what easy Husbands these Women of quality have.

ALITHEA: I tell you plainly, he pursues me to marry me.

SPARKISH: Pshaw!

HARCOURT: You see, Madam, you strive in vain to make him jealous. I would not wrong you for the World.

SPARKISH: Look you, there. Hear him, hear him and do not walk away so.

HARCOURT: I say I love you that I would not have you cast yourself away upon so unworthy and inconsiderable a thing as what you see here. *(Beating his own breast but managing to indicate SPARKISH.)*

SPARKISH: No faith, I believe you would not. Now, his meaning is plain.

HARCOURT: Heavens forbid the glory of her Sex should fall so low as into the embraces of such a contemptible Wretch.

SPARKISH: You see, he will rather wrong himself than me in giving himself such names.

ALITHEA: Do you not understand him yet? *(Starts to go.)*

SPARKISH: Nay, Madam, stay, since *you* have not yet understood him. Answer to thy Catechism, Friend. *(In most unusual manner.)* Do you love my Mistress here?

HARCOURT: *(Same.)* Yes, I wish she would not doubt it.

SPARKISH: But how do you love her?

HARCOURT: With all my Soul.

ALITHEA: Me-thinks, he speaks plain enough now.

SPARKISH: But with what kind of love, Harcourt?

HARCOURT: *(In normal speaking voice.)* With the best and truest love in the World.

SPARKISH: Look you there then, that is no matrimonial love, I'm sure.

ALITHEA: How's that, do you say matrimonial love is not best?

SPARKISH: Gad, I went too far ere I was aware. But speak for thyself, Harcourt. You said you would not wrong her.

HARCOURT: Who knows how to value so much beauty and virtue?

SPARKISH: Aye . . .

HARCOURT: Whose love can no more be equalled in the world than that Heavenly form of yours.

SPARKISH: No . . .

HARCOURT: Who could no more suffer a Rival than your absence.

SPARKISH: No . . .

HARCOURT: Who loves you better than his eyes that first made him love you.

SPARKISH: Aye – (*ALITHEA starts to leave.*) Nay, Madam, faith, you shan't go till . . .

ALITHEA: Have a care, lest you make me stay too long.

SPARKISH: But till he has saluted you, that I may be assured you are friends. Come Pray, Madam, be friends with him.

(Enter PINCHWIFE, MRS. PINCHWIFE.)

ALITHEA: You must pardon me, Sir, that I am not yet so obedient to you.

PINCHWIFE: What, invite your Wife to kiss Men? Monstrous! Are you not ashamed?

SPARKISH: Are you not ashamed that I should have more confidence in the chastity of your Family than you have? Sir, I am frank, Sir.

PINCHWIFE: Very frank, Sir, to share your Wife with your friends.

SPARKISH: I take a pleasure in it, as when I show fine Clothes at a Playhouse and my count money before poor folk.

PINCHWIFE: He that shows his money, his clothes or his wife will be in danger of having them borrowed.

SPARKISH: I love to be envied and would not marry a Wife that I alone could love. Loving alone is as dull as eating alone. And so good night, for I must to Whitehall. Madam, I hope you are now reconciled to my Friend, and so I wish you a good night, Madam, and sleep if you can, for tomorrow you know I must visit you early with a Canonical Gentleman. Good night, dear Harcourt.

(Exit SPARKISH.)

HARCOURT: Madam, I hope you will not refuse my visit tomorrow, with a Canonical Gentleman, if it should be earlier than Mr. Sparkish's.

PINCHWIFE: *(Laying his hand on his sword hilt.)* This Gentlewoman is yet under my care, therefore you must yet forbear your freedom with her, Sir.

(Coming between ALITHEA and HARCOURT.)

HARCOURT: *(Showing steel.)* Must, Sir?

PINCHWIFE: Yes, Sir! She is my Sister. *(He tries to draw his sword, but it is still stuck.)*

HARCOURT: *(Returning steel.)* 'Tis well she is, Sir— for I must be her — and your — Servant, Sir. Madam . . .

PINCHWIFE: Come away, Sister, we had been gone if it had not been for you, and so avoided these lewd Rakehells.

(Enter HORNER, DORILANT to them.)

HORNER: How now, Pinchwife?

PINCHWIFE: Your Servant.

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HORNER: What, I see the Country makes a Man unaccountable and only fit to converse with his Horses and Dogs.

PINCHWIFE: I take pleasure in my business, Sir, and must mind it. Your business is pleasure, therefore you and I go different ways.

HORNER: Well, you may go, but this pretty young Gentleman . . . *(Takes hold of Mrs. Pinchwife)*

HARCOURT: The Lady . . . *(Taking Alithea's hand.)*

DORILANT: And the Maid . . . *(With his arm around Lucy.)*

HORNER: Shall stay with us, for I suppose their business is the same as ours, pleasure.

PINCHWIFE: *(Aside)* 'Sdeath he knows her, she carries it so badly. Yet if he does not, I should be a fool to reveal it first.

ALITHEA: Pray, let us go, Sir.

PINCHWIFE: Come, come—

HORNER: *(to MRS. PINCHWIFE.)* Had you not rather stay with us? Prithee, Pinchwife, who is this pretty young Gentleman?

PINCHWIFE: One to whom I'm a guardian.

HORNER: Who is he? I never saw anything so pretty in all my life.

PINCHWIFE: Pshaw, do not look upon him so much. You'll put him out of countenance. Come away — Brother. (*Starts to take her away.*)

HORNER: Oh, your Brother!

PINCHWIFE: Yes, my Wife's Brother. Come, she stays supper for us.

HORNER: He is very like her I saw at the Play, whom I told you I was in love with.

MRS. PINCHWIFE: (*Aside*) Oh, Jeminy! Is this he that was in love with me? I am glad on it I vow, for he's a curious fine Gentleman, and I love him already, too. (*to PINCHWIFE.*) Is this he, Bud?

PINCHWIFE: (*To his Wife.*) Come away, come away.

HORNER: Why, what haste are you in? Why won't you let me talk with him?

PINCHWIFE: Because you'll debauch him, and I would not have him debauched for anything in the World. (*Aside*) How she gazes on him! The Devil!

HORNER: Harcourt, Dorilant, look here. This is the very likeness of that dowdy wife he told us of. Did you ever see a lovelier Creature? The Rogue has reason to be jealous of his Wife, since she is like him, for she would make all that see her love her.

DORILANT: She must indeed be very pretty.

HARCOURT: More beautiful than a Poet's first Mistress of the Imagination.

HORNER: Or another Man's last Mistress of flesh and blood.

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Nay, now you jeer, Sir. Pray don't jeer me . . .

PINCHWIFE: Come, come. (*Aside*) By Heavens, she'll reveal herself.

HORNER: I speak of your Sister, Sir.

PINCHWIFE: (*To his Wife.*) Come, come away, I say---

HORNER: Nay, by your leave, Sir, he shall not go yet— (*To them.*) Harcourt, Dorilant, let us torment this jealous Rogue a little.

HARCOURT, DORILANT: How?

HORNER: I'll show you.

PINCHWIFE: Come, I cannot stay fooling any longer. I tell you his Sister stays supper for us.

HORNER: Does she? Come then. we'll all go sup with her and thee.

PINCHWIFE: No, now I think on it, I warrant she's gone to bed. Come, I must rise early tomorrow, come.

HORNER: Well then, if she be gone to bed, I wish her and you a good night. Young Gentleman, present my humble service to her. *(Bowing.)*

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Thank you heartily, Sir. *(Starts to curtsy, then changes to a bow.)*

PINCHWIFE: *(Aside)* S'death, she will discover herself yet in spite of me.

HORNER: Tell her, dear sweet little Gentleman, that you have revived the love I had for her in the Playhouse.

MRS. PINCHWIFE: But did you love her, indeed?

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PINCHWIFE: Away, I say.

HORNER: Nay stay. Yes indeed, pray do you tell her so and give her this kiss from me. *(Kisses her.)*

PINCHWIFE: *(Aside)* Oh, Heavens! What do I suffer? Now 'tis too plain he knows her.

HORNER: And this, and this— *(Kisses her again.)*

MRS. PINCHWIFE: What do you kiss me for? *(Putting on a swagger.)* I am no Woman.

PINCHWIFE: Come, I cannot nor will stay any longer.

HORNER: Nay, they shall send your Lady a kiss too. Here Harcourt, Dorilant, will you not? *(HARCOURT comes forward and kisses her. She does a take to the audience then rushes to DORILANT and kisses him.)*

PINCHWIFE: *(Aside.)* How, do I suffer this? *(Pulling her away. Aloud.)* Come, come.

HORNER: Good night dear little Gentleman. Madam, goodnight. Farewell, Pinchwife. *(Apart to HARCOURT and DORILANT.)* Did not I tell you I would raise his jealous gall?

(Exeunt HORNER, HARCOURT and DORILANT.)

PINCHWIFE: So, gone at last. Stay, let me see first if the Coach be at this door.

(Exit PINCHWIFE. HORNER, HARCOURT, DORILANT return.)

HORNER: What not gone yet? Will you be sure to do as I desired you, sweet Sir?

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Sweet Sir, but what will you give me then?

HORNER: Come away into the next walk.

(Exit HORNER, drawing away MRS. PINCHWIFE.)

ALITHEA: Hold, hold — what do you do?

LUCY: Stay, stay, hold . . .

HARCOURT: He'll come presently. Nay, I will never let you go till you answer my question.

(ALITHEA, LUCY struggling with HARCOURT and DORILANT)

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LUCY: For God's sake, Sir, I must follow them.

DORILANT: No, I have something to present you with too. You shan't follow them.

(PINCHWIFE returns.)

PINCHWIFE: Where? — how? — what's become of? — gone — whither?

LUCY: He's only gone with the Gentleman who will give him something.

PINCHWIFE: Give him something! Where are they?

ALITHEA: In the next walk, Brother.

PINCHWIFE: Where, where?

(Exit PINCHWIFE, and returns presently, then goes out again.)

HARCOURT: What's the matter with him? But dearest Madam . . .

ALITHEA: Pray, let me go, Sir. I have suffered enough already, therefore I will never see

you more.

HARCOURT: Let me then, Madam, have the privilege of a banished Lover. If you cannot condescend to marry me, you should not take that wretch, my Rival.

ALITHEA: If he be true, and what I think him to me, I must be so to him. Your Servant, Sir.

HARCOURT: Are Women, like Fortune, only true to fools?

(Enter PINCHWIFE.)

PINCHWIFE: Gone! Not to be found. Which way went they?

ALITHEA: But into the other walk, Brother.

LUCY: Their business will be done presently, sir. It can't be long in doing.

ALITHEA: Are they not there?

PINCHWIFE: No, Eternal shame of your Family. You do not dishonour us enough yourself, but you must help her do it, too, thou legion of Bawds.

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ALITHEA: Good Brother.

ALITHEA: Look you here, she's coming.

(Enter MISTRESS PINCHWIFE, running, out of breath and somewhat dishevelled, with her hat full of Oranges, HORNER following.)

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Oh, dear Bud, look you here what I have got, see. The fine Gentleman has given me better things yet.

PINCHWIFE: Has he so?

HORNER: I have only given your little Brother an Orange, Sir.

PINCHWIFE: Thank you, Sir. *(Aside)* And squeezed the pips, too, I suppose. *(To his Wife.)* Come away.

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Stay, till I have put up my fine things, Bud.

(Enter SIR JASPAR FIDGET.)

SIR JASPAR: Oh, Master Horner! Come, the Ladies stay for you. Your Mistress, my Wife,

wonders you make not more haste to her.

HORNER: I have stayed a half-hour for you here. 'Tis your fault I am not now with your Wife. Good night, sweet little Gentleman. One kiss more. (*Kisses her.*) You'll remember me now I hope.

DORILANT: Sir Jaspar, he promised to sup with us, and if you take him to your house, you'll be in danger of our company too.

SIR JASPAR: Alas, Gentlemen, my house is not fit for you. There are none but gentlewomen there, which are not for your turn. *He*, you know, can bear with the society of civil Women now, ha, ha, ha! He's — hee, hee, heh.

DORILANT: What is he?

SIR JASPAR: Faith, my Eunuch, since you'll have it, hee, hee, hee.

(Exit SIR JASPAR FIDGET and HORNER.)

DORILANT: Harcourt, what a good Cuckold is lost there for want of a Man to make him one. O, to have Horner's privilege, who can make use of it.

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PINCHWIFE: Come.

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Presently, Bud.

DORILANT: Let us go too. (*To ALITHEA.*) Madam, your Servant. (*To LUCY.*) Good night, Strapper. (*Exit.*)

HARCOURT: Madam, though you will not let me have a good day or night, I wish you one, but dare not name the other half of my wish.

ALITHEA: Good night, Sir, forever. (*Exit.*)

MRS. PINCHWIFE: (*Holding out an Orange.*) I don't know where to put this. Here, dear Bud, you shall eat it.

PINCHWIFE: Indeed I deserve it, since I furnished the best part of it. (*Strikes away the Orange. She tears up and exits, crying loudly.*)

The Gallant treats, presents and gives the Ball;
But 'tis the absent Cuckold pays for all.

(He exits.)

END OF FIRST HALF

**ACT IV
SCENE 1**

*(Pinchwife's Lodging)
(The next morning)*

(ALITHEA enters in her wedding gown; LUCY comes behind, holding the train.)

LUCY: Well, Madam, here you are adorned and set up with so many ornaments and so much perfume, as People adorn and perfume a Corpse, to be dropped into the stinking second-hand-grave that is Master Sparkish's bed.

ALITHEA: Hold your peace.

LUCY: Nay, Madam, I will not. Why banish poor Master Harcourt from your sight? How could you be so hard-hearted?

ALITHEA: Because I was not hard-hearted.

LUCY: I see. 'Twas love and kindness that told him you'd see him more?

ALITHEA: I would see him no more, because — I love him.

LUCY: Hey day, a very pretty reason.

ALITHEA: I cannot injure the man I am engaged to marry.

LUCY: Can there be a greater wrong than to give him your person without your heart?

ALITHEA: I'll retrieve it for him after I am married a while.

LUCY: Marrying to fall in love is like gambling to become rich. All you do is lose what little you had before.

ALITHEA: Talk no more of Master Harcourt. I wish the other would come.

LUCY: Sparkish?

ALITHEA: Whatever his name.

LUCY: You will marry him then?

ALITHEA: I will give no cause for him to be jealous. Jealousy in a Husband begets a thousand plagues to a poor Woman, the loss of her honour, her quiet, her . . .

LUCY: Oh, does the wind lie there?

(Enter SPARKISH, and HARCOURT dressed like a Parson.)

SPARKISH: Madam, your humble Servant, a happy day to you and to us all.

HARCOURT: Amen.

ALITHEA: Who have we here?

SPARKISH: My Chaplain, in faith.

ALITHEA: But, Master Harcourt . . .

SPARKISH: Oh, Madam, poor Harcourt remembers his humble service to you, and in obedience to your last commands, refrains coming into your sight.

ALITHEA: Is not that he?

SPARKISH: No, fie no, but to show that he never intended to hinder our Match has sent his Brother to join our hands according to the Custom. This is his Brother and my Chaplain.

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LUCY: *(Apart to Alithea.)* And your Chaplain to preach in your — Pulpit.

ALITHEA: His Brother!

LUCY: *(Aside)* Hah, ha, he! He has a trick left still, it seems—

SPARKISH: Come my dearest, pray let us go to Church.

ALITHEA: For shame, you are abused still.

SPARKISH: Dearest of my life, hear me. I tell you this is Ned Harcourt of Cambridge. By the world, you see he has a sneaking College look. 'Tis true he's something like his Brother Frank and they differ from each other no more than in their age, for they were Twins.

LUCY: Hah, ha, he.

ALITHEA: I cannot be so deceived, though you are.

SPARKISH: Frank Harcourt, coming to me this morning to wish me joy and present his service to you, I asked him to help me to a Parson and he told me he had a Brother in Town who was in Orders, and sent him, you see there, to me.

- ALITHEA: Yes, Frank goes and puts on a black-coat then tells you he is Ned.
- SPARKISH: If you won't believe one, have your Chamber-maid there try him, for Chamber-maids know Chaplains better than other Men, they are so used to them.
- ALITHEA: So very, very foolish.
- LUCY: Let's see. Nay, he has the Canonical smirk – *(she turns down and HARCOURT gooses her as he passes)* – and the filthy, clammy palm of a Chaplain.
- ALITHEA: Well, most reverend Doctor, pray let us make an end of this fooling.
- HARCOURT: With all my soul, Divine Heavenly Creature, when you please.
- ALITHEA: He speaks like a Chaplain, indeed.
- SPARKISH: Was there not “soul,” “Divine” and “Heavenly,” in what he said?
- ALITHEA: I have no more patience left. Sir, this dull trick will not serve your turn. Though you delay our marriage, you shall not hinder it.
- HARCOURT: Far be it from me, *Magnificent Patroness*, to delay your Marriage. I desire nothing more than to marry you presently, which I might do if you yourself would, for my Noble, Good-natured and thrice Generous Patron here would not hinder it.
- SPARKISH: Not I, faith.
- HARCOURT: And now, Madam, let me tell you plainly, nobody else shall marry you. I'll die first, for I'm sure I should die after it.
- ALITHEA: That was spoken like a Chaplain too. Now you understand him, I hope.
- SPARKISH: Poor man, he takes it heinously to be refused, but you'll pardon me, Madam, it shan't be. He shall marry us, come away, pray Madam.
- ALITHEA: Invincible stupidity, he would marry me as your Rival, not as your Chaplain.
- SPARKISH: Come, Madam. *(Pulling her away.)* Lord, here's such a deal of modesty, I warrant, the first day.
- LUCY: Yes, and it please your Worship, married women show all their Modesty the first day, because married men show all their love the first day.

(Exeunt SPARKISH, ALITHEA, HARCOURT, and LUCY.)

ACT IV
SCENE 2

(Pinchwife's Lodging)
(Later that morning)

(Enter PINCHWIFE and MRS. PINCHWIFE, arguing.)

PINCHWIFE: Come, tell me, I say.

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Lord, haven't I told it an hundred times over?

PINCHWIFE: Come, how was it, Baggage?

MRS. PINCHWIFE: He carried me up into the house next to the Exchange.

PINCHWIFE: So, and you two were alone in the room?

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Yes, for he sent away his servant for some dried fruit and China Oranges.

PINCHWIFE: Did he so? Damn him for it — and for —

~~MRS. PINCHWIFE: But presently came up the Gentlewoman of the house.~~

PINCHWIFE: 'Twas well she did, but what did he do while the fruit came?

MRS. PINCHWIFE: He kissed me an hundred times and told me he fancied he kissed my fine Sister, meaning me, whom he said he loved with all his Soul and bid me to tell her, meaning me, so.

PINCHWIFE: So— he knew you certainly. But stood you very still when he kissed you?

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Yes, I warrant you. Would you have had me reveal myself?

PINCHWIFE: But you told me he did some beastliness to you, as you called it. What was it?

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Why, he . . .

PINCHWIFE: What?

MRS. PINCHWIFE: He put the tip of his tongue between my lips, and so muzzled me — and I said I'd bite it. But to say truth, he has the sweetest breath I ever knew.

PINCHWIFE: The Devil — you were satisfied with it then and would do it again?

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Not unless he should force me.

PINCHWIFE: Force you!

MRS. PINCHWIFE: He's a proper, goodly strong man. 'Tis hard, let me tell you, to resist him.

PINCHWIFE: *(Aside)* So, 'tis plain she loves him, and that increases her aversion for me.
(Aloud) Go fetch Pen, Ink and Paper out of the next room.

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Yes, Bud.

(Exit MRS. PINCHWIFE.)

PINCHWIFE: Why do Women have more invention in love than men? Because they have more desire, more passion, more lust, and more of the Devil.

(MRS. PINCHWIFE returns with tray of writing materials)

Come, Mistress Minx, sit down and write.

MRS. PINCHWIFE: But what should I write?

PINCHWIFE: I'll have you write a Letter to your Lover.

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MRS. PINCHWIFE: Oh, Lord, to the fine Gentleman, a Letter!

PINCHWIFE: *(Mocking her accent.)* Yes, to the fine Gentleman, a Letter! *(Back to his usual voice.)* Come, write as I tell you.

MRS. PINCHWIFE: I know that Letters are only writ from the Country to London, and from London to the Country. He's in Town and I'm in Town, therefore I can't write to him, now.

PINCHWIFE: You may, when your Husband bids you!

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Oh,, may I so?

PINCHWIFE: Begin. *(Dictates)* "Sir"

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Shan't I say, "Dear Sir?" One says always something more than just bare "Sir."

PINCHWIFE: Do as I bid, or I will write "Whore" on a sign and hang it about your neck in the street!

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Nay, good Bud. *(She writes)* "Sir."

PINCHWIFE: "Though I suffered last night your nauseous, loathed Kisses and Embraces..."

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Nay, why should I say so? I told you he had a sweet breath.

PINCHWIFE: Write.

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Let me leave out, "loathed." (*He glares at her.*) Well, then. (*She writes.*)

PINCHWIFE: Let's see. (*Reads.*) "Though I suffered last night your kisses and embraces . . ." Impudent creature, where is "nauseous" and "loathed?"

MRS. PINCHWIFE: I can't abide to write such filthy words.

PINCHWIFE: Once more write as I'd have you and question it not, or I will spoil thy writing.

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Oh, Lord, I will.

PINCHWIFE: So— so— Let's see now! (*Reads.*) "Though I suffered last night your nauseous, loathed kisses and embraces." Go on, "Yet I would not have you presume that you shall ever repeat them" — So—

MRS. PINCHWIFE: (*She writes.*) So—

PINCHWIFE: "I concealed myself to avoid your insolence."

MRS. PINCHWIFE: (*She writes.*) So—

PINCHWIFE: "That you may forevermore cease to pursue her who hates and detests you. . ."

MRS. PINCHWIFE: (*She writes on.*) So—h— (*Sighs*)

PINCHWIFE: What, do you sigh? "Detests you as much as she loves her Husband and her Honour . . ."

MRS. PINCHWIFE: I vow, Husband, he'll never believe such a Letter.

PINCHWIFE: What, he'd expect something different from you? Come now, sign your name.

MRS. PINCHWIFE: What, shan't I say, "your most faithful, humble Servant till death?"

PINCHWIFE: No, tormenting Fiend! Come wrap it up now while I go fetch wax and a candle. And write on the back side, "for Mr. Horner."

(*Exit PINCHWIFE.*)

MRS. PINCHWIFE: "For Mr. Horner." I am glad he has told me his name. Dear Mr. Horner. But why should I send such a Letter to make thee angry? I will not send it . . . but

then my husband will kill me. I see plainly he won't let me love Mr. Horner . . . but what care I? I won't send such a Letter . . .but then my Husband . . . oh ! What if I writ at bottom, "My Husband made me write it" . . . but then my Husband would see it. What if I should write a Letter and wrap it up like this . . . but then my Husband would see it. I don't know what to do. But I will not send this Letter to poor Mr. Horner. (*Writing.*) "Dear, Sweet Mr. Horner," So . . . "My Husband would have me send you a base, rude, unmannerly Letter, but . . ." (*She thinks*) "I won't" So . . . "and would have me forbid you loving me, but I won't" So . . . "and would have me say to you, I hate you, poor Mr. Horner, but I won't . . ." So . . . "tell a lie for him . . ." There . . . "for I'm sure if you and I were in the Country at cards together" So . . . "I could not help treading on your Toe under the Table or rubbing knees with you and then looking down and blushing" Ah . . . "but I must make haste before my Husband come. Dear, dear, poor dear Mr. Horner, your most Humble Friend and Servant 'til death, Margery Pinchwife." So . . . now wrap it up just like the other, so . . . now write "for Mr. Horner" . . . But, oh, here comes my Husband.

(*Enter Pinchwife.*)

PINCHWIFE: Now, have you done?

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Aye, aye, Bud, just now.

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PINCHWIFE: Let's see it.

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Here. (*He opens, and reads the first Letter.*) (*Aside, touching the second letter*) I had been served if I had given him this.

PINCHWIFE: Come, where's the Wax and Seal?

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Pray let me. Lord, you think me such a fool I cannot seal a Letter? (*Snatches the Letter from him, changes it for the other, seals it, and delivers it to him.*)

PINCHWIFE: Very well, but I warrant you would not have it go now?

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Indeed, I would, Bud — now.

PINCHWIFE: Well, you are a good Girl, then. Come, let me lock you up in your chamber till I come back. And be sure you come not within three strides of the window.

(*Exit MRS. PINCHWIFE. PINCHWIFE locks the door.*)

If we do not cheat women, they'll cheat us. Now I have secured all within, I'll deal with the Foe without. (*Holds up the Letter*)

(*Exit PINCHWIFE.*)

ACT IV
SCENE 3

(Horner's Lodging)
(That Afternoon)

(HORNER revealed)

HORNER: *(Aside.)* Now, I deceive not myself but the grave Matrons and old rigid Husbands who think me as unfit for love as they are. But their Wives, Sisters and Daughters know better, already. I tell thee, it takes little to come around your women of Honour, for there are Hypocrites in Honour, just like those in Religion. They fear the eye of the world more than the eye of Heaven. Now we talk of Women of Honour, here comes one. Observe if I have not particular privileges with the women of reputation already.

(Enter LADY FIDGET, looking about her.)

LADY FIDGET: Well Horner, am not I a woman of Honour? You see I'm as good as my word.

HORNER: And I shall be as good as my word too, if you please but to withdraw into the next room.

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LADY FIDGET: But first, my dear Sir, you must promise to have a care of my dear Honour.

HORNER: If you talk a word more of your Honour, you'll make me incapable of wronging it.

LADY FIDGET: Nay, you must have a great care of your conduct, for my acquaintance are so censorious and detracting that perhaps they'll talk to the prejudice of my Honour.

HORNER: Nay Madam, rather than prejudice your Honour, I'll lie with them all, make the secret their own, and then they'll keep it.

LADY FIDGET: A secret is better kept, I hope, by a single person than a multitude, dear, dear Mr. Horner. *(Embracing him.)*

(Enter SIR JASPAR FIDGET.)

SIR JASPAR: How now!

LADY FIDGET: *(Aside)* Oh, my Husband! *(Aloud, thinking quickly.)* Sir Jaspar, come hither, I am trying if Mr. Horner were ticklish, and he's as ticklish as can be. Let's you and I tickle him.

SIR JASPAR: No, your Ladyship will tickle him better without me, but is this your buying China? I thought you had been at the China House?

HORNER: *(Aside)* China-House? That's my Cue. I must take it. *(Aloud)* A Pox, can't you keep your impertinent Wives at home? I will not be your drudge by day to squire your wife about.

SIR JASPAR: Hee, hee, hee, be not angry, Horner.

LADY FIDGET: No, 'tis *I* have reason to be angry, left by you to go abroad indecently alone, or pin myself upon such ill bred people as this is.

SIR JASPAR: Nay, prithee what has he done?

LADY FIDGET: Nay, he has done nothing.

SIR JASPAR: But what do you take ill, if he has done nothing?

LADY FIDGET: The unmannerly toad knows China well and has a good stock of it, but will not let me near it, lest I beg him give me some. But I will have what I came for, yet.

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HORNER: *(Apart to LADY FIDGET.)* Lock the door, Madam. *(Aloud)* So, she has got into my chamber and locked me out. Oh, the impertinence of woman-kind!

SIR JASPAR: *(Aside)* Hah, ha, he, at my first coming in, and finding her arms about him, I was half jealous, but, she was only tickling him. *(Aloud)* Heh, he, he, poor Horner.

HORNER: Oh women, more impertinent, more cunning and more mischievous than Monkeys, and to me almost as ugly — now is she throwing my things about and rifling all I have, but I'll get into her the back way, and so rifle her for it —

SIR JASPAR: Hah, ha, ha, poor angry Horner.

HORNER: Stay here a little. I'll ferret her out to you presently, I warrant.

(Exit HORNER at the other door.)

SIR JASPAR: *(Calling through the door.)* Wife, my Lady Fidget, Wife, he is coming into you the back way.

LADY FIDGET: *(OFF.)* Let him come and welcome, which way he will.

SIR JASPAR: He'll catch you and use you roughly.

LADY FIDGET: As roughly as he like.

(Enter MRS. DAINTY.)

DAINTY: Where's this Woman-hater, this Toad, this ugly, greasy, dirty Sloven? Where is the odious Beast?

SIR JASPAR: He's within in his chamber with my Wife. She's playing with him.

DAINTY: Is she so? He'll give her no quarter, let me tell you. Come, let's go help her — What, the door's locked?

SIR JASPAR: Aye, my Wife locked it.

DAINTY: Did she so, let us break it open then!

SIR JASPAR: No, no, he'll do her no hurt.

DAINTY: No— But is there no other way to get into them? Whither goes this? I will
disturb them. *(Exit DAINTY at another door.)*

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(Enter old Lady SQUEAMISH.)

SQUEAMISH: Where is this Harlotry, this Impudent Baggage, this rambling Tomrigg? Oh, Sir Jasper, I'm glad to see you here. Did you not see my wild Grandchild come in hither just now?

SIR JASPAR: Yes.

SQUEAMISH: Aye, but where is she? Lord, Sir Jasper, I have rattled myself to pieces in pursuit of her. What does she do here? They say no woman lodges here.

SIR JASPAR: No, nor no man neither. This is Mr. Horner's Lodging.

SQUEAMISH: Is it so? Are you sure?

SIR JASPAR: Yes, yes.

SQUEAMISH: So then there's no hurt in it. But where is he?

SIR JASPAR: He's in the next room with my Wife.

SQUEAMISH: Nay, if you trust him with your wife, I may with my Biddy. They say he's a

harmless man now.

(Enter DAINTY.)

DAINTY: I can't find them— Oh, are you here, Grandmother? I followed my Lady Fidget hither. 'Tis the prettiest lodging, and has the prettiest Pictures.

(Enter LADY FIDGET with a piece of China in her hand, and HORNER following.)

LADY FIDGET: And I have been toiling and moiling for the prettiest piece of China, my Dear.

HORNER: Nay, she made it too hard for me, do what I could.

DAINTY: Oh Lord, I want some China too, good Mr. Horner. Don't think to give other people China and me none. Come with me, too.

HORNER: Upon my honour, I have none left now.

DAINTY: Nay, nay, I have known you deny your China before now, but you shan't put me off so, come . . .

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HORNER: This Lady here, had the last

LADY FIDGET: Yes, Madam, to my certain knowledge, he has no more left.

DAINTY: O, but he may have some you could not find.

LADY FIDGET: What, do you think, if he had any left, I would not have had it, too? For we women of quality can never get enough China.

HORNER: Do not take it ill. I cannot make China for you all, but I will have a setting for you, another time.

SQUEAMISH: Poor Mr. Horner is hard pressed to please you all, I see.

HORNER: I thank you Madam, I could never find pity but from such reverend Ladies as you are. The young ones will never let up.

DAINTY: Come, come, Beast, and go dine with us, for we shall want a man after dinner. For cards.

HORNER: You see how they use me, Madam.

SQUEAMISH: Poor Gentleman, I pity you.

DAINTY: Come, Sloven, I'll lead you to be sure of you. *(Pulls him by the cravat.)*

SQUEAMISH: Alas, poor man, how she tugs him. Kiss, kiss her. That's the way to make such nice women quiet.

HORNER: No, Madam, any thing rather than that.

SQUEAMISH: Prithee, kiss her and I'll give you her Picture that you admired so last night.

HORNER: Well, nothing but that could bribe me. I'll do it.

(Kisses DAINTY.)

DAINTY: Foh, you filthy Toad. Nay, now, I've done jesting.

SQUEAMISH: Ha, ha, ha, I told you so.

DAINTY: Foh, a kiss of his—

SIR JASPAR: Has no more hurt in it than one of my Spaniels.

(Enter PINCHWIFE.)

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LADY FIDGET: Oh, Lord, here's a man, Sir Jaspár. Let's be gone.

DAINTY: Oh, Grandmother, let us be gone. I know not how he may censure us.

LADY FIDGET: Found in the lodging of anything like a man, away.

(Exeunt SIR JASPAR, LADY FIDGET, SQUEAMISH, DAINTY.)

HORNER: *(Aside.)* What's here, another Cuckold? He looks like one. *(To PINCHWIFE.)* Well, what brings my dear friend hither?

PINCHWIFE: Your impertinency.

HORNER: My impertinency? Haven't I been always thy friend, honest Jack, always ready to serve thee in love or battle?

PINCHWIFE: I believe so. You would be my second now, indeed.

HORNER: Dear Jack, why so grim, so strange? Come, prithee, be friends, dear Rogue.

PINCHWIFE: What, you would send a kiss to my Wife, would you?

HORNER: So there 'tis— a man can't show his friendship to a married man.

- PINCHWIFE: You ought to be kind and civil to me, since I am so kind as to bring you this. Look you there, Sir. *(Delivers him a Letter)*
- HORNER: What is it?
- PINCHWIFE: A Love Letter, Sir.
- HORNER: From whom? *(Reads)* How, this is from your Wife— hum— and hum— *(Aside)* Ha, is this a trick of hers or his? *(Aloud.)* But what should this mean? *(Aside)* Stay the Postscript. “Be sure I love you whatsoever my husband says to the contrary, and let him not see this, lest he should come home and pinch me or kill my Squirrel.” It seems he knows not what the Letter contains.
- PINCHWIFE: Come, never wonder at it so much.
- HORNER: Faith, I can't help it.
- PINCHWIFE: Does the Letter want Comment? Know, Sir, I will not be a Cuckold, Sir, I will not.
- HORNER: I never saw your Wife in my life but at the Play yesterday.
- PINCHWIFE: There will be danger, I say, in making me a Cuckold.
- HORNER: Why, were you not well cured of your last clap?
- PINCHWIFE: I wear a Sword.
- HORNER: It should be taken from you, lest you do yourself a mischief. Thou art mad.
- PINCHWIFE: *(Trying to draw again.)* As mad as I am, I say you have mistaken your woman as you have done your man.
- HORNER: *(Aside)* I understand something now. *(Aloud)* Was that thy Wife? Faith, my freedom with her was your fault, not mine. Fie, I'd never do it to a woman before her husband's face. Well, I must be contented with what she writes.
- PINCHWIFE: I'll assure you 'twas voluntarily writ. I had no hand in it, you may believe me.
- HORNER: I do believe thee, faith.
- PINCHWIFE: And believe her too. And so fare you well, Sir.
- HORNER: However, present my humble service to her and tell her I will obey every jot and tittle of her Letter and fulfill her desires, whatever they be.

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PINCHWIFE: Well, fare you well, and play with any man's honour but mine, kiss any man's wife but mine, and welcome—

(Exit PINCHWIFE.)

HORNER: Ha, ha, ha! I will now believe it possible to Cuckold the Great Turk amidst his Guards of Eunuchs.

(Enter SPARKISH pulling in PINCHWIFE.)

SPARKISH: Come back! You are a pretty Brother-in-law, neither go to Church nor to dinner with your Sister Bride.

PINCHWIFE: My Sister denies her marriage, and has run away from you, dissatisfied.

SPARKISH: Pshaw, upon the foolish scruple that our Parson was not in lawful Orders. But 'tis only her modesty. Harry, you must be at my wedding dinner at my Aunt's in the Piazza.

HORNER: Your wedding? What old Maid has lived to despair of a husband?

SPARKISH: O your servant, Sir! This Gentleman's Sister, No old Maid.

HORNER: I'm sorry for it for her sake, not yours, and another man that might have hoped, I thought.

SPARKISH: Another Man, another man, what is his Name?

HORNER: Since 'tis past, he shall be nameless.

SPARKISH: Prithee, tell me— nay, you shan't go, Brother.

PINCHWIFE: I must of necessity, but I'll come to you at dinner.

(Exit PINCHWIFE.)

HORNER: Who dines with thee?

SPARKISH: My Friends and Relations, my Brother Pinchwife.

HORNER: And his Wife.

SPARKISH: Gad, he keeps his wife from his friends as he does his Firkin of Ale for his own drinking. Ha, ha, ha, gad, I am witty, considering I was married today, but come—

HORNER: No, I will not dine with you unless you can fetch her, too.

SPARKISH: Pshaw, what pleasure can you have with women now, Harry?

HORNER: My eyes are not gone, and I will not dine with you unless she does, too. Go fetch her therefore, but do not tell her husband. 'Tis for my sake.

SPARKISH: Well, I'll go try what I can do. In the meantime, to my Aunt's lodging. 'Tis on the way to Pinchwife's. *(Exit.)*

HORNER: *(To audience.)* The poor woman has called for aid and stretched forth her hand. I cannot but help her over the Pale and out of the Briars.

(Exit HORNER.)

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ACT IV
SCENE 4

(Pinchwife's Lodging)
(Later that afternoon)

(MRS. PINCHWIFE with Pen, Ink, Paper and a lit Candle)

MRS. PINCHWIFE: I have got the disease they call Love. I am sick *for* my Gallant and *of* my Husband, for when I think of my Husband, I have inclinations to vomit. But when I think of my dear Mr. Horner, I am all in a Fever and only he can make me well. I will not stay here, therefore I'll send this Letter which be a finer Letter than my last, because I have studied it like anything. Oh, sick, sick!

(She writes. Enter PINCHWIFE who snatches the paper.)

PINCHWIFE: What, more Letters?

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Oh, Lord, Bud, you frighted me so!

PINCHWIFE: How's this! *(Reads)* "Dear, dear, dear, Mr. Horner." Well, I have taught you to write Letters to good purpose. "First I beg pardon for my boldness in writing to you, but you said first you loved me, which if you do, you will never suffer me to lie in the arms of a man whom I loathe, nauseate, and detest." Now you can write those filthy words! "Therefore I hope you will speedily free me from this match which was never of my choice. If you love me, as I do you, try what you can do, but before tomorrow, or else I shall be forever out of your reach, for I can defer no longer our . . ." What follows? Speak! What? "our Journey into the Country", I suppose! Oh, Woman, damned Woman, and damned Love! But I'll make an end thus of all my plagues together. *(Tries to draw his sword.)*

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Oh, Bud, never draw on your wife, but in the dark, when you can't hurt her.

PINCHWIFE: Take the Pen and finish the Letter as you intended. If you are false in a tittle, I shall soon perceive it. Write what was to follow— let's see— *(Reads)* "You must make haste and help me away before tomorrow, or else I shall be forever out of your reach, for I can defer no longer our . . ." What follows "our?"

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Must all out then, Bud? Look you, then. *(MRS. PINCHWIFE writes.)*

PINCHWIFE: Let's see. "For I can defer no longer our— Wedding. Your slighted Alithea." What? My Sister's name to it? I am stunned! My head turns round! Speak!

MRS. PINCHWIFE: She'll be angry, but I had rather *she* be angry than you, Bud. And to tell you the truth, 'twas she had me write the Letter.

PINCHWIFE: Ha— I thought the style was somewhat better, but how could she speak to you, since I had locked you up alone?

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Oh, through the keyhole, Bud.

PINCHWIFE: But why should she make you write a Letter for her, since she can write herself?

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Why, she said because—

PINCHWIFE: Because what— because?

MRS. PINCHWIFE: If Mr. Horner should refuse her, she might disown it, the hand not being hers.

PINCHWIFE: Ha! Now I think on it, Horner said he was sorry she had married Sparkish, and me-thinks she has evaded it for Horner's sake. But hark you Madam, your Sister went out in the morning, and I have not seen her since.

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Alack, she has been crying all day above, in a corner.

PINCHWIFE: Where is she? Let me speak with her.

MRS. PINCHWIFE: *(Aside.)* Oh, Lord! *(Aloud.)* Bud, do you mean to discover me? She'll know I have told you. Pray, Bud, let me talk with her first . . .

PINCHWIFE: I must know whether she be married to Sparkish or no.

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Let me first tell her that I have told you all, or she'll kill me else.

PINCHWIFE: Go then and bid her come out to me.

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Yes, yes Bud—

PINCHWIFE: Let me see—

MRS. PINCHWIFE: *(Aside.)* She is not within to come to him. I scarcely know what lie I shall tell next, for I am at my wits' end.

(Exit MRS. PINCHWIFE.)

PINCHWIFE: Horner shall have her. I'd rather give him my Sister than lend him my Wife.

(MRS. PINCHWIFE returns, rubbing her face as if struck.)

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Oh, Lord, Bud, I told you how angry she would be.

PINCHWIFE: Won't she come hither?

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Alack, she's ashamed to look you in the face. She says if you go in, she'll run away and go to Mr. Horner, for she will have no other.

PINCHWIFE: Then she shall have no other. Go tell her so. Go!

(Exit MRS. PINCHWIFE.)

His estate is equal to Sparkish's and his standing much better, but mostly I'd rather be Brother-in-law than Cuckold.

(Enter MRS. PINCHWIFE.)

Well, what says she now?

MRS. PINCHWIFE: She would have you lead her to Horner, but she can't look you in the face. Therefore she'll come to you in a mask, and she will make no answer to any question till she be brought to Mr. Horner, and if you will not question her, she'll come out to you immediately.

PINCHWIFE: Let her come. I will not speak a word to her nor require a word from her.

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MRS. PINCHWIFE: Oh, I forgot. She asks you to put out the Candle.

PINCHWIFE: I agree to all. Let her make haste.

(MRS. PINCHWIFE puts out the candle and exits. It is dark.)

I'd rather fight with Horner for lying to my Sister than for lying with my Wife. Both are plagues and torments and equally troublesome, for we have as much ado to keep people from lying with our Sisters as to keep them from lying to our Wives. Or rather, lying *with* our... no, lying *to* our... it's all one.

(Enter MRS. PINCHWIFE, in a hooded cloak of ALITHEA's.)

Are you come, Sister? Let us go. But first let me lock up my Wife. Margery?

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Here, Bud. *(Give him her hand, but slips around him as he locks the door.)*

PINCHWIFE: Let me lock you up. Get you in. Come, Sister, where are you now?

(Exeunt, MRS. PINCHWIFE led away by him as if she were ALITHEA.)

ACT V
SCENE 2

(Horner's Lodging.)
(Later that evening)

(Horner revealed)

HORNER: *(Aside.)* All alone. Not so much as one Cuckold here nor one of their Wives. Keeping a Cuckold company after you have had his Wife is as tiresome as keeping a Country Squire company after you have got all his Money. But, here's the man we are talking of, I think.

(Enter PINCHWIFE, leading in his Wife masked, muffled and in her Sister's cloak.)

HORNER: What means this?

PINCHWIFE: The last time, Sir, I brought you a love Letter. Now, a Mistress. I think you'll say I am a civil man to you.

HORNER: I know you are an honest fellow. Make her show, man. Do I know her?

PINCHWIFE: I am sure you do know her.

HORNER: Why dost thou bring her to me then?

PINCHWIFE: Because she's a Relation of mine.

HORNER: Is she, man? Then thou art still more civil and obliging, dear Rogue.

PINCHWIFE: You'll make her welcome for my sake, I hope.

HORNER: I hope she is handsome enough to make herself welcome.

PINCHWIFE: Do you speak to her. She would never be ruled by me.

HORNER: Madam— *(MRS. PINCHWIFE whispers to HORNER.)* She says she must speak with me in private. Withdraw, prithee.

PINCHWIFE: Well then, I hope when I am gone, you'll agree. If not, you and I shan't agree, Sir.

HORNER: If she and I agree, 'tis no matter what you and I do. *(Whispers to MRS. PINCHWIFE, who makes signs with her hand for PINCHWIFE to be gone.)*

PINCHWIFE: In the meantime I'll fetch a Parson and find out Sparkish and disabuse him. You would have me fetch a Parson, would you not?

(Exit PINCHWIFE.)

HORNER: *(At window.)* Sir Jaspar is coming up. Has he not enough to do to hinder his own Wife's sport? Step in here, Madam.

(Exit MRS. PINCHWIFE. Enter SIR JASPAR.)

SIR JASPAR: My best and dearest Friend.

HORNER: *(Aside.)* The old style. *(Aloud.)* Be short for I am busy. What would your impertinent Wife have now?

SIR JASPAR: Well guessed, in faith, for I do come from her.

HORNER: To invite me to supper. Tell her I can't come.

SIR JASPAR: Nay, my Lady and the whole knot of the "Virtuous Gang", as they call themselves, are resolved upon a frolic of coming to you tonight.

HORNER: I shall be at home.

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SIR JASPAR: Nay, prithee, don't disappoint them. The poor virtuous Rogues would not have it known for the world that they come to no man's Ball but yours.

HORNER: Well, well, get you gone and tell them if they come, 'twill be at the peril of their honour and yours.

SIR JASPAR: Hee, hee, hee! We'll trust you for that. Farewell.

(Exit SIR JASPAR.)

HORNER: *(To audience.)* Friends, anon you too shall be my guest. But now I'm going to a private feast.

(HORNER crosses to where he has sent MRS. PINCHWIFE. He opens the door. Her hand comes out, grabs him and pulls him in.)

ACT V
SCENE 3

(An exterior setting)
(Later that evening)

(Enter PINCHWIFE, SPARKISH with the Letter in his hand.)

SPARKISH: Nay, I cannot tell if this be her hand, for I never saw it.

PINCHWIFE: 'Tis no matter whether that be her hand or no. I am sure this hand led her to Mr. Horner, with whom I left her just now to go fetch a Parson to them to deprive you of her forever, for it seems yours was but a mock marriage.

SPARKISH: Indeed, she would have it that 'twas Harcourt himself in a Parsons habit that married us, but I'm sure he told me 'twas his Brother Ned.

PINCHWIFE: Oh, there, 'tis out and you were deceived, not she. But I must be gone. You'll find her at Mr. Horner's. Go and believe your eyes.

(Exit PINCHWIFE.)

SPARKISH: Nay, I'll not say and call her as many Crocodiles, Sirs, Harpies, and other heathenish names as a Poet would do a Mistress who had refused to hear his suit. But stay, is not that she at the other end of the Piazza, and coming from Horner's? Certainly— 'tis so—

(Enter ALITHEA and LUCY behind.)

You are well met, Madam. What, you have made a short visit to Mr. Horner? But I suppose you'll return to him presently, by that time the Parson can be with him.

ALITHEA: Mr. Horner and the Parson, Sir?

SPARKISH: Come Madam, no more dissembling, no more jilting.

ALITHEA: How's this?

LUCY: *(Aside)* So 'twill work I see—

SPARKISH: Could you find out no easy Country Fool to abuse? None but me, a Gentleman of wit and pleasure? Unworthy false woman! False as dice who undo those that trust all they have to them.

ALITHEA: You have been too merry, Sir, at your wedding dinner, sure.

SPARKISH: Did you not write an impudent Letter to Mr. Horner? Who I find now has clubbed with you in deluding me with his aversion for women, that I might not suspect him for my Rival?

LUCY: *(Aside)* Do you think the Gentleman can be jealous now, Madam?

ALITHEA: I wrote a Letter to Mr. Horner?

SPARKISH: Nay, do not deny it. Your Brother showed it me just now and told me likewise he left you at Horner's lodging to fetch a Parson to marry you to him. And I wish you joy, Madam, joy, joy, and to him too much joy, and to myself more joy for not marrying you.

ALITHEA: *(Aside)* I see this Gentleman can be made jealous. *(Aloud)* Oh, Lucy, by his rude usage and jealousy he makes me almost afraid I am married to him. Art thou sure 'twas Harcourt, himself, and no Parson that married us?

SPARKISH: I suppose that was a contrivance, too, of Mr. Horner's and yours to make Harcourt play the Parson. For shall I tell you another truth? I never had any passion for you, 'til now, for now I hate you, and so your Servant. *(He bows and starts to exit, then returns.)* 'Tis true I might have married your portion, as other men of parts of the Town do sometimes, and so your Servant. *(He bows and starts to exit, then returns.)* And to show my unconcernedness, I'll come to your wedding and resign you with as much joy as I would a stale wench to a new pimp. And so your Servant.

(Exit SPARKISH, nearly in tears.)

ALITHEA: How was I deceived in a man!

LUCY: You'll believe, then, a fool may be made jealous now?

ALITHEA: But marry Mr. Horner? If my brother intend it, I would take your advice and Mr. Harcourt for my Husband. Away, impertinent!

LUCY: Yes, Madam. *(Aside)* And where, I hope, we shall find Mr. Harcourt.

(Exeunt ALITHEA, LUCY.)

ACT V
SCENE 4

(Horner's Lodging.)
(Later that night.)

(The sound of laughter and clinking bottles off.)

HORNER: *(Entering. Aside)* A Pox they are come too soon— before I have sent back my new Mistress.

(LADY FIDGET, DAINTY enter, carrying Bottles.)

LADY FIDGET: That we may be sure of our welcome, we have brought our entertainment with us and are resolved to treat thee, dear Toad.

DAINTY: And that we may be merry, we have left Sir Jaspar and my old Lady Squeamish quarrelling at home. Therefore let us make use of our time, lest they should chance to interrupt us.

HORNER: First that you may be private, let me lock this door, and I'll wait upon you presently. *(He does and returns.)*

LADY FIDGET: Now Lady, supposing we had drank each of us our two Bottles, let us speak the truth of our hearts.

DAINTY: *(Taking a bottle and drinking.)* Lovely Brimmer, let me enjoy him first.

LADY FIDGET: *(Pulling it away from her and drinking.)* I never part with a Gallant till I've tried him. Dear Brimmer, that makest our Husbands short-sighted/

.DAINTY: *(Pulling it away from her and drinking.)* And for want of a Gallant, the Butler lovely in our eyes. *(To Horner.)* Drink, Eunuch.

LADY FIDGET: Drink, thou representative of a Husband. Damn a Husband!

DAINTY: The filthy Toads choose Mistresses now as they do Stuffs, for having been fancied and worn by others.

LADY FIDGET: Whilst women of quality, like the richest Stuffs, lie untumbled and unasked for. Let me tell you, Sir, there is nowhere more freedom than in our houses, and we take freedom from a young person as a sign of good breeding. And a person may be as free as he pleases with us, as frolick, as gamesome, as wild as he will.

HORNER: Haven't I heard you declaim against wild men?

LADY FIDGET: We think wildness in a man a desirable quality. A tame man, foh.

HORNER: Your Reputations frightened me as much as your Faces invited me.

LADY FIDGET: Our Reputation, Lord! Why should you not think that we women make use of our Reputation as you men of yours?

DAINTY: I assure you, women are least masked when they have their velvet masks on.

LADY FIDGET: You would have found us modest women — in our denials only.

HORNER: I beg your pardon, Ladies, I was deceived in you devilishly. But why that mighty pretence to Honour?

LADY FIDGET: We have told you. To avoid ill company, to enjoy the better and more privately those you love.

HORNER: But, why would you never give a Friend a wink, then?

LADY FIDGET: Faith, you frightened us as much as we did you, you were so notoriously lewd.

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HORNER: And you so seemingly honest.

LADY FIDGET: Was that all that deterred you?

HORNER: And so expensive.

LADY FIDGET: Money, foh— do such as we expect money?

DAINTY: Such as we make sale of our hearts?

HORNER: With your pardon, Ladies, we must let you win at Cards or we lose your hearts. And if you make an assignation, 'tis at a Goldsmiths, Jewellers or China house.

DAINTY: Would you not have us assured of our Gallant's Love?

LADY FIDGET: Come, here's to our Gallants in waiting, whom we must name, and I'll begin. This is my false Rogue. (*Claps him on the back*).

HORNER: (*Aside.*) 'Twill all out now.

DAINTY: Did you not tell me, 'twas for my sake only you reported yourself no man?

HORNER: So, so.

LADY FIDGET: Did you not swear to me, 'twas for my Love you passed for that thing you do?

HORNER: So, so.

LADY FIDGET: This is my false Villain.

DAINTY: And mine, too.

HORNER: Well then, you are both my false Rogues, too, and there's an end on it.

LADY FIDGET: Well then, there's no remedy, Sister Sharer. Let us not fall out, but have a care of our Honour.

HORNER: Come, faith Madam, let us pardon one another, for all the difference I find betwixt we men and you women, we forswear ourselves at the beginning of an Amour, you, at the end.

(Enter SIR JASPAR FIDGET, and old Lady SQUEAMISH.)

SIR JASPAR: Oh, my Lady Fidget, was this your cunning to come to Mr. Horner without me? But, you have been nowhere else, I hope?

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LADY FIDGET: No, Sir Jaspar.

SQUEAMISH: And you came straight hither, Biddy?

DAINTY: Yes, indeed, Lady Grandmother.

SIR JASPAR: 'Tis well, 'tis well. I knew when once they were thoroughly acquainted with poor Horner, they'd never be from him, and I warrant her Reputation safe.

(HORNER looks out a window.)

HORNER: Here's a Gentleman come whom you would not suffer to come up, with a Lady and other Gentlemen. Do you all go in there, while I send them away.

*(Exeunt SIR JASPAR, LADY FIDGET, SQUEAMISH, DAINTY.
Exit HORNER at the other door and returns with MRS.
PINCHWIFE.)*

HORNER: Pray, my Dearest, be persuaded to go home and leave the rest to my management. I'll let you down the back way.

MRS. PINCHWIFE: I don't know the way home, so I don't.

HORNER: My man shall wait upon you.

MRS. PINCHWIFE: What, are you weary of me already?

HORNER: No, my life, 'tis to secure my love and your Reputation with your Husband.

MRS. PINCHWIFE: What care I? I don't intend to go to him again. You shall be my Husband now.

HORNER: I cannot be your Husband, Dearest, since you are married to him.

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Oh, I see every day, Town-women leave their Husband and go and live with other men as their Wives. Pshaw, you'd make me angry, but that I love you so mainly.

HORNER: In again, in, I hear them. (*Places MRS. PINCHWIFE behind the screen*). Well, a silly Mistress betrays her Husband first to her Gallant and then her Gallant to her Husband.

(*Enter PINCHWIFE, ALITHEA, HARCOURT, SPARKISH,*

LUCY.)

PINCHWIFE: Come, shall you persuade me I did not bring you hither just now? Here's my witness who cannot deny it. Mr. Horner, did not I bring this Lady to you just now?

HORNER: (*Aside*) Now must I wrong one woman for another's sake.

ALITHEA: Pray, speak, Sir.

HORNER: Then truly, you did bring that Lady to me just now.

PINCHWIFE: Oh, ho—

ALITHEA: How, Sir?

HARCOURT: How, Horner!

ALITHEA: What mean you, Sir? I always took you for a man of Honour!

SPARKISH: So if I *had* had her, she'd have made me believe the Moon had been made of a Christmas pie.

ALITHEA: (*To HARCOURT.*) It is your censure, Sir, that troubles me, not theirs.

HARCOURT: Madam, then have no trouble. You shall now see 'tis possible for me to love without being jealous. I will not only believe your innocence myself, but make

all the world believe it. *(Reaching for his sword.)* Horner, I must now be concerned for this Lady's Honour.

HORNER: And I must be concerned for a Lady's Honour, too.

HARCOURT: *(Drawing.)* I understand you not.

HORNER: *(Skipping out of the way.)* I would not have you.

(MRS. PINCHWIFE peeping from behind the screen.)

MRS. PINCHWIFE: *(Aside)* What's the matter with them all?

PINCHWIFE: Come, come, Mr. Horner, no more disputing. I have a Parson below.

HARCOURT: No, Sir. *(Returns his sword.)* I'll employ him, if this Lady please.

PINCHWIFE: How, what do you mean?

SPARKISH: Aye, what does he mean?

HORNER: Why, I resign your Sister to him. He has my consent.

PINCHWIFE: But he has not mine Sir! A woman's injured Honour can not be repaired or satisfied by any but him that first wronged it. You shall marry her presently, or
...

(HARCOURT and PINCHWIFE begin to draw. MRS. PINCHWIFE looks out from her hiding place.)

MRS. PINCHWIFE: *(Aside)* Oh, Lord, they'll kill poor Mr. Horner. Besides he shall not marry her while I stand by and look on. I'll not lose my second Husband so. *(She comes out to them.)*

PINCHWIFE: What do I see?

ALITHEA: My Sister in my clothes!

SPARKISH: Ha!

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Nay, pray now, don't quarrel about finding work for the Parson. *(To PINCHWIFE.)* He shall marry me to Mr. Horner, for now I believe you have enough of me. Pray, Sister, pardon me for telling so many lies of you.

HARCOURT: I suppose the Riddle is plain now.

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Now, Bud, hear me.

(PINCHWIFE pulls his hat over his eyes.)

PINCHWIFE: I will never hear woman again, but make them all silent thus. *(Tries to draw upon his Wife.)*

HORNER: No, that must not be.

PINCHWIFE: You go first. 'Tis all one to me. *(His sword stuck, he is stopped by HARCOURT.)*

HARCOURT: Hold—

(Enter SIR JASPAR FIDGET, LADY FIDGET, Old Lady SQUEAMISH.)

SIR JASPAR: What's the matter, what's the matter Sir? I beseech you communicate, Sir.

PINCHWIFE: My Wife has communicated, Sir, as your Wife may have done too, Sir, with *him*.

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SIR JASPAR: Pshaw, will him? Hee, hee, hee.

PINCHWIFE: Do you mock me, Sir? A Cuckold is a kind of a wild Beast. Have a care, Sir.

SIR JASPAR: *You mock me*, Sir. He cuckold you! It can't be, hee, hee, hee. Why, I'll tell you, Sir . . .

PINCHWIFE: I tell *you*, he has whored my Wife and yours too, and all the women he comes near.

SIR JASPAR: Nay, then— how— Wife—?

SQUEAMISH: Speak, young Harlotry, speak how?

SIR JASPAR: Speak, good Horner, hast thou . . . ?

HORNER: Soh—

LUCY: *(Entering, to Horner)* I'll fetch you off and her too, if she will but hold her tongue.

HORNER: *(Aside to Lucy)* Canst thou? I'll give thee . . .

LUCY: *(to PINCHWIFE.)* Pray, have but patience to hear me, Sir, who am the

unfortunate cause of all this confusion. Your Wife is innocent, I only culpable, for I put her upon telling you all these lies concerning my Mistress in order to break off the match between Mr. Sparkish and her to make way for Mr. Harcourt. *(She punctuates the explanation by pointing out each person she names.)*

SPARKISH: Did you so? Then my Mistress was not false to me. I was only deceived by you, brother-that-should-have-been. Now, man, to bring your Wife to her Lover— ha—

LUCY: Sir, she came not to Mr. Horner out of love, for she loves him no more . . .

MRS. PINCHWIFE: Hold! I told lies for you, but you shall tell none for me, for I do love Mr. Horner with all my soul, and don't you go to make poor Mr. Horner believe to the contrary.

HORNER: *(Aside to MRS. PINCHWIFE.)* Peace, Dear Idiot.

(Enter DORILANT.)

DORILANT: Horner, your Servant. But what's the matter, Gentlemen, for Heaven's sake, what's the matter?

HORNER: 'Tis well you are come, else I had died for a crime I never committed. Therefore pray satisfy these worthy, honourable, jealous Gentlemen that . . . *(Whispers.)*

DORILANT: Sir Jaspar, I have the word of his Physician, Sir, that . . . *(Whispers to SIR JASPAR.)*

SIR JASPAR: Nay, truly? Pardon me, my virtuous Lady and dear of honour.

SQUEAMISH: What, then all's right again?

SIR JASPAR: *(Indicating PINCHWIFE.)* Aye, aye, and now let us satisfy *him*, too.

(They whisper with PINCHWIFE.)

PINCHWIFE: An Eunuch! Pray, no fooling with me.

DORILANT: I'll bring half the Surgeons in Town to swear it.

PINCHWIFE: They'd swear a man, bled to death through his wounds, died of an Apoplexy.

DORILANT: Why, all the Town has heard the report of him.

PINCHWIFE: I'm sure, when I left the Town, he was the lewdest fellow in it.

DORILANT: I tell you, Sir, he has been in France.

ALL: Oh!

DORILANT: Ladies, haven't you all heard the late sad report of poor Mr. Horner?

ALL LADIES: Aye, Aye, aye.

DORILANT: Why, thou jealous Fool, dost thou doubt it? He's an errant French Capon.

MRS. PINCHWIFE: 'Tis false Sir, you shall not disparage poor Mr. Horner, for to my certain knowledge—

LUCY: | Oh, hold!
|

LADY FIDGET: | Stop her mouth!

PINCHWIFE: Well, if this were true, but my Wife . . .

(DORILANT whispers with MRS. PINCHWIFE.)

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LUCY: Indeed, she's innocent, Sir. Her coming out was but to see her Sister's Wedding, and what she has said to your face of her love to Mr. Horner was but innocent revenge on a Husband's jealousy, was it not Madam? Speak.

(HORNER, LADY FIDGET, LUCY, DORILANT nod encouragingly.)

MRS. PINCHWIFE: *(Aside to LUCY.)* Since you'll have me tell more lies. *(Aloud)* Yes, indeed, Bud.

ALITHEA: Come, Brother, you see? But have a care of too strong an imagination. There's doctrine for all Husbands, Mr. Harcourt.

HARCOURT: *(To Alithea.)* I am impatient till I *am* one.

SPARKISH: *(To audience.)* And I, outwitted, am *not* one.

DORILANT: *(To audience.)* And I, by example, will never *be* one.

HORNER: *(To audience.)* And I, alas, *can't* be one.

PINCHWIFE: *(To audience.)* But I, alas, *must* be one – husband to a Country Wife.

MRS. PINCHWIFE: *((To audience.))* And I must be a Country Wife still, for I can't, like a City one,

be rid of my musty old Husband and do what I list. *(She looks slyly at SPARKISH and smiles. She starts to cross to him, but HORNER intercepts her.)*

HORNER: Now, Ladies, we'll divert your troubles with a dance.

(Music.)

WOMEN: In the days of my youth, I could bill like a dove.
Fa-la-la-la-la, fa-da-liddle-lah-dy.
In the days of my youth, I could bill like a dove.

MEN: Like a sparrow, at all times, was ready for love.

ALL: Fa-da-liddle-lah-dy. Fa-da-liddle-lah-dy.
Fa-la-la. Fa-la-la. Fa-dah-lah-dy.

WOMEN: The life of all mortals in kissing should pass.
Fa-la-la-la-la, fa-da-liddle-lah-dy.
The life of all mortals in kissing should pass.

MEN: Lip to lip when you're young, then the lip to the glass!

ALL: Fa-da-liddle-lah-dy. Fa-da-liddle-lah-dy.
Fa-la-la. Fa-la-la. Fa-dah-lah-dy.

The life of all mortals in kissing should pass.
Lip to lip when you're young, then the lip to the glass!
Fa-da-liddle-lah-dy. Fa-da-liddle-lah-dy.
Fa-la-la. Fa-la-la. Fa-dah-lah-dy.

END OF PLAY