

The Duchess of Malfi

BUSC Summer Production 2023

Important Dates

- First reading: 11./12.03.
- Rehearsal weekend (First run through): 28.-30.04.
- Poster general meeting: 04.05.
- Second run through: 20./21.05.
- Third run through: 10./11.06.
- Main rehearsal (Fourth run through): 01.07.
- Dress rehearsal: 07.07.
- Performances: 08.-15.07.

Characters

Name	Size	Description	Audition scenes
The DUCHESS (f)	major	Widow of the recently deceased top gangster boss of Malfi and heir to his imperium, though not really interested in ruling it. She wants to enjoy her life and her newly won freedom, being able to make decisions for herself for the first time in her life. Secretly in love with ANTONIO.	2, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10
ANTONIO (m)	major	The DUCHESS' asset manager and her secret lover. He made his way out of Malfi's criminal society by studying and spending time abroad. He is an honest and caring lover and sometimes a little gullible, which ultimately is his demise.	1, 4, 5, 7
FERDINAND (m)	major	The DUCHESS' twin brother and owner of a nightclub. He is secretly in love with his sister and accepts no other man in her life. He is a vengeful hothead and in no control of his emotions, later develops a psychosis which makes him think he's a wolf.	2, 3, 6, 8, 11
The CARDINAL (m)	major	The complete opposite of his younger brother, the CARDINAL is the calm and collective de-facto leader of the gangster imperium. He has no morals and stops at nothing to preserve his power, not even at killing his own mistress.	2, 6, 12, 13

BOSOLA (m/f/d)	major	A former hitman for the CARDINAL, being released from prison after serving a multi-year sentence for murder. BOSOLA tries to better himself but is quickly sucked into the vicious circle of crime-centered Malfi. After being a key factor in the DUCHESS' killing, BOSOLA has a change of heart and takes revenge on her brothers.	3,5,9,13
CARIOLA (f)	medium	The DUCHESS' best friend and maid. They have known each other for their entire life and stick together until the very end. CARIOLA is always there to comfort or cheer up the DUCHESS and is privy to her affair with ANTONIO, secretly marrying the two.	4,7,10
DELIO (m/f/d)	medium	Owner of the Malfi's diner and the eyes and ears of the city. DELIO is the good-hearted long-time friend of ANTONIO and warns him about the dangerous brothers. Lone survivor of the play along with ANTONIO's and the DUCHESS' child.	1,15
JULIA (f)	medium	A former prostitute and the wife of CASTRUCCIO. Feeling bored in her marriage, she entertains an affair with the CARDINAL, enjoying the benefits of this powerful, but dangerous company.	12,15
The DOCTOR (m/f/d)	minor	Previously a highly regarded physician, the DOCTOR lost his medical license due to some questionable treatment methods. Now works discreetly on a commission basis for the mob.	11
CASTRUCCIO MALATESTA PESCARA SILVIO RODERIGO GRISOLAN (all m/f/d)	minor	Being not as highly educated as the DUCHESS or her brothers, these gang members excel in other fields: weapons, drugs, protection money, prostitution and other fun stuff. All of them are loyal henchmen to the CARDINAL and FERDINAND and also serve as some comic relief of the play.	11,14,15
2 Police DETECTIVES (m/f/d)	minor	Two corrupt cops, being paid by the CARDINAL to look away when he wants them to. They release BOSOLA from prison at the beginning of the play.	/

Scene 1

Characters: ANTONIO, DELIO

ANTONIO and DELIO discuss the DUCHESS and her brothers.

ANTONIO

The presence 'gins to fill: you promis'd me
To make me the partaker of the natures
Of some of your great courtiers.

DELIO

The lord cardinal's
And other strangers' that are now in court?
I shall.

ANTONIO

Now, sir, your promise: what's that cardinal?
I mean his temper? They say he's a brave fellow,
Will play his five thousand crowns at tennis, dance,
Court ladies, and one that hath fought single combats.

DELIO

Some such flashes superficially hang on him for form;
but observe his inward character: he is a melancholy churchman.
The spring in his face is nothing but the engend'ring of toads;
where he is jealous of any man, he lays worse plots for them than
ever was impos'd on Hercules, for he strews in his way flatterers,
panders, intelligencers, atheists, and a thousand such political
monsters. He should have been Pope; but instead of coming to it
by the primitive decency of the church, he did bestow bribes
so largely and so impudently as if he would have carried it away
without heaven's knowledge. Some good he hath done -

ANTONIO

You have given too much of him. What 's his brother?

DELIO

The duke there? A most perverse and turbulent nature.
What appears in him mirth is merely outside;
If he laught heartily, it is to laugh all honesty out of fashion.

ANTONIO

Twins?

DELIO

In quality.
He speaks with others' tongues, and hears men's suits
With others' ears; will seem to sleep o' the bench
Only to entrap offenders in their answers;
Dooms men to death by information; Rewards by hearsay.

ANTONIO

Then the law to him
Is like a foul, black cobweb to a spider, -
He makes it his dwelling and a prison
To entangle those shall feed him.

DELIO

Most true:
He never pays debts unless they be shrewd turns,
And those he will confess that he doth owe.
Last, for this brother there, the cardinal,
They that do flatter him most say oracles
Hang at his lips; and verily I believe them,
For the devil speaks in them.
But for their sister, the right noble duchess -

ANTONIO

You never fix'd your eye on three fair medals
Cast in one figure, of so different temper.
For her discourse, it is so full of rapture,
You only will begin then to be sorry
When she doth end her speech, and wish, in wonder,
She held it less vain-glory to talk much,
Than your penance to hear her. Whilst she speaks,
She throws upon a man so sweet a look
That it were able to raise one to a galliard.
That lay in a dead palsy, and to dote
On that sweet countenance; but in that look
There speaketh so divine a continence
As cuts off all lascivious and vain hope.
Her days are practis'd in such noble virtue,
That sure her nights, nay, more, her very sleeps,
Are more in heaven than other ladies' shrifts.
Let all sweet ladies break their flatt'ring glasses,
And dress themselves in her.

DELIO

Fie, Antonio,
You play the wire-drawer with her commendations.

ANTONIO

I 'll case the picture up: only thus much;
All her particular worth grows to this sum, -
She stains the time past, lights the time to come.

Scene 2

Characters: DUCHESS, FERDINAND, CARDINAL

The brothers try to talk their sister into not marrying again.

CARDINAL

We are to part from you; and your own discretion
Must now be your director.

FERDINAND

You are a widow:
You know already what man is; and therefore
Let not youth, high promotion, eloquence –

CARDINAL

No, nor anything without the addition, honour,
Sway your high blood.

FERDINAND

Marry? They are most luxurious will wed twice.

CARDINAL

O, fie!

FERDINAND

Their livers are more spotted
Than Laban's sheep.

DUCHESS

Diamonds are of most value,
They say, that have pass'd through most jewellers' hands.

FERDINAND

Whores by that rule are precious.

DUCHESS

Will you hear me?
I 'll never marry.

CARDINAL

So most widows say;
But commonly that motion lasts no longer
Than the turning of an hour-glass: the funeral sermon
And it end both together.

FERDINAND

Now hear me:
You live in a rank pasture, here, in the court;
There is a kind of honey-dew that's deadly;
It will poison your fame; look to 't. Be not cunning;
For they whose faces do belie their hearts
Are witches ere they arrive at twenty years,
Ay, and give the devil suck.

DUCHESS

This is terrible good counsel.

FERDINAND

Hypocrisy is woven of a fine small thread,
Subtler than Vulcan's engine: yet, believe 't,
Your darkest actions, nay, your privatest thoughts,
Will come to light.

CARDINAL

You may flatter yourself,
And take your own choice; privately be married
Under the eaves of night –

FERDINAND

Think 't the best voyage
That e'er you made; like the irregular crab,
Which, though 't goes backward, thinks that it goes right
Because it goes its own way: but observe,
Such weddings may more properly be said
To be executed than celebrated.

CARDINAL

The marriage night
Is the entrance into some prison.

FERDINAND

And those joys,
Those lustful pleasures, are like heavy sleeps
Which do fore-run man's mischief.

CARDINAL

Fare you well.
Wisdom begins at the end: remember it.

Exit CARDINAL.

DUCHESS

I think this speech between you both was studied,
It came so roundly off.

FERDINAND

You are my sister;
This was my father's poniard, do you see?
I'd be loath to see 't look rusty, 'cause 'twas his.
I would have you give o'er these chargeable revels:
A visor and a mask are whispering rooms
That were never built for goodness. Fare ye well.
And women like that part which, like the lamprey,
Hath ne'er a bone in't.

DUCHESS

Fie, sir!

FERDINAND

Nay, I mean the tongue. Variety of courtship –
What cannot a neat knave with a smooth tale
Make a woman believe? Farewell, lusty widow.

Scene 3

Characters: FERDINAND, BOSOLA

FERDINAND talks BOSOLA into spying on the DUCHESS.

BOSOLA

I was lur'd to you.

FERDINAND

My brother, here, the cardinal, could never abide you.

BOSOLA

Never since he was in my debt.

FERDINAND

May be some oblique character in your face made him suspect you.

BOSOLA

Doth he study physiognomy?
There's no more credit to be given to the face
Than to a sick man's urine, which some call
The physician's whore, because she cozens him.
He did suspect me wrongfully.

FERDINAND

For that you must give great men leave to take their times.
Distrust doth cause us seldom be deceiv'd.
You see the oft shaking of the cedar-tree fastens it more at root.

BOSOLA

Yet take heed;
For to suspect a friend unworthily
Instructs him the next way to suspect you,
And prompts him to deceive you.

FERDINAND

There's gold.

BOSOLA

So: What follows? Whose throat must I cut?

FERDINAND

Your inclination to shed blood rides post
Before my occasion to use you. I give you that
To live i' the court here, and observe the duchess;
To note all the particulars of her behaviour,
What suitors do solicit her for marriage,
And whom she best affects. She's a young widow:
I would not have her marry again.

BOSOLA

No, sir?

FERDINAND

Do not you ask the reason; but be satisfied.
I say I would not.

BOSOLA

It seems you would create me one of your familiars.

FERDINAND

Familiar! What's that?

BOSOLA

Why, a very quaint invisible devil in flesh, -
An intelligencer.

FERDINAND

Such a kind of thriving thing
I would wish thee; and ere long thou mayst arrive
At a higher place by 't.

BOSOLA

Take your devils,
Which hell calls angels! These curs'd gifts would make
You a corrupter, me an impudent traitor;
And should I take these, they'd take me to hell.

FERDINAND

Sir, I'll take nothing from you that I have given.
There is a place that I procur'd for you
This morning, the provisorship o' the horse;
Have you heard on 't?

BOSOLA

No.

FERDINAND

'Tis yours: is't not worth thanks?

BOSOLA

I would have you curse yourself now, that your bounty
Which makes men truly noble e'er should make me
A villain. O, that to avoid ingratitude
For the good deed you have done me, I must do
All the ill man can invent! Thus the devil
Candies all sins o'er; and what heaven terms vile,
That names he complimentary.

FERDINAND

Be yourself;
Keep your old garb of melancholy; 'twill express
You envy those that stand above your reach,
Yet strive not to come near 'em. This will gain
Access to private lodgings, where yourself
May, like a politic dormouse -

BOSOLA

As I have seen some feed in a lord's dish, half asleep, not seeming
To listen to any talk; and yet these rogues
Have cut his throat in a dream. What 's my place?
The provisorship o' the horse? Say, then, my corruption
Grew out of horse-dung: I am your creature.

Scene 4

Characters: DUCHESS, ANTONIO, CARIOLA

The DUCHESS and ANTONIO talk about marriage, with CARIOLA listening.

DUCHESS

Shall this move me? If all my royal kindred
Lay in my way unto this marriage,
I 'd make them my low footsteps. And even now,
Even in this hate, as men in some great battles,
By apprehending danger, have achiev'd
Almost impossible actions – I have heard soldiers say so –,
So I through frights and threatenings will assay
This dangerous venture. Let old wives report
I wink'd and chose a husband. – Cariola,
To thy known secrecy I have given up
More than my life, – my fame.

CARIOLA

Both shall be safe;
For I'll conceal this secret from the world
As warily as those that trade in poison
Keep poison from their children.

DUCHESS

Thy protestation is ingenious and hearty; I believe it.
Is Antonio come?

CARIOLA

He attends you.

DUCHESS

Good dear soul,
Leave me; but place thyself behind the arras,
Where thou mayst overhear us. Wish me good speed;
For I am going into a wilderness,
Where I shall find nor path nor friendly clue
To be my guide.

Exit CARIOLA. Enter ANTONIO.

DUCHESS

I sent for you: sit down;
Take pen and ink, and write: are you ready?

ANTONIO

Yes.

DUCHESS

What did I say?

ANTONIO

That I should write somewhat.

DUCHESS

O, I remember.

After these triumphs and this large expense
It's fit, like thrifty husbands, we inquire
What 's laid up for to-morrow.

ANTONIO

So please your beauteous excellence.

DUCHESS

Beauteous!

Indeed, I thank you. I look young for your sake;
You have ta'en my cares upon you.

ANTONIO

I'll fetch your grace
The particulars of your revenue and expense.

DUCHESS

O, you are an upright treasurer: but you mistook;
For when I said I meant to make inquiry
What's laid up for to-morrow, I did mean
What's laid up yonder for me.

ANTONIO

Where?

DUCHESS

In heaven.

I am making my will, as 'tis fit princes should,
In perfect memory, and, I pray, sir, tell me:
Were not one better make it smiling, thus,
Than in deep groans and terrible ghastly looks,
As if the gifts we parted with procur'd
That violent distraction?

ANTONIO

O, much better.

DUCHESS

If I had a husband now, this care were quit:
But I intend to make you overseer.
What good deed shall we first remember? Say.

ANTONIO

Begin with that first good deed began i' the world
After man's creation, the sacrament of marriage;
I'd have you first provide for a good husband;
Give him all.

DUCHESS

All!

ANTONIO

Yes, your excellent self.

DUCHESS
In a winding-sheet?

ANTONIO
In a couple.

DUCHESS
Saint Winifred, that were a strange will!

ANTONIO
'Twere stranger if there were no will in you
To marry again.

DUCHESS
What do you think of marriage?

ANTONIO
I take 't, as those that deny purgatory,
It locally contains or heaven or hell;
There's no third place in 't.

DUCHESS
How do you affect it?

ANTONIO
My banishment, feeding my melancholy,
Would often reason thus.

DUCHESS
Pray, let 's hear it.

ANTONIO
Say a man never marry, nor have children,
What takes that from him? Only the bare name
Of being a father, or the weak delight
To see the little wanton ride a-cock-horse
Upon a painted stick, or hear him chatter
Like a taught starling.

DUCHESS
Fie, fie, what 's all this?
One of your eyes is blood-shot; use my ring to 't.
They say 'tis very sovereign. 'Twas my wedding-ring,
And I did vow never to part with it
But to my second husband.

ANTONIO
You have parted with it now.

DUCHESS
Yes, to help your eye-sight.

ANTONIO
You have made me stark blind.

Scene 5

Characters: ANTONIO, BOSOLA

*ANTONIO tries to stop BOSOLA from entering the DUCHESS' lodgings,
where she is currently in labour.*

BOSOLA

Sure I did hear a woman shriek: list, ha!
And the sound came, if I receiv'd it right,
From the duchess' lodgings. There's some stratagem
In the confining all our courtiers
To their several wards: I must have part of it;
My intelligence will freeze else. List, again!
It may be 'twas the melancholy bird,
Best friend of silence and of solitariness,
The owl, that screamed so. — Ha! Antonio!

Enter ANTONIO.

ANTONIO

I heard some noise. — Who 's there? What art thou? Speak.

BOSOLA

Antonio, put not your face nor body
To such a forc'd expression of fear;
I am Bosola, your friend.

ANTONIO

Bosola!
— This mole does undermine me. — Heard you not
A noise even now?

BOSOLA

From whence?

ANTONIO

From the duchess' lodging.

BOSOLA

Not I: did you?

ANTONIO

I did, or else I dream'd.

BOSOLA

Let 's walk towards it.

ANTONIO

No: it may be 'twas
But the rising of the wind.

BOSOLA

Very likely.
Methinks 'tis very cold, and yet you sweat:
You look wildly.

ANTONIO

What 's that to you?

'Tis rather to be question'd what design,
When all men were commanded to their lodgings,
Makes you a night-walker.

BOSOLA

In sooth, I'll tell you:
Now all the court 's asleep, I thought the devil
Had least to do here; I came to say my prayers;
And if it do offend you I do so,
You are a fine courtier.

ANTONIO

This fellow will undo me.
You gave the duchess apricocks to-day:
Pray heaven they were not poison'd!

BOSOLA

Poison'd! A Spanish fig for the imputation!

ANTONIO

Traitors are ever confident
Till they are discover'd. There were jewels stol'n too:
In my conceit, none are to be suspected
More than yourself.

BOSOLA

You are a false steward.

ANTONIO

Saucy slave, I 'll pull thee up by the roots.

BOSOLA

May be the ruin will crush you to pieces.

ANTONIO

You are an impudent snake indeed, sir.

BOSOLA

Are you scarce warm, and do you show your sting?

ANTONIO

You libel well, sir.

BOSOLA

No, sir. Copy it out,
And I will set my hand to 't.

ANTONIO

For you, sir, I 'll take order
I' the morn you shall be safe.
Sir, this door you pass not:
I do not hold it fit that you come near
The duchess' lodgings, till you have quit yourself.

Scene 6

Characters: FERDINAND, CARDINAL

The brothers discuss the news of their sister being pregnant.

CARDINAL

What 's the prodigy?

FERDINAND

Read there, — a sister damn'd: she's loose i' the hilts;
Grown a notorious strumpet.

CARDINAL

Speak lower.

FERDINAND

Lower!

Rogues do not whisper 't now, but seek to publish 't aloud.
O, confusion seize her!
She hath had most cunning bawds to serve her turn,
And more secure conveyances for lust
Than towns of garrison for service.

CARDINAL

Is 't possible? Can this be certain?

FERDINAND

Here 's the cursed day
To prompt my memory; and here 't shall stick
Till of her bleeding heart I make a sponge
To wipe it out.

CARDINAL

Why do you make yourself so wild a tempest?

FERDINAND

Would I could be one,
That I might toss her palace 'bout her ears,
Root up her goodly forests, blast her meads,
And lay her general territory as waste
As she hath done her honours.

CARDINAL

Shall our blood be thus attainted?

FERDINAND

Apply desperate physic:
We must not now use balsamum, but fire,
The smarting cupping-glass, for that's the mean
To purge infected blood, such blood as hers.
There is a kind of pity in mine eye,
I'll give it to my handkercher; and now 'tis here,
I'll bequeath this to her bastard.

CARDINAL
What to do?

FERDINAND
Why, to make soft lint for his mother's wounds,
When I have hew'd her to pieces.

CARDINAL
Curs'd creature!
Unequal nature, to place women's hearts
So far upon the left side!

FERDINAND
Foolish men,
That e'er will trust their honour in a bark
Made of so slight weak bulrush as is woman,
Apt every minute to sink it!

CARDINAL
Thus ignorance, when it hath purchas'd honour,
It cannot wield it.

FERDINAND
Methinks I see her laughing,
Excellent hyena! Talk to me somewhat quickly,
Or my imagination will carry me
To see her in the shameful act of sin.

CARDINAL
With whom?

FERDINAND
Happily with some strong-thigh'd bargeman,
Or one o' th' wood-yard that can quoit the sledge
Or toss the bar, or else some lovely squire
That carries coals up to her privy lodgings.

CARDINAL
You fly beyond your reason.

FERDINAND
Go to, mistress!
'Tis not your whore's milk that shall quench my wild-fire,
But your whore's blood.

CARDINAL
How idly shows this rage, which carries you,
As men convey'd by witches through the air,
On violent whirlwinds! This intemperate noise
Fitly resembles deaf men's shrill discourse,
Who talk aloud, thinking all other men
To have their imperfection.

FERDINAND
Have not you my palsy?

CARDINAL

Yes, but I can be angry
Without this rupture. There is not in nature
A thing that makes man so deform'd, so beastly,
As doth intemperate anger. Chide yourself.
You have diverse men who never yet express'd
Their strong desire of rest but by unrest,
By vexing of themselves. Come, put yourself in tune.

FERDINAND

So I will only study to seem
The thing I am not. I could kill her now,
In you, or in myself; for I do think
It is some sin in us heaven doth revenge by her.

CARDINAL

Are you stark mad?

FERDINAND

I would have their bodies
Burnt in a coal-pit with the ventage stopp'd,
That their curs'd smoke might not ascend to heaven;
Or dip the sheets they lie in in pitch or sulphur,
Wrap them in 't, and then light them like a match;
Or else to-boil their bastard to a cullis,
And give 't his lecherous father to renew
The sin of his back.

CARDINAL

I 'll leave you.

FERDINAND

Nay, I have done.
I am confident, had I been damn'd in hell,
And should have heard of this, it would have put me
Into a cold sweat. In, in; I 'll go sleep.
Till I know who loves my sister, I 'll not stir:
That known, I 'll find scorpions to string my whips,
And fix her in a general eclipse.

Scene 7

Characters: DUCHESS, ANTONIO, CARIOLA

The DUCHESS is getting ready for the night.

DUCHESS
Bring me the casket hither, and the glass.
You get no lodging here to-night, my lord.

ANTONIO
Indeed, I must persuade one.

DUCHESS
Very good:
I hope in time 't will grow into a custom,
That noblemen shall come with cap and knee
To purchase a night's lodging of their wives.

ANTONIO
I must lie here.

DUCHESS
Must! You are a lord of mis-rule.

ANTONIO
Indeed, my rule is only in the night.

DUCHESS
To what use will you put me?

ANTONIO
We'll sleep together.

DUCHESS
Alas, what pleasure can two lovers find in sleep?

CARIOLA
My lord, I lie with her often and I know
She'll much disquiet you -

ANTONIO
See, you are complained of!

CARIOLA
- For she's the sprawlingest bedfellow!

ANTONIO
I shall like her better for that.

CARIOLA
Sir, shall I ask you a question?

ANTONIO
I pray thee, Cariola.

CARIOLA
Wherefore still when you lie with my lady
Do you rise so early?

ANTONIO
Labouring men count the clock oftenest, Cariola –
Are glad when their task's ended.

DUCHESS
I 'll stop your mouth. *[Kisses him.]*

ANTONIO
Nay, that's but one; Venus had two soft doves
To draw her chariot; I must have another.

[She kisses him again.]

When wilt thou marry, Cariola?

CARIOLA
Never, my lord.

ANTONIO
O, fie upon this single life! forgo it.
We read how Daphne, for her peevish slight,
Became a fruitless bay-tree; Syrinx turn'd
To the pale empty reed; Anaxarete
Was frozen into marble: whereas those
Which married, or prov'd kind unto their friends,
Were by a gracious influence transhap'd
Into the olive, pomegranate, mulberry,
Became flowers, precious stones, or eminent stars.

CARIOLA
This is a vain poetry: but I pray you, tell me,
If there were propos'd me, wisdom, riches, and beauty,
In three several young men, which should I choose?

ANTONIO
'Tis a hard question. This was Paris' case,
And he was blind in 't, and there was a great cause;
For how was 't possible he could judge right,
Having three amorous goddesses in view,
And they stark naked?
Now I look on both your faces so well form'd,
It puts me in mind of a question I would ask.

CARIOLA
What is 't?

ANTONIO
I do wonder why hard-favour'd ladies,
For the most part, keep worse-favour'd waiting-women
To attend them, and cannot endure fair ones.

DUCHESS

O, that's soon answer'd.

Did you ever in your life know an ill painter
Desire to have his dwelling next door to the shop
Of an excellent picture-maker? 'Twould disgrace
His face-making, and undo him. I prithee,
When were we so merry? – My hair tangles.

ANTONIO

Pray thee, Cariola, let 's steal forth the room,
And let her talk to herself: I have diverse times
Serv'd her the like, when she hath chaf'd extremely.
I love to see her angry. Softly, Cariola.

Exeunt ANTONIO and CARIOLA.

Scene 8

Characters: DUCHESS, FERDINAND

FERDINAND sneaks into his sister's bedchamber to confront her about her pregnancy.

DUCHESS

Doth not the colour of my hair begin to change?
When I wax gray, I shall have all the court
Powder their hair with arras, to be like me.
You have cause to love me; I ent'red you into my heart
Before you would vouchsafe to call for the keys.

Enter FERDINAND unseen.

DUCHESS

We shall one day have my brothers take you napping.
Methinks his presence, being now in court,
Should make you keep your own bed; but you 'll say
Love mix'd with fear is sweetest. I 'll assure you,
You shall get no more children till my brothers
Consent to be your gossips. Have you lost your tongue?
'Tis welcome: For know, whether I am doom'd to live or die,
I can do both like a prince.

FERDINAND

Die, then, quickly!
Virtue, where art thou hid? What hideous thing
Is it that doth eclipse thee?

DUCHESS

Pray, sir, hear me.

FERDINAND

Or is it true thou art but a bare name,
And no essential thing?

DUCHESS

Sir -

FERDINAND

Do not speak.

DUCHESS

No, sir:
I will plant my soul in mine ears, to hear you.

FERDINAND

O most imperfect light of human reason,
That mak'st us so unhappy to foresee
What we can least prevent! Pursue thy wishes,
And glory in them: there's in shame no comfort
But to be past all bounds and sense of shame.

DUCHESS

I pray, sir, hear me: I am married.

FERDINAND

So!

DUCHESS

Happily, not to your liking: but for that,
Alas, your shears do come untimely now
To clip the bird's wings that's already flown!
Will you see my husband?

FERDINAND

Yes, if I could change eyes with a basilisk.

DUCHESS

Sure, you came hither by his confederacy.

FERDINAND

The howling of a wolf
Is music to thee, screech-owl: prithee, peace.
Whate'er thou art that hast enjoy'd my sister,
For I am sure thou hear'st me, for thine own sake
Let me not know thee. I came hither prepar'd
To work thy discovery; yet am now persuaded
It would beget such violent effects
As would damn us both. I would not for ten millions
I had beheld thee: therefore use all means
I never may have knowledge of thy name;
Enjoy thy lust still, and a wretched life,
On that condition. And for thee, vile woman,
If thou do wish thy lecher may grow old
In thy embracements, I would have thee build
Such a room for him as our anchorites
To holier use inhabit. Let not the sun
Shine on him till he's dead;
If thou do love him, cut out thine own tongue,
Lest it bewray him.

DUCHESS

Why might not I marry?
I have not gone about in this to create
Any new world or custom.

FERDINAND

Thou art undone;
And thou hast taken that massy sheet of lead
That hid thy husband's bones, and folded it
About my heart.

DUCHESS

Mine bleeds for 't.

FERDINAND

Thine! Thy heart!
What should I name 't unless a hollow bullet
Fill'd with unquenchable wild-fire?

DUCHESS.

You are in this too strict;
And were you not my princely brother, I would say, too wilful:
My reputation is safe.

FERDINAND

Dost thou know what reputation is?
I 'll tell thee, to small purpose, since the instruction
Comes now too late.
Upon a time Reputation, Love, and Death,
Would travel o'er the world; and it was concluded
That they should part, and take three several ways.
Death told them, they should find him in great battles,
Or cities plagu'd with plagues: Love gives them counsel
To inquire for him 'mongst unambitious shepherds,
Where dowries were not talk'd of, and sometimes
'Mongst quiet kindred that had nothing left
By their dead parents: 'Stay,' quoth Reputation,
'Do not forsake me; for it is my nature,
If once I part from any man I meet,
I am never found again.' And so for you:
You have shook hands with Reputation,
And made him invisible. So, fare you well:
I will never see you more.

DUCHESS

Why should only I,
Of all the other princes of the world,
Be cas'd up, like a holy relic?
I have youth and a little beauty.

FERDINAND

So you have some virgins that are witches.
I will never see thee more.

Exit FERDINAND.

Scene 9

Characters: DUCHESS, BOSOLA

The DUCHESS wants to know what BOSOLA thinks of ANTONIO, who she just "banished" as a means to get him out of trouble.

DUCHESS

I would know what are your opinions of this Antonio.

BOSOLA

He hath left a sort of flattering rogues behind him;
Their doom must follow. Princes pay flatterers
In their own money: flatterers dissemble their vices,
And they dissemble their lies; that's justice.
Alas, poor gentleman!

DUCHESS

Poor! he hath amply fill'd his coffers.

BOSOLA

Sure, he was too honest.
Let me show you what a most unvalued jewel
You have in a wanton humour thrown away,
To bless the man shall find him. He was an excellent
Courtier and most faithful; a soldier that thought it
As beastly to know his own value too little
As devilish to acknowledge it too much.
Both his virtue and form deserved a far better fortune:
His discourse rather delighted to judge itself than show itself:
His breast was fill'd with all perfection,
And yet it seemed a private whisp'ring-room,
It made so little noise of 't.

DUCHESS

But he was basely descended.

BOSOLA

Will you make yourself a mercenary herald,
Rather to examine men's pedigrees than virtues?
Fare thee well, Antonio! Since the malice of the world
Would needs down with thee, it cannot be said yet
That any ill happen'd unto thee, considering thy fall
Was accompanied with virtue.

DUCHESS

O, you render me excellent music!

BOSOLA

Say you?

DUCHESS

This good one that you speak of is my husband.

BOSOLA

Do I not dream? Can this ambitious age
Have so much goodness in 't as to prefer
A man merely for worth, without these shadows
Of wealth and painted honours? Possible?

DUCHESS

I have had a child by him.

BOSOLA

Fortunate lady!
For you have made your private nuptial bed
The humble and fair seminary of peace,
No question but: many an unbenefic'd scholar
Shall pray for you for this deed, and rejoice
That some preferment in the world can yet
Arise from merit. The virgins of your land
That have no dowries shall hope your example
Will raise them to rich husbands. Should you want
Soldiers, 'twould make the very Turks and Moors
Turn Christians, and serve you for this act.
Last, the neglected poets of your time,
In honour of this trophy of a man,
Rais'd by that curious engine, your white hand,
Shall thank you, in your grave, for 't; and make that
More reverend than all the cabinets
Of living princes. For Antonio,
His fame shall likewise flow from many a pen,
When heralds shall want coats to sell to men.

DUCHESS

As I taste comfort in this friendly speech,
So would I find concealment.

BOSOLA

O, the secret of my prince,
Which I will wear on th' inside of my heart!

DUCHESS

You shall take charge of all my coin and jewels,
And follow him; for he retires himself to Ancona.

BOSOLA

So.

DUCHESS

Whither, within few days,
I mean to follow thee.

Scene 10

Characters: DUCHESS, CARIOLA

*The DUCHESS and CARIOLA are kept prisoners in their own house,
terrorized by madmen sent outside by FERDINAND.*

DUCHESS
What hideous noise was that?

CARIOLA
'Tis the wild consort
Of madmen, lady, which your tyrant brother
Hath plac'd about your lodging. This tyranny,
I think, was never practis'd till this hour.

DUCHESS
Indeed, I thank him. Nothing but noise and folly
Can keep me in my right wits; whereas reason
And silence make me stark mad. Sit down;
Discourse to me some dismal tragedy.

CARIOLA
O, 'twill increase your melancholy!

DUCHESS
Thou art deceiv'd:
To hear of greater grief would lessen mine.
This is a prison?

CARIOLA
Yes, but you shall live
To shake this durance off.

DUCHESS
Thou art a fool:
The robin-red-breast and the nightingale
Never live long in cages.

CARIOLA
Pray, dry your eyes.
What think you of, madam?

DUCHESS
Of nothing;
When I muse thus, I sleep.

CARIOLA
Like a madman, with your eyes open?

DUCHESS
Dost thou think we shall know one another
In th' other world?

CARIOLA
Yes, out of question.

DUCHESS

O, that it were possible we might
But hold some two days' conference with the dead!
From them I should learn somewhat, I am sure,
I never shall know here. I 'll tell thee a miracle:
I am not mad yet, to my cause of sorrow:
Th' heaven o'er my head seems made of molten brass,
The earth of flaming sulphur, yet I am not mad.
I am acquainted with sad misery
As the tann'd galley-slave is with his oar;
Necessity makes me suffer constantly,
And custom makes it easy. Who do I look like now?

CARIOLA

Like to your picture in the gallery,
A deal of life in show, but none in practice;
Or rather like some reverend monument
Whose ruins are even pitied.

DUCHESS

Very proper;
And Fortune seems only to have her eye-sight
To behold my tragedy. — How now!
What noise is that?

Scene 11

Characters: DOCTOR, PESCARA, MALATESTA, FERDINAND

PESCARA wants to visit FERDINAND, who suffers from a psychological illness, thinking he is a wolf.

PESCARA
Now, doctor, may I visit your patient?

DOCTOR
If 't please your lordship; but he's instantly
To take the air here in the gallery by my direction.

PESCARA
Pray thee, what 's his disease?

DOCTOR
A very pestilent disease, my lord, they call lycanthropia.

PESCARA
What 's that?
I need a dictionary to 't.

DOCTOR
I 'll tell you.
In those that are possess'd with 't there o'erflows
Such melancholy humour they imagine
Themselves to be transformed into wolves;
Steal forth to church-yards in the dead of night,
And dig dead bodies up: as two nights since
One met the duke 'bout midnight in a lane
Behind Saint Mark's church, with the leg of a man
Upon his shoulder; and he howl'd fearfully;
Said he was a wolf, only the difference
Was, a wolf's skin was hairy on the outside,
His on the inside; bade them take their swords,
Rip up his flesh, and try. Straight I was sent for,
And, having minister'd to him, found his grace
Very well recover'd.

PESCARA
I am glad on 't.

DOCTOR
Yet not without some fear
Of a relapse. If he grow to his fit again,
I'll go a nearer way to work with him
Than ever Paracelsus dream'd of; if
They 'll give me leave, I 'll buffet his madness out of him.
Stand aside; he comes.

Enter FERDINAND and MALATESTA

FERDINAND
Leave me.

MALATESTES

Why doth your lordship love this solitariness?

FERDINAND

Eagles commonly fly alone: they are crows, daws,
and starlings that flock together. Look, what 's that follows me?

MALATESTES

Nothing, my lord.

FERDINAND

Yes.

MALATESTES

'Tis your shadow.

FERDINAND

Stay it; let it not haunt me.

MALATESTES

Impossible, if you move, and the sun shine.

FERDINAND

I will throttle it.

[Throws himself down on his shadow.]

MALATESTES

O, my lord, you are angry with nothing.

FERDINAND

You are a fool: how is 't possible I should catch
my shadow, unless I fall upon 't? When I go to hell, I mean
to carry a bribe; for, look you, good gifts evermore make way
for the worst persons.

PESCARA

Rise, good my lord.

FERDINAND

I am studying the art of patience.

PESCARA

'Tis a noble virtue.

FERDINAND

To drive six snails before me from this town to Moscow;
neither use goad nor whip to them, but let them take their own time;
—the patient'st man i' th' world match me for an experiment:
an I 'll crawl after like a sheep-biter.

DOCTOR

Force him up.

FERDINAND

Use me well, you were best.

What I have done, I have done: I 'll confess nothing.

DOCTOR

Now let me come to him. Are you mad, my lord? are you out of your princely wits?

FERDINAND

What 's he?

PESCARA

Your doctor.

FERDINAND

Let me have his beard saw'd off, and his eye-brows fil'd more civil.

DOCTOR

I must do mad tricks with him, for that's the only way on 't.

FERDINAND

Hide me from him: physicians are like kings,
They brook no contradiction.

DOCTOR

Now he begins to fear me: now let me alone with him.

MALATESTES

How now, put off your gown?

DOCTOR

Now he begins to fear me. Can you fetch a frisk, sir?

Let him go, let him go, upon my peril:

I find by his eye he stands in awe of me; I 'll make him as tame as a dormouse.

FERDINAND

Can you fetch your frisks, sir! I will stamp him into a cullis, flay off his skin to cover one of the anatomies this rogue hath set i' th' cold yonder in Barber-Chirurgeon's-hall. Hence, hence! You are all of you like beasts for sacrifice.

Exit FERDINAND.

PESCARA

Doctor, he did not fear you thoroughly.

DOCTOR

True; I was somewhat too forward.

MALATESTES

Mercy upon me, what a fatal judgment
Hath fall'n upon this Ferdinand!

Scene 12

Characters: CARDINAL, JULIA

The CARDINAL confesses his part in the DUCHESS' death to JULIA.

JULIA
How now, my lord! what ails you?

CARDINAL
Nothing.

JULIA
O, you are much alter'd:
Come, I must be your secretary, and remove
This lead from off your bosom: what 's the matter?

CARDINAL
I may not tell you.

JULIA
Are you so far in love with sorrow
You cannot part with part of it? Or think you
I cannot love your grace when you are sad
As well as merry? Or do you suspect
I, that have been a secret to your heart
These many winters, cannot be the same
Unto your tongue?

CARDINAL
Satisfy thy longing,
The only way to make thee keep my counsel
Is, not to tell thee.

JULIA
Tell your echo this,
Or flatterers, that like echoes still report
What they hear though most imperfect, and not me;
For if that you be true unto yourself, I 'll know.

CARDINAL
Will you rack me?

JULIA
No, judgment shall draw it from you: it is an equal fault,
To tell one's secrets unto all or none.

CARDINAL
The first argues folly.

JULIA
But the last tyranny.

CARDINAL
Very well: why, imagine I have committed
Some secret deed which I desire the world
May never hear of.

JULIA

Therefore may not I know it?
You have conceal'd for me as great a sin as adultery.
Sir, never was occasion for perfect trial of my constancy
Till now: sir, I beseech you -

CARDINAL

You 'll repent it.

JULIA

Never.

CARDINAL

It hurries thee to ruin: I 'll not tell thee.
Be well advis'd, and think what danger 'tis
To receive a prince's secrets. They that do,
Had need have their breasts hoop'd with adamant
To contain them. I pray thee, yet be satisfi'd;
Examine thine own frailty; 'tis more easy
To tie knots than unloose them. 'Tis a secret
That, like a ling'ring poison, may chance lie
Spread in thy veins, and kill thee seven year hence.

JULIA

Now you dally with me.

CARDINAL

No more; thou shalt know it.
By my appointment the great Duchess of Malfi, four nights since,
Was strangl'd.

JULIA

O heaven! sir, what have you done!

CARDINAL

How now? How settles this? Think you your bosom
Will be a grave dark and obscure enough for such a secret?

JULIA

You have undone yourself, sir.

CARDINAL

Why?

JULIA

It lies not in me to conceal it.

CARDINAL

No?
Come, I will swear you to 't upon this book.

JULIA

Most religiously.

CARDINAL

Kiss it.

Scene 13

Characters: CARDINAL, BOSOLA

BOSOLA catches the CARDINAL red-handed after murdering JULIA.

CARDINAL

Wherefore com'st thou hither?

BOSOLA

That I might find a great man like yourself,
Not out of his wits, as the Lord Ferdinand,
To remember my service.

CARDINAL

I 'll have thee hew'd in pieces.

BOSOLA

Make not yourself such a promise of that life
Which is not yours to dispose of.

CARDINAL

Very well.
Now you know me for your fellow-murderer.

BOSOLA

And wherefore should you lay fair marble colours
Upon your rotten purposes to me?
Unless you imitate some that do plot great treasons,
And when they have done, go hide themselves i' th' grave
Of those were actors in 't?

CARDINAL

No more; there is a fortune attends thee.

BOSOLA

Shall I go sue to Fortune any longer?
'Tis the fool's pilgrimage.

CARDINAL

I have honours in store for thee.

BOSOLA

There are a many ways that conduct to seeming
Honour, and some of them very dirty ones.

CARDINAL

Throw to the devil thy melancholy. The fire burns well;
What need we keep a stirring of 't, and make
A greater smother? Thou wilt kill Antonio?

BOSOLA

Yes.

CARDINAL

Take up that body.

BOSOLA

I think I shall
Shortly grow the common bier for church-yards.

CARDINAL

I will allow thee some dozen of attendants
To aid thee in the murder.

BOSOLA

O, by no means. Let me have no train when I go
to shed blood, less it make me have a greater when I ride
to the gallows.

CARDINAL

Come to me after midnight, to help to remove
That body to her own lodging. I 'll give out
She died o' th' plague; 'twill breed the less inquiry
After her death.

BOSOLA

Where 's Castruccio her husband?

CARDINAL

He's rode to Naples, to take possession
Of Antonio's citadel.

BOSOLA

Believe me, you have done a very happy turn.

CARDINAL

Fail not to come. There is the master-key
Of our lodgings; and by that you may conceive
What trust I plant in you.

BOSOLA

You shall find me ready.

Exit CARDINAL.

O poor Antonio, though nothing be so needful
To thy estate as pity, yet I find
Nothing so dangerous! I must look to my footing:
In such slippery ice-pavements men had need
To be frost-nail'd well, they may break their necks else;
The precedent 's here afore me. How this man
Bears up in blood, seems fearless!
Well, good Antonio,
I 'll seek thee out; and all my care shall be
To put thee into safety from the reach
Of these most cruel biters that have got
Some of thy blood already. It may be,
I 'll join with thee in a most just revenge.
The weakest arm is strong enough that strikes
With the sword of justice.

Scene 14:

Characters: CASTRUCCIO, SILVIO, GRISOLAN, RODERIGO

The gang makes fun of Malateste, who they think is a coward. Then they observe BOSOLA bringing news to the brothers.

CASTRUCCIO

This great Count Malateste, I perceive,
Hath got employment?

SILVIO

No employment, my lord;
A marginal note in the muster-book, that he is
A voluntary lord.

GRISOLAN

He's no soldier.

RODERIGO

He has worn gun-powder in 's hollow tooth for the tooth-ache.

SILVIO

He comes to the leaguer with a full intent
To eat fresh beef and garlic, means to stay
Till the scent be gone, and straight return to court.

GRISOLAN

He hath read all the late service
As the City-Chronicle relates it;
And keeps two pewterers going, only to express
Battles in model.

ROGERIGO

Then he 'll fight by the book.

SILVIO

By the almanac, I think,
To choose good days and shun the critical;

GRISOLAN

I think he would run away from a battle,
To save it from taking prisoner.

RODERIGO

He is horribly afraid
Gun-powder will spoil the perfume on 't.

SILVIO

I saw a Dutchman break his pate once
For calling him pot-gun; he made his head
Have a bore in 't like a musket.

GRISOLAN

I would he had made a touch-hole to 't.
He is indeed a guarded sumpter-cloth,
Only for the remove of the court.

CASTRUCCIO

Bosola arriv'd! What should be the business?
Some falling-out amongst the cardinals.
These factions amongst great men, they are like
Foxes, when their heads are divided,
They carry fire in their tails, and all the country
About them goes to wrack for 't.

SILVIO

What's that Bosola?

CASTRUCCIO

I knew him in Padua, a fantastical scholar, like such who
study to know how many knots was in Hercules' club, of what colour
Achilles' beard was, or whether Hector were not troubled with the
tooth-ache. He hath studied himself half blear-eyed to know the true
symmetry of Caesar's nose by a shoeing-horn; and this he did to gain
the name of a speculative man.

GRISOLAN

Mark Prince Ferdinand:
A very salamander lives in 's eye,
To mock the eager violence of fire.

RODERIGO

That cardinal hath made more bad faces with his oppression
than ever Michaelangelo made good ones. He lifts up 's nose, like
a foul porpoise before a storm.

SILVIO

The Lord Ferdinand laughs.

GRISOLAN

Like a deadly cannon
That lightens ere it smokes.

RODERIGO

These are your true pangs of death,
The pangs of life, that struggle with great statesmen.

SILVIO.

In such a deformed silence witches whisper their charms.

Scene 15

Characters: DELIO, PESCARA, JULIA

DELIO wants PESCARA to pass the banished ANTONIO's property onto him, but gets denied.

DELIO

Here comes the marquis: I will make myself
Petitioner for some part of Antonio's land,
To know whither it is flying.

[Enter PESCARA.]

DELIO

Sir, I have a suit to you.

PESCARA

To me?

DELIO

An easy one:
There is the Citadel of Saint Bennet,
With some demesnes, of late in the possession
Of Antonio Bologna – please you bestow them on me.

PESCARA

You are my friend; but this is such a suit,
Nor fit for me to give, nor you to take.

DELIO

No, sir?

PESCARA

I will give you ample reason for 't
Soon in private: here 's the cardinal's mistress.

[Enter JULIA.]

JULIA

My lord, I am grown your poor petitioner,
And should be an ill beggar, had I not
A great man's letter here, the cardinal's,
To court you in my favour.

PESCARA

He entreats for you
The Citadel of Saint Bennet, that belong'd
To the banish'd Bologna.

JULIA

Yes.

PESCARA

I could not have thought of a friend I could rather
Pleasure with it: 'tis yours.

JULIA

Sir, I thank you;
And he shall know how doubly I am engag'd
Both in your gift, and speediness of giving
Which makes your grant the greater.

[Exit JULIA.]

DELIO

Sir, I am little bound to you.

PESCARA

Why?

DELIO

Because you denied this suit to me, and gave 't
To such a creature.

PESCARA

Do you know what it was?
It was Antonio's land; not forfeited
By course of law, but ravish'd from his throat
By the cardinal's entreaty. It were not fit
I should bestow so main a piece of wrong
Upon my friend; 'tis a gratification
Only due to a strumpet, for it is injustice.
Shall I sprinkle the pure blood of innocents
To make those followers I call my friends
Look ruddier upon me? I am glad
This land, ta'en from the owner by such wrong,
Returns again unto so foul an use
As salary for his lust. Learn, good Delio,
To ask noble things of me, and you shall find
I 'll be a noble giver.

DELIO

You instruct me well.