DRAMATIS PERSONAE

VOLPONE, a Magnifico.
MOSCA, his Parasite.
VOLTORE, an Advocate.
CORBACCIO, an old Gentleman.
CORVINO, a Merchant.
BONARIO, son to Corbaccio.
COMMANDADORI, Officers of the Court.
1 AVOCATORE, a Magistrate.
2 AVOCATORE, a Magistrate.
3 AVOCATORE, a Magistrate.
4 AVOCATORE, a Magistrate.
NOTARY, the Registar.
CElia, Corvino's Wife.
SERVANT.
NARRATOR.
SOUND EFFECTS.

SCENE: VENICE.

THE ARGUMENT.

V olpone, childless, rich, feigns sick, despairs,
O ffers his state to hopes of several heirs,
L ies languishing: his parasite receives
P resents of all, assures, deludes; then weaves
O ther cross plots, which ope themselves, are told.
N ew tricks for safety are sought; they thrive: when bold,
E ach tempts the other again, and all are sold.

ACT 1. SCENE 1.

A ROOM IN VOLPONE'S HOUSE. ENTER VOLPONE AND MOSCA.

VOLPONE:
Good morning to the day; and next, my gold:
Open the shrine, that I may see my Saint.

[Mosca withdraws the curtain, and reveals piles of gold]
Hail the world's soul, and mine!...O thou son of Sol,
But brighter than thy father, let me kiss,
With adoration, thee, and every relic
Of sacred treasure, in this blessed room.
Dear saint, riches, the dumb God, that gives all men tongues;
That canst do nothing, and yet makes men do all things;
....Thou art virtue, fame, honor, and all things else.
Whoe'er gets thee, he shall be noble, valiant, honest, wise,—

MOSCA:
And what he will, sir. Riches are
A greater good than wisdom is in nature.

VOLPONE:
True, my beloved Mosca. Yet I glory
More in the cunning purchase of my wealth,
Than in the glad possession, since I gain
No common way. I use no trade, no venture.

MOSCA:
You will not lie in straw, whilst moths and worms
Feed on your sumptuous hangings and soft beds.
You know the use of riches, and dare give now
From that bright heap to me, your poor observer.

VOLPONE:
What should I do, Mosca, but live free
To all delights my fortune calls me to?
I have no wife, no parent, child, ally,
To give my substance to; but whom I choose
Must be my heir; and this makes men observe me,
This draws new clients daily to my house,
Who bring me presents, with hope that when I die,
It shall then return ten-fold upon them.
All which I suffer, playing with their hopes,
And am content to coin them into profit,
Letting the cherry knock against their lips,
And draw it by their mouths, and back again.–
How now! [SOUND EFFECT: Knocking outside.]
Who's that? Look, Mosca.

MOSCA:
'Tis Signior Voltore, the advocate.
VOLPONE:
Fetch me my gown and night-cap; say, my couch is changing,
And let him entertain himself awhile in the gallery. [Exit Mosca.]
Now, now, my clients
Begin their visitation! Vulture, kite,
Raven, crow, all my birds of prey,
That thinking I turn carcass, now they come–
[Re-enter Mosca, with a nightgown and cap.]
How now! the news?

MOSCA:
A piece of plate, sir.

VOLPONE:
How big?

MOSCA:
Huge, massy, and antique, with your name inscribed.

VOLPONE:
Good! Give me my gown. [Puts on his sick dress.]
Why dost thou laugh so, man?

MOSCA:
I cannot choose, sir, when I think about
What thoughts he has outside now:
That this might be the last gift he should give;
...If you died to-day,
And gave him all, what he should be tomorrow;
How he should be worship'd and reverenced,
Called the great and learned advocate.

VOLPONE:
My cap, good Mosca. Fetch him in.
Hurry, hurry: I long to have possession
Of my new present.

MOSCA:
That, and thousands more,
I hope, to see you lord of.
And that, when I am long dead,
You shall live forever to delude these harpies.
VOLPONE:
Loving Mosca! Let him enter. [Exit Mosca.]
Now, my fained cough, my apoplexy, and my gout,
Help this my pretense,
Wherein, this three year, I have milked their hopes.
He comes. I hear him - Uh! [coughing.] uh! uh! uh! O-

[Re-enter Mosca, introducing Voltore, with a massive antique plate.]

MOSCA:
Only you, of all the rest, commands his love,
And you do wisely to preserve it thus,
With early visitation and kind notes
Of your good meaning to him, which, I know,
Cannot but come most grateful. [yelling] Patron! sir!
Here's signior Voltore is come -

VOLPONE [faintly, pretending to be deaf]:
What say you?

MOSCA:
Sir, signior Voltore is come this morning
To visit you, and hath brought
A piece of antique plate, bought in St. Mark,
With which he here presents you.

VOLPONE:
He is welcome.
Pray him to come more often.

MOSCA:
Yes.

VOLTORE:
What says he?

MOSCA:
He thanks you, and desires you see him often.

VOLPONE:
Mosca.

MOSCA:
Sir?

VOLPONE:
Bring him near. I long to feel his hand.

VOLTORE:
How fare you, sir?

VOLPONE:
I thank you, signior Voltore;
Where is the plate? mine eyes are bad.

VOLTORE [putting the plate into his hands]:
I'm sorry to see you still thus weak.

MOSCA [snide, aside.]:
That he's not weaker.

VOLPONE:
You are too generous. Be not far from me.

MOSCA:
[To Voltore] Do you observe that, sir?

VOLPONE:
I cannot now last long–

MOSCA:
You are his heir, sir.

VOLTORE:
Am I?

VOLPONE: I feel me going. [coughs]

MOSCA:
Alas, kind gentleman! Well, we must all go–

VOLTORE:
But, Mosca– am I inscribed his heir for certain?

MOSCA:
Confirm'd:
The ink is scarce dry upon the parchment.

VOLTORE:
Happy, happy, me!
By what good chance, sweet Mosca?

MOSCA:
Your deserving, sir.
I oft have heard him say, how he admired
Men of your profession who could speak
To every cause till they were hoarse again;
Who give forked counsel; take gold on either hand.
These men, he knew, would thrive.
And, for his part, he thought he should be blest
To have his heir of such a spirit,
So wise, so grave....when every word
Your worship but lets fall is a coin!– [SOUND EFFECT: Knocking outside.]
Who's that?! I would not have you seen, sir.
And yet...pretend you came, and went in haste:
I'll fashion an excuse.... And, sir,
When you do come to swim in golden lard,
Up to the arms in honey, think on me.

VOLTORE:
Mosca!–

MOSCA:
When will you have your inventory brought, sir?
Or see a copy of the will? Soon
I will bring them to you, sir. Away, be gone.

[Exit Voltore.]

VOLPONE [springing up.]:
Excellent Mosca!
Come here, let me kiss thee.

MOSCA:
Keep you still, sir. here is Corbaccio.

VOLPONE:
Set the plate away:
The vulture's gone, and the old raven's come!
MOSCA:
Betake you to your silence, and your sleep:
Now, shall we see
A wretch who is indeed more impotent
Than Volpone can feign to be— [Enter Corbaccio.]
Signior Corbaccio! You're very welcome, sir.

CORBACCIO:
How does your patron?

MOSCA:
Truth, as he did, sir; no amends.

CORBACCIO:
[Corbaccio misunderstands and is alarmed] What! mends he?

MOSCA:
No, sir: he's rather worse.

CORBACCIO:
That's well. Where is he?

MOSCA:
Upon his couch sir, newly fallen asleep.

CORBACCIO:
Does he sleep well?

MOSCA:
No w ink, sir, all this night.

CORBACCIO:
Good! I have brought him
An opiate here, from mine own doctor.

MOSCA:
He will not hear of drugs.

CORBACCIO:
'Tis but to make him sleep.

MOSCA [aside.]:
Ay, his last sleep, if he would take it.
[To Corbaccio] Sir, he has no faith in medicine.

CORBACCIO:
[not hearing] 'Say you?

MOSCA:
[louder] He has no faith in medicine; he does think
Most of your doctors are the greater danger,
Worse than disease, to escape.

CORBACCIO:
How does his apoplexy?

MOSCA:
Most violent. [Volpone coughs.]
His speech is broken, and his eyes are set,
His face drawn longer than 'twas wont–

CORBACCIO:
O, good!

MOSCA:
A freezing numbness stiffens all his joints.

CORBACCIO:
[increasingly pleased] 'Tis good.
Has he made his will? What has he given me?

MOSCA:
He has not made his will, sir.

CORBACCIO:
But what was Voltore the lawyer doing here?

MOSCA:
He smelt a carcass, sir, when he but heard
My master was about his testament–

CORBACCIO:
I thought so.

MOSCA:
Yes, and presented him this piece of plate.
CORBACCIO:
To be his heir?

MOSCA:
I do not know, sir.

CORBACCIO:
Well, I shall prevent him. See, Mosca, [offers a purse of money: SOUND EFFECT: jingle]
Here, I have brought a bag of bright coins,
Will quite weigh down his plate.

MOSCA [taking the purse]:
Yea, marry, sir, here is true medicine!
I will so advise you so you shall have it all.
This fit he shall recover, and, on first advantage
Of his gain'd sense, will I ask him again
About the making of his testament,
And show him this. [pointing to the money.]

CORBACCIO:
Good.

MOSCA:
Now make you home with speed;
There, frame a will whereto you shall inscribe
My master your sole heir.

CORBACCIO:
And disinherit my son?!

MOSCA:
O, sir, the better, for that
Shall make it much more taking.
This will, sir, you shall send it unto me.
Now, when I come to endorse you, I will produce your will.
He cannot be so stupid,
But out of conscience and gratitude–

CORBACCIO:
He must pronounce me his?

MOSCA:
'Tis true.
CORBACCIO:
This plot did I think on before.

MOSCA:
Which, when he hath publish'd you his heir,
And you so certain to survive him,
Being so lusty a man– [Corbaccio is increasingly delighted]:
You have not only done yourself good...

CORBACCIO:
...But multiplied it on my son!

MOSCA:
Exactly, sir. Heaven knows,
You are he for whom I labor here.

CORBACCIO:
Ay, do. I'll go straight about it. [Going.]

MOSCA:
Your worship is a precious ass!

CORBACCIO:
[not hearing] What say'st thou?

MOSCA:
I do desire your worship to make haste, sir.

CORBACCIO:
'Tis done, 'tis done, I go. [Exit.]

VOLPONE [leaping from his couch, laughing]:
O, I shall burst!

MOSCA:
Contain your laughter, sir: you know this hope
Is such a bait that it covers any hook.

VOLPONE:
O, but thy working and thy placing it!
I cannot hold; good rascal, let me kiss thee.

MOSCA:
Sir, I but do as I am taught;
Follow your grave instructions;
Pour oil into their ears, and send them hence.

VOLPONE:
'Tis true, 'tis true. What a rare punishment
Is avarice to itself!

MOSCA:
Ay, with our help.

VOLPONE: [SOUND EFFECT: knocking inside.]
Who's that there, now? a third?

MOSCA:
To your couch again; I hear his voice:
It is Corvino, our spruce merchant.

[Volpone lies down as before; enter Corvino.]

MOSCA:
Signior Corvino! O,
How happy were you, if you knew it, now!

CORVINO:
Why?

MOSCA:
The hour is come, sir.

CORVINO:
He is not dead?

MOSCA:
Not dead, sir, but just as good;
He knows no man.

CORVINO:
How shall I do then?
I have brought him here a pearl.

MOSCA:
Perhaps he has
So much remembrance left, as to know you, sir: He still calls on you... Is your pearl orient, sir?

CORVINO:
Venice was never known one like it.

VOLPONE (faintly):
Signior Corvino.

MOSCA:
He calls you; step and give it him.– [To Volpone] He's here, sir, And he has brought you a rich pearl.

CORVINO:
How do you, sir?
[to Mosca] Tell him, it doubles twelve carats.

MOSCA:
Sir, he cannot understand, his hearing's gone; And yet it comforts him to see you–

CORVINO:
'Las! How pitiful the sight is!

MOSCA:
Tut! The weeping of an heir should ever be laughter Under a mask.

CORVINO:
Why, am I his heir?

MOSCA:
Sir, I am sworn, I may not show the will Till he be dead. But here have been Corbaccio, Voltore, others too, they were so many, All grasping here for legacies. But I took Paper, and pen, and ink, and there I asked him, Whom he would have his heir? "Corvino," said he. To any question he was silent to, I interpreted the nods he made For consent, and sent home th' others, Nothing bequeath'd them, but to cry and curse.
CORVINO:
O, my dear Mosca! [They embrace.]
Does he not perceive us?

MOSCA:
No more than a blind harper. He knows no man,
No face of friend, nor name of any servant,
Who 'twas that fed him last, or gave him drink.

CORVINO:
Art sure he does not hear us?

MOSCA:
Sure, sir! why, look you,
[shouting in Volpone's ear.]
The pox add to your diseases,
If it would send you hence the sooner, sir,
[To Corvino] You may come near, sir.— Nay help, sir—

CORVINO:
Your nose is like a common sewer, ever running.
[Enjoying himself] Mosca!
Thou art my friend, my fellow, my companion,
My partner, and shalt share in all my fortunes.

MOSCA:
Excepting one.

CORVINO:
What's that?

MOSCA:
Your gallant wife, sir,—
[They laugh tensely. Exit Corvino.]

VOLPONE: My divine Mosca!
Thou hast today outdone thyself. [SOUND EFFECT: knocking outside.]
—Who's there? I will be troubled with no more. [Exit Mosca.]
Let me see; a pearl! Plate! Coins!
Why, this is better than rob churches. [Re-enter Mosca.]
Who is't?

MOSCA:
The beauteous lady Would-Be, sir.  
She hath not yet the face to be dishonest.  
But had she signior Corvino's wife's face—

VOLPONE:  
Has she so rare a face?  

MOSCA:  
O, sir, the wonder, the blazing star of Italy!  
Her skin is whiter than a swan all over!  A soft lip  
That would tempt you to eternity of kissing!  
Bright as your gold, and lovely as your gold!  

VOLPONE:  
Why had not I known this before?  

MOSCA:  
Alas, sir, myself but yesterday discover'd it.  

VOLPONE:  
How might I see her?  

MOSCA:  
O, not possible;  
She's kept as warily as is your gold;  
Never does come abroad, but at a window.  

VOLPONE:  
I will go see her.  

MOSCA:  
In some disguise, then.  

VOLPONE:  
True;  let's think.  

[EXEUNT.]  

NARRATOR:  
Volpone, disguised as the famous mountebank Scoto of Mantua, hawks a fake cure-all under the window of Corvino's apartment.  A crowd gathers, and Celia watches Volpone's sale pitch from the window above.  When Volpone offers a cheap sample and a bonus elixir, Celia drops her handkerchief to take advantage.  Corvino, enraged, sees this, and chases Volpone away, beating
him.

ACT 2, SCENE 2.

A ROOM IN VOLPONE’S HOUSE. ENTER VOLPONE AND MOSCA.

VOLPONE:
O, I am wounded!

MOSCA:
Where, sir?

VOLPONE:
Not outside. Those blows were nothing; I could bear them ever. But angry Cupid, bolting from her eyes, Hath shot himself into me like a flame; Where, now, he flings about his burning heat.

MOSCA:
Sir, I'm bound in conscience to effect Your release of torment, and I will, sir.

VOLPONE:
O, there spoke my better angel. Mosca, take my keys, My gold, all's at thy discretion, So thou but fill my longings, Mosca.

[Exeunt.]

ACT 2, SCENE 3.

A ROOM IN CORVINO’S HOUSE. ENTER CORVINO, WITH HIS SWORD IN HIS HAND, DRAGGING IN CELIA.

CORVINO [raging]:
Death of mine honour, with a prating mountebank! And at a public window!

CELIA:
Alas, sir, be appeas'd! I could not think My being at the window should now Move your impatience.
CORVINO:
To seek a parley with a known knave, before a multitude!
You were an actor with your handkerchief,
Which he most sweetly kissed and might return with a letter,
And appoint the place where you might meet.

CELIA:
Why, dear sir, when do I ever stir abroad, but to the church?

CORVINO:
Well, it shall be less; therefore mark me.
First, I will have this bawdy window damm'd up;
And till then, some two or three yards off,
I'll chalk a line, o'er which if thou but chance
To set thy foot, more hell, more horror shall seize on thee,
Than on a conjurer with a devil. [SOUND EFFECT: Knocking outside.]
Away, and be not seen, on pain of thy life;
Nor look toward the window: if thou dost–
Nay, hear this– I will dissect thee mine own self, and in public.
Away! [Exit Celia. Enter Servant.]
Who's there?

SERVANT:
'Tis signior Mosca, sir.

CORVINO:
Let him come in. [Exit Servant.] 
(Aside) His master's dead!
[Enter Mosca.] My Mosca, welcome! I guess your news.

MOSCA:
I fear you cannot, sir.

CORVINO:
Is't not his death?

MOSCA:
Rather the contrary.

CORVINO:
Not his recovery?

MOSCA:
Yes, sir.

CORVINO:  
How?

MOSCA:  
Why, sir, with Scoto's oil.  
Corbaccio and Voltore brought of it,  
Whilst I was busy in an inner room—

CORVINO:  
That damn'd mountebank!  
It cannot be his oil should have that power.

MOSCA:  
I know not, sir, but some of it  
They pour'd into his ears and recover'd him.

CORVINO:  
Pox o' them!

MOSCA:  
They have had the college of physicians  
Consulting how he might recover.  
They all resolved that to restore him, there was no other means  
But some young woman must be straight sought out,  
Lusty, full of juice, to sleep by him.  
And to this service am I now employ'd,  
For your counsel. They are all now striving, who shall first present him.  
Therefore prevent them if you can.

CORVINO:  
Death to my hopes!  
Best to hire some common courtesan.

MOSCA:  
Ay, I thought on that, sir. But they are all so full  
Of art that we may perchance hire a whore may cheat us all.

CORVINO:  
'Tis true.

MOSCA:  

No, no: it must be one that has no tricks, sir,
Some simple thing, some wench you may command.
Think, sir. One o' the doctors offer'd up his daughter.

CORVINO:
How!

MOSCA:
And a virgin, sir. Besides, who shall know about it?

CORVINO:
I prithee give me leave. [walks aside.]
If any man but I had had this luck– The thing in itself,
I know, is nothing– In the point of honor,
The cases are all one of wife and daughter.

MOSCA [aside]:
I hear him coming.

CORVINO:
She shall do't. 'Tis done. Mosca, I have determined.
The party you wot of shall be mine own wife.

MOSCA:
Sir, the thing, but that I would not seem to counsel you,
I should have said to you at the first!

CORVINO:
Well, I'll be brief. Go home, tell him with what zeal
I do it; swear it was on the first hearing mine own notion.

MOSCA:
Sir, I warrant you,
I'll so possess him with it, that the rest
Of his clients shall be banish'd all,
And only you received. But come not, sir,
Until I send, for I have something else
To ripen for your good. You must not know it. [Exit.]

CORVINO:
Where are you, wife? my Celia? [Re-enter Celia, crying.]
Come, dry those tears. I think thou thought'st me in earnest;
Ha! I talk'd so but to try thee:
Come, I am not jealous.

CELIA:  
No!?

CORVINO:  
'Faith, I am not, nor never was.  
Come kiss me. Go make thee ready, 
In all thy best attire, thy choicest jewels; 
We are invited to a solemn feast, 
At old Volpone's, where it shall appear 
How far I am free from jealousy or fear.

[Exeunt.]

ACT 3. SCENE 3.  

A STREET. ENTER MOSCA.

MOSCA:  
I fear I shall begin to grow in love 
With my dear self. I can feel  
A whimsy in my blood: I know not how, 
Success hath made me wanton. O! your parasite  
Is a most precious thing, dropped from heav'n. 
Your fine elegant rascal that can rise,  
And stoop almost together like an arrow; 
Turn short as doth a swallow; and be here,  
And there, and here, and yonder, all at once; 
Present to any humor, all occasion;  
And change his face swifter than a thought! 
This is the creature had the art born with him; 
Who doth practice it out of most excellent nature: 
Such are the true parasites.

[Enter Bonario.]

MOSCA:  
Who's this? Bonario, old Corbaccio's son?  
–Sir, you are happily met.

BONARIO:  
That cannot be by thee.
MOSCA:
Why, sir?

BONARIO:
Leave me. I would be loth to discourse
With such as thou art.

MOSCA:
Sir, scorn not my poverty.

BONARIO:
No, I hate thy baseness.

MOSCA:
Baser ness! Though your sentence may be righteous, yet
St. Mark bear witness 'gainst you, 'tis inhuman. [weeps]

BONARIO [aside]:
What! does he weep? I do repent me that I was so harsh.
Prithee, forgive me: and speak out thy business.

MOSCA:
Sir, it concerns you. This very hour
Your father is in purpose to disinherit you–

BONARIO:
How!

MOSCA:
'Tis true, sir. This news no way engageth me, but, as
I claim an interest in the general state
Of virtue, which I hear abounds in you,
I have done it.

BONARIO:
It is impossible my father should be so unnatural.

MOSCA:
It is a confidence that well becomes
Your simple innocence. This very minute,
It is or will be doing, and if you
Shall be pleas'd to go with me, I'll bring you where
You shall hear yourself proclaimed bastard.

BONARIO:
I am amazed!

MOSCA:
Sir, if I do it not, draw your just sword,
And score your vengeance on my face.

BONARIO:
Lead. I follow.

[Exeunt.]

ACT 3, SCENE 3.

THE PASSAGE LEADING TO VOLPONE’S CHAMBER. ENTER MOSCA AND BONARIO.

MOSCA:
Sir, here conceal’d, [shows him a closet.]
You may hear all. But, pray you, have patience. [SOUND EFFECT: knocking outside.]
–Your father knocks. I leave you. [Exit.]

BONARIO:
Do so.–Yet,
My thought cannot imagine this a truth.

[Goes into the closet.]

ACT 3, SCENE 4.

ANOTHER PART OF THE SAME HOUSE. ENTER MOSCA AND CORVINO, CELIA FOLLOWING.

MOSCA:
You are come too soon!
Did not I say, I would send?

CORVINO:
Yes, but I fear’d
You might forget it, and then they prevent us.
MOSCA [aside.]:
Did e'er man haste so for his horns?
–[To Corvino] Well, now there's no helping it, stay here.
I'll presently return. [Exit.]

CORVINO:
Where are you, Celia?
You know not why I have brought you hither?

CELIA:
Not well, except you told me.

CORVINO:
Now, I will.

[Exeunt.]

NARRATOR:
Mosca hides Bonario in a closet where he believes Bonario cannot hear. But Bonario doesn't trust Mosca and keeps his ears peeled.

ACT 3, SCENE 6.

VOLPONE’S CHAMBER - VOLPONE ON HIS COUCH. MOSCA SITTING BY HIM. ENTER CORVINO, FORCING IN CELIA.

CELIA:
Sir, let me beseech you,
Affect not these strange trials; if you doubt
My chastity, why, lock me up for ever.

CORVINO:
Believe it, all that I speak I mean.
Go to, show yourself obedient, and a wife.

CELIA:
Before your honour?

CORVINO:
Honour? Tut, a breath, a mere term
Invented to awe fools. What is my gold
The worse, for touching, clothes for being look'd on?
An old decrepit wretch, what can this man hurt you?
Here, 'tis a pious work, mere charity for medicine,
And honest policy to assure mine own.

CELIA:
O heaven!

MOSCA [advancing.]:
[To Corvino] Please you draw near, sir.
[To Volpone] Sir, Signior Corvino is come to see you.
And hearing of the consultation had for your health,
Is come to [clears his throat] offer,
As the true fervent instance of his love,
His own most fair and proper wife,
To be your comfortress and to preserve you.

VOLPONE:
Alas, I am past already! Pray you, thank him
For his good care, but
'Tis a vain labour to fight 'gainst heaven— [coughs weakly.]
Will him to pray for me, and to use his fortune
With reverence when he comes to't.

MOSCA:
Do you hear, sir?
Go to him with your wife.

CORVINO [angrier as Celia resists]:
Wilt thou persist thus? Come, I pray thee, come.
By this hand, I shall grow violent.

CELIA:
Sir, kill me, rather: I will take down poison,
Eat burning coals, do any thing.–

CORVINO [raging]:
Be damn'd! Heart, I'll drag thee hence, home, by the hair;
At my window hang you forth, devising
Some monstrous crime, which I, in capital letters,
Will eat into thy flesh with corrosives on thy breast.
Now, by the blood thou hast incensed, I'll do it!

CELIA:
Sir, what you please, you may. I am your martyr.
CORVINO:
Think who it is entreats you. 'Prithee, sweet;—
Thou shalt have jewels, gowns, attires. Do but go kiss him
For my sake. [she resists] No?! I shall remember this.
Will you disgrace me thus spitefully to affect my ruin?

MOSCA:
Ay, now you have put your fortune in her hands.
If you were absent, she would be more coming.
What woman can before her husband?
Let us depart, and leave her here.

CORVINO:
Sweet Celia, thou may'st redeem all yet.
If not, consider yourself lost.

[Corvino shuts the door, and exit with Mosca. SOUND EFFECT: shutting of door]

CELIA:
O God, and his good angels!
Is modesty an exile made, for money?

VOLPONE [leaping from his couch]:
Ay, in Corvino, and such earth-fed minds
That never tasted the true heaven of love.
Why art thou 'mazed to see me thus revived?
Rather applaud thy beauty that hath
Sundry times raised me in several shapes,
And but this morning, like a mountebank;
To see thee at thy window.

CELIA [amazed, resisting]:
Sir!

VOLPONE:
Nay, fly me not. nor let thy false imagination
That I was bed-rid, make thee think I am so.
I am now as fresh, as hot, as high, and in as jovial plight,
As when I drew the eyes and ears of all the ladies.

CELIA:
Some dire lightning strike my offending face!

VOLPONE:
Why droops my Celia?
Thou hast, in place of a base husband, found
A worthy lover. Use thy fortune well,
With secrecy and pleasure. See what thou art queen of.
See, here, a rope of pearl, and each more orient
Than that the brave Egyptian queen caroused;
Dissolve and drink them. See, a ruby that
May put out both the eyes of our St. Mark;
Take these, and wear, and lose them.

CELIA:
Good sir, these things might move a mind affected
With such delights, but I, whose innocence
Is all I can think worth th' enjoying,
Cannot be taken with these sensual baits.

VOLPONE:
Thy baths shall be the juice of July-flowers,
Spirit of roses, and of violets.
Our drink shall be prepared gold and amber.
We shall in changéd shapes act Ovid's tales,
Thou, like Europa now, and I like Jove,
So, of the rest, till we have wearied all the fables of the gods.
Then will I have thee in more modern forms,
Attired like some sprightly dame of France,
Brave Tuscan lady, or proud Spanish beauty;
And I will meet thee in as many shapes,
Where we may so transfuse our wandering souls,
Out at our lips, and score up sums of pleasures.

CELIA:
If you have a heart that may be touched,
Do me the grace to let me 'scape. If not,
Be bountiful and kill me.
If you will deign me neither of these graces,
Then punish what you miscall my beauty
For seducing your blood to this rebellion–
And I will pray for you, sir, for your health...

VOLPONE:
Think me cold, frozen and impotent?
Yield, or I'll force thee! [Seizes her.]
CELIA:
O!

BONARIO [rushing in]:
Forbear, foul ravisher, libidinous swine!
Free the forced lady, or thou diest, impostor!
Lady, let's quit the place, it is the den
Of villainy. Fear nought, you have a guard.

[Exeunt Bonario and Celia]

VOLPONE:
Fall on me, roof, and bury me in ruin! O!
I am unmask'd, unspirited, undone–

[Enter Mosca, wounded and bleeding.]

MOSCA:
Where shall I run, most wretched shame of men,
To beat out my unlucky brains?

VOLPONE:
Here, here. What! dost thou bleed?

MOSCA:
Who would have thought he would have heard?

VOLPONE:
What shall we do?

MOSCA:
I know not. [SOUND EFFECT: Knocking outside.]

VOLPONE:
Hark! who's there? I hear some officers
Come to apprehend us!

MOSCA:
To your couch, sir, you,
Make that place good, however. [Volpone lies down, as before. Enter Corbaccio.]
Signior Corbaccio!

CORBACCIO:
How now, Mosca?

MOSCA:
O, undone, amazed, sir.
Your son, I know not by what accident,
Acquainted with your purpose to my patron,
Enter'd our house with violence, his sword drawn,
Vowed he would kill you.

CORBACCIO:
Me!

MOSCA:
Yes, and my patron.

CORBACCIO:
This act shall disinherit him indeed.

MOSCA:
'Tis well, sir.

CORBACCIO:
Be you as careful now for me.

[Enter Voltore, behind.]

MOSCA:
My life, sir, is not more tender'd; I am only yours.

VOLTORE [coming forward.]:
This is a knave, I see.

MOSCA [seeing Voltore]:
How! signior Voltore! [aside.] Did he hear me?

VOLTORE:
Parasite!

MOSCA:
O, sir, most timely welcome—

VOLTORE:
Hardly to the discovery of your tricks, I fear.
You are his only? And mine, also?

MOSCA [flustered]:
Who? I, sir?

VOLTORE [indignant]:
You, sir. What is this about a will?

MOSCA:
A plot for you, sir. Did you not hear it?

VOLTORE:
Yes, I hear Corbaccio
Hath made your patron there his heir.

MOSCA [scrambling to make up a story]:
'Tis true, for your good, I did, sir.
Nay, more, I brought his son, hid him here,
Where he might hear his father pass the deed,
So that the unnaturalness of the act,
Would sure enrage him
To do some violence upon his parent,
On which the law should take sufficient hold,
And you be instated in hope–

VOLTORE [convinced by this lie]:
I cry thee mercy, Mosca.

MOSCA [compounding the lie]:
You must help, sir.
Whilst we expected the old raven, in comes
Corvino's wife, sent hither by her husband.
The youth he rushes forth, wounds me,
Makes the lady swear my patron to have done her rape–

[VOLTORE, pretending to be ill] Which how unlike it is, you see! And hence,
With that pretext he's gone to accuse his father,
Defame my patron, defeat you–

VOLTORE:
Where is her husband?

MOSCA:
Sir, I'll go fetch him.
VOLTORE:  
Bring him to court.

MOSCA:  
O you do nobly, sir.  
Alas, 'twas labor'd all, sir, for your good;  
But fortune can o'erthrow  
The projects of a hundred learned men.

VOLTORE [To Corbaccio]:  
Will't please you, sir, to go along?  [Exit Corbaccio, followed by Voltore.]

MOSCA:  
Patron, go in, and pray for our success.

VOLPONE [rising from his couch, kissing Mosca]:  
Heaven your labour bless!

[Exeunt.]

ACT 4. SCENE 2.

*THE SCRUTINEO, OR SENATE-HOUSE. ENTER VOLTORE, CORBACCIO, CORVINO, AND MOSCA.*

VOLTORE:  
Well, now you know the carriage of the business,  
Your constancy is all that is required.

MOSCA:  
Is the lie safely convey'd amongst us?

CORVINO:  
Yes.

MOSCA:  
Then shrink not. [To Voltores] Worshipful sir,  
Mercury sit upon your thundering tongue,  
To beat flat, as with a tempest, our adversaries.

VOLTORE:  
Here they come. Have done.
[Enter Avocatori and take their seats. Bonario, Celia, Notary, and officers of the court enter and take their places. SOUND EFFECT: Commotion, "Hear ye, Hear ye!"]

1 AVOCATORE: The like of this the senate never heard of.

2 AVOCATORE: 'Twill come most strange to them when we report it.

4 AVOCATORE: The gentlewoman has been ever held of unreproved name.

3 AVOCATORE: So has the youth.

4 AVOCATORE: The more unnatural part that of his father.

2 AVOCATORE: More of the husband.

3 AVOCATORE: Appear yet those were cited?

NOTARY: All, but the old magnifico, Volpone.

1 AVOCATORE: Why is not he here?

MOSCA: Please your fatherhoods, Here is his advocate: himself's so weak–

4 AVOCATORE: What are you?

BONARIO: His parasite. I beseech the court Volpone may be forced to come that you May bear strong witness of his strange impostures.

VOLTORE: 
Upon my credit with your virtues,  
He is not able to endure the air.

2 AVOCATORE [forcefully, a command]:  
Bring him, however.

VOLTORE:  
Your fatherhoods' fit pleasures be obey'd;  
[Exeunt Officers.]  
But sure, the sight will rather move your pities,  
Than indignation. May it please the court,  
In the mean time, he may be heard in me.

3 AVOCATORE:  
Speak free.

VOLTORE:  
Then know, most honour'd fathers, I must now  
Discover to your abused ears,  
The most prodigious piece of solid impudence,  
That ever nature yet brought forth. This lewd woman  
Hath long been known a close adulteress,  
To that lascivious youth there; not suspected,  
I say, but known, and taken in the act  
With him, and by this man, the easy husband,  
Pardon'd; whose timeless bounty makes him now  
Stand here innocent. This gentleman, the father,  
Hearing of this foul fact,  
His son's ills growing to that strange flood,  
At last decreed to disinherit him.

1 AVOCATORE:  
These be strange turns!

2 AVOCATORE:  
The young man's fame was ever fair and honest.

VOLTORE:  
So much more full of danger is his vice,  
That can beguile so under shade of virtue.  
But, my honour'd sires, that parricide  
Enter'd Volpone's house, there sought his father:–  
But with what purpose sought he him, my lords?  
I tremble to pronounce it—it was to murder him!
When being prevented by his lucky absence,
What then did he? He dragged forth
The aged gentleman that had there lain bed-rid,
Naked upon the floor, there left him; wounded
His servant in the face; and, with this strumpet
Thought to redeem themselves
By laying infamy upon this man.

1 AVOCATORE:
What proofs have you of this?

BONARIO:
Most honoured fathers, this fellow,
For six coins more, would plead against his Maker.

1 AVOCATORE:
You do forget yourself.

VOLTORE:
Nay, nay, grave fathers,
Let him have scope. Can any man imagine
That he will spare his accuser who would not
Have spared his parent?

1 AVOCATORE:
Well, produce your proofs.

CELIA:
I would I could forget I were a creature.

VOLTORE:
Signior Corbaccio.

[Corbaccio comes forward.]

1 AVOCATORE:
What is he?

VOLTORE:
The father.

CORBACCIO:
[doddering] What must I do now?
NOTARY:
Your testimony's craved.

CORBACCIO:
[misunderstands] Speak to the knave?
I'll have my mouth first stopped with earth.

1 AVOCATORE:
But for what cause?

CORBACCIO:
He is an utter stranger to my loins.

BONARIO:
Have they made you to this?

CORBACCIO:
Monster of men, parricide, speak not, thou viper!

BONARIO:
Sir, I will sit down,
And rather wish my innocence should suffer
Than I resist the authority of a father.

VOLTORE:
Signior Corvino!

[Corvino comes forward.]

2 AVOCATORE:
This is strange.

1 AVOCATORE:
Who's this?

NOTARY:
The husband.

3 AVOCATORE:
Speak, then.

CORVINO:
This woman, please your fatherhoods, is a whore—
1 AVOCATORE [horrified]:
Preserve the honour of the court!

CORVINO:
I shall,
And modesty of your most reverend ears.
And yet I hope that I may say, these eyes
Have seen her glued unto that well-timber'd gallant.

MOSCA [aside to Corvino, enjoying his humiliation]:
Excellent, sir!

CORVINO [aside to Mosca.]:
There's no shame in this now, is there?

MOSCA:
None.

3 AVOCATORE:
His grief hath made him frantic.

1 AVOCATORE:
Remove him hence.

2 AVOCATORE:
Look to the woman.

CELIA [swooning]:
Oooh!

CORVINO:
Prettily feign'd!

4 AVOCATORE:
Give her air.

3 AVOCATORE [To Mosca.]:
What can you say?

MOSCA:
My wound,
May it please your wisdoms, speaks for me, received
In aid of my good patron, when he missed
His sought-for father, when that well-taught dame
Had her cue given her to cry out, "A rape!"

BONARIO:
O most laid impudence! Fathers–

3 AVOCATORE:
Sir, be silent;
You had your hearing, so must they theirs.

VOLTORE:
Grave fathers,
She is a creature of a most professed
And prostituted lewdness. May her feignings
Not take your wisdoms. This very day she baited
A stranger with her loose eyes and lascivious kisses.

[Re-enter Officers, bearing Volpone on a couch.  SOUND EFFECT: commotion.]

VOLTORE:
Here, the testimony comes that will convince.
[mockingly]  See here, grave fathers, here's the ravisher,
The great impostor!
O, my most equal hearers, if these
Acts of this bold and most exorbitant strain
May pass with sufferance, which of you
Are safe, my honour'd fathers?

1 AVOCATORE:
Take them to custody, and separate them.

2 AVOCATORE:
'Tis pity two such prodigies should live.

1 AVOCATORE:
Let the old gentleman be return'd with care.  [Exeunt Officers with Volpone.]

4 AVOCATORE:
These are two creatures!

2 AVOCATORE:
Their shame, even in their cradles, fled their faces.
AVOCATORE [To Voltore]:
You have done a worthy service to the state, sir,
In their discovery.

AVOCATORE:
You shall hear before night
What punishment the court decrees.

[Exeunt Avocatori, Notary, and Officers with Bonario and Celia. SOUND EFFECT: commotion]

VOLTORE:
We thank your fatherhoods. [To Mosca]–How like you it?

MOSCA:
Rare. I'd have your tongue, sir, tipped with gold for this.
Signior Corvino, I would have you go
And show yourself that you have conquer'd.
It was much better that you should profess
Yourself a cuckold thus, than that the other
Should have been proved.

CORVINO:
Nay, I consider'd that. Now it is her fault. [Exit.]

CORBACCIO:
Mosca!

MOSCA:
Now for your business, sir.

CORBACCIO:
How! have you business?

MOSCA:
Yes, yours, sir.

CORBACCIO:
Dispatch it. [Exit.]

MOSCA [aside]:
What strange offence did he commit
'Gainst nature, in his youth, worthy this age?
[To Voltore]—You see, sir, how I work
Unto your ends. Take you no notice.

VOLTORE:
No, I'll leave you.

[Exeunt.]

ACT 5. SCENE 1.

A ROOM IN VOLPONE'S HOUSE. ENTER VOLPONE.

VOLPONE:
Well, I am here, and all this brunt is past.
I ne'er was in dislike with my disguise
Till this moment. Here, in private, 'twas good,
But in public, whilst I breathe,
'Fore God, my left leg began to have the cramp.
Well! I must be merry and shake it off.
Give me a bowl of lusty wine, to fright
This humour from my heart. [drinks.]
Hum, hum! 'Tis almost gone already.
Any device of rare ingenious knavery
Would wake me up again. [drinks again.]
Mosca!

[Enter Mosca.]

MOSCA:
How now, sir? does the day look clear again?
Was it not carried learnedly?
Here we must rest; this is our master-piece.

VOLPONE:
[Wondering at his victims' stupidity] That these, being so divided 'mongst themselves,
Should not doubt their own side!

MOSCA:
True, they will not see't.
Each of them is so possessed with his own hopes,
That anything unto the contrary,
However so true, they will resist it–
VOLPONE:
I will begin even now to vex them all. [*Enter Two Servants*] Go,
Straight give out about the streets, you two,
That I am dead. Impute it to the grief
Of this late slander.

SERVANTS:
Yes, sir.

[*Exeunt Servants.*]

MOSCA:
What do you mean, sir?

VOLPONE:
I shall have instantly my Vulture, Crow,
Raven, come flying hither on the news,
Greedy, and full of expectation.
I will have thee put on a gown, as thou wert mine heir:
Show them a will with your name on't.

MOSCA:
It will be rare, sir. [*putting on a gown.*]

VOLPONE:
[*giving him a paper*] Here's my will.
Get thee a cap, a count-book, pen and ink,
Papers afore thee. Sit as thou wert making
An inventory. I'll get behind the curtain, and hearken.
O, 'twill afford me a rare meal of laughter!

MOS [*putting on a cap, and setting out the table; SOUND EFFECT: knocking outside.*]
Hark, there's some already.
[*Looks*] It is the Vulture:
He has the quickest scent.

VOLPONE: I'll to my place, thou to thy posture.
[*goes behind the curtain.*]
Mosca, torture them rarely.

[*Enter Voltore.*]

VOLTORE:
How now, my Mosca?

MOSCA [as he writes; throughout Mosca ignores the gathering men]:
"Turkish carpets, nine"-

VOLTORE:
Taking an inventory! that is well.

MOSCA:
"Two suits of bedding"-

VOLTORE:
Where's the Will? Let me read it.

[Enter two Servants, with Corbaccio in a chair. Exeunt Servants.]

VOLTORE:
Is he come now to trouble us!

MOSCA:
"Of cloth of gold, two more"-

CORBACCIO:
Is it done, Mosca?

VOLTORE:
Dost thou not hear?

[Enter Corvino.]

CORBACCIO:
Ha! is the hour come, Mosca?

VOLPONE [peeping over the curtain.]:
Ay, now, they gather.

CORVINO:
What does the advocate here, or Corbaccio?

CORBACCIO:
What do these here?

CORVINO:
Mosca, the Will,
That I may show it these, and rid them hence.

MOSCA:
"Six chests of diaper."– There. [Gives them the will carelessly, over his shoulder.]

CORBACCIO:
Is that the will?

MOSCA:
"Down-beds..."-

VOLPONE:
Look, see! How their swift eyes
Run over the long deed unto the name,
What is bequeath'd them there–

VOLTORE [shocked]:
Mosca the heir?!

CORBACCIO [not hearing Voltore, he takes the will]:
All these are out of hope. I am sure, the man.

CORVINO:
But, Mosca–

MOSCA:
"Two cabinets."

CORVINO:
Is this in earnest? Or do you but delude me?

MOSCA:
I am very busy.
It is a fortune thrown upon me–
"Item, one agate"–not my seeking.
Tomorrow I shall be at leisure to talk with you all.

CORVINO:
Mosca, 'pray you a word.

MOSCA [contemptuously]:
Lord! Will you not take your dispatch hence?
Methinks, of all, you should have been the example.
Why should you stay here?
Hear you; do not you know that you are
A declared cuckold?
Go home, be melancholy too, or mad. [Exit Corvino.]

VOLTORE:
Certain he doth delude all these for me.

VOLPONE [As Volpone watches Corbaccio read the will]:
O, his four eyes have found it.

CORBACCIO [shocked]:
Mosca the heir!

MOSCA [contemptuously]:
Yes, sir. Are not you he that have today in court
Profess'd the disinheriting of your son?
Perjured yourself? Go home, and die, and stink.
If you but croak a syllable, all comes out:
Away! [Exit Corbaccio.]

VOLPONE:
Excellent varlet!

VOLTORE:
Now, my faithful Mosca, I find thy constancy.

MOSCA [as he writes, contemptuously]:
"A table of porphyry"-I marvel,
You'll be thus troublesome.

VOLTORE:
Nay, you can leave off now, they are gone.

MOSCA:
What! Who did send for you? I am grieved for you,
That any chance of mine should thus defeat
Your most deserving travails,
But I protest, sir, this was cast upon me.
Marry, my joy is that you need it not.
You have a gift, sir, will never let you want,
While there are men and malice to breed causes.
In mean time, good sir, I thank you for my plate.  [Exit Voltore.]

VOLPONE [comes from behind the curtain, laughing.]:
My witty mischief, let me embrace thee.  Mosca, go,
And walk the streets.  Be seen, torment them more!
That I could now but think on some disguise
To meet them in, and ask them questions:
How I would vex them at every turn!

MOSCA:
Sir, I can fit you.  I know one o' the commandatori;
Him will I straight make drunk, and bring you his clothes.

VOLPONE:
A rare disguise!  O, I will be a sharp disease unto them.

[Exeunt.]

ACT 5. SCENE 3.

A ROOM IN VOLPONE’S HOUSE.  ENTER MOSCA IN THE HABIT OF A
CLARISSIMO;  AND VOLPONE IN THAT OF A COMMANDADORE.

VOLPONE:
Am I like him?

MOSCA:
O, sir, you are he.  But what am I?

VOLPONE:
'Fore heaven, a brave clarissimo!
Pity thou wert not born one.

MOSCA [offended, aside.]:
If I hold my made one, 'twill be well.

VOLPONE:
I'll see what news first at the court.  [Exit.]

MOSCA [sinister]:
Do so. My Fox is out of his hole, and before he shall re-enter,
I'll bury him or gain by him: I am his heir,
And so will keep me, till he share at least.
This is call'd the Fox-trap. [Exit.]

NARRATOR:
Volpone's public taunting of Voltore, Corbaccio, and Corvino about Mosca's rise to wealth provides him a few laughs, but it quickly backfires. Voltore, convinced Mosca has tricked him, resolve to change his story at the sentencing hearing for Bonario and Celia.

ACT 5. SCENE 6.

THE SCRUTINEO OR SENATE-HOUSE. ENTER AVOCATORI, NOTARY, BONARIO, CELIA, CORBACCIO, CORVINO, OFFICERS OF THE COURT. SOUND EFFECT: Commotion, "Hear ye, Hear Ye!"

1 AVOCATORE:
Are all the parties here?

VOLTORE:
O, my most honour'd fathers,
I know not which to address myself to first;
Whether your fatherhoods, or these innocents–

CORVINO [aside]:
Will he betray himself?

VOLTORE:
Whom equally
I have abused, out of most covetous ends–
For which here, I prostate
Myself at your offended feet for pardon.

1, 2 AVOCATORE [in unison]:
Arise.

CELIA:
O heaven, how just thou art!

VOLPONE [still in disguise, aside]:
I am caught in mine own noose–

CORVINO [To Corbaccio]:
Be constant, sir: nothing now
Can help but impudence.
1 AVOCATORE:
Speak forward.

VOLTORE:
It is not passion in me, reverend fathers,
But only conscience makes me now tell truth.
That parasite hath been the instrument of all.

1 AVOCATORE:
Where is that knave? Fetch him.

VOLPONE:
I go. [Exit.]

CORVINO:
Grave fathers, this man's distracted.
For, hoping to be old Volpone's heir,
Who now is dead—

3 AVOCATORE:
How?

2 AVOCATORE:
Is Volpone dead?

BONARIO:
O sure vengeance!

CORVINO:
He does speak out of mere envy, 'cause the servant's made
The thing he hoped for.
Please your fatherhoods, this is the truth.

VOLTORE:
Pleaseth your wisdoms
To view these notes, they shall speak clear truth.

CORVINO:
The devil has enter'd him!

BONARIO:
Or bides in you.
4 AVOCATORE: We have done ill, by a public officer, To send for him if the parasite be heir.

3 AVOCATORE: 'Tis true, he is now a man of great estate.

4 AVOCATORE: [to the Notary] Go you, and learn his name, and say, the court Entreats his presence here, but to the clearing Of some few doubts. [Exit Notary.]

1 AVOCATORE: Stand you unto your first report?

CORVINO: My state, my life, my fame–

BONARIO: Where is it?

1 AVOCATORE: Is this your story too?

CORBACCIO: The advocate's a knave, And has a forked tongue–

2 AVOCATORE: Speak to the point.

CORBACCIO: So is the parasite too.

1 AVOCATORE: This is confusion.

VOLTORE: I do beseech your fatherhoods, read but those– [giving them the papers.]

CORVINO: And credit nothing the false spirit hath writ: It cannot be, but he's possessed, grave fathers.
1 AVOCATORE:
These things can ne'er be reconciled. He, here, [showing the papers.]
Professeth that the gentleman was wrong'd
And that the gentlewoman was brought thither,
Forced by her husband, and there left.

VOLTORE:
Most true.

CELIA:
How ready is heaven to those that pray!

1 AVOCATORE:
But thar Volpone would have ravish'd her, he holds
Utterly false, knowing his impotence.

CORVINO [pointing to Voltore]:
Grave fathers, he's possessed.

3 AVOCATORE:
Here comes our officer.

[Enter Volpone, still in a commendatore disguise.]

VOLPONE:
The parasite will straight be here, grave fathers.

4 AVOCATORE:
His coming will clear all.

2 AVOCATORE:
Yet, it is misty.

VOLTORE:
May't please your fatherhoods–

VOLPONE [whispers to Voltore]:
Sir, the parasite will'd me to tell you, that his master lives;
That you are still the man; your hopes the same;
And this was only a jest–

VOLTORE:
How?
VOLPONE:
Sir, to try if you were firm,
And how you stood affected.

VOLTORE:
O me! I was too violent.

VOLPONE:
Sir, you may redeem it.
They said, you were possessed. Fall down, and seem so;
I'll help to make it good. [Voltore falls into a fit. SOUND EFFECT: commotion.]
–God bless the man!– See, see! His eyes are set!
His mouth's running away! Do you see, signior?
Now it is in his belly!

CORVINO:
Ay, the devil!

VOLPONE:
Now in his throat.

CORVINO:
Ay, I perceive it plain.

VOLPONE:
'Twill out, 'twill out! stand clear.
See where it flies, in shape of a blue toad with a bat's wings!

CORVINO:
'Tis too manifest.

VOLPONE:
Look! he comes to himself!

VOLTORE:
Where am I?

VOLPONE:
Take good heart, the worst is past, sir.
You are dispossessed.

3 AVOCATORE:
If he were possessed, all this is nothing.
CORVINO:  
He has been often subject to these fits.

1 AVOCATORE:  
Show him that writing:– do you know it, sir?

VOLPONE [whispers to Voltore.]:  
Deny it, sir.

VOLTORE:  
Yes, I do know it well, it is my hand;  
But all that it contains is false.

BONARIO:  
O practice!

2 AVOCATORE:  
What maze is this!

1 AVOCATORE:  
Is he not guilty then,  
Whom you there name the parasite?

VOLTORE:  
Grave fathers,  
No more than his good patron, old Volpone.

4 AVOCATORE:  
Why, he is dead.

VOLTORE:  
O no, my honour'd fathers, he lives—

1 AVOCATORE:  
How! lives?

3 AVOCATORE:  
You said he was dead.

VOLTORE:  
Never.

4 AVOCATORE:  

Here comes the gentleman; make him way.

[Enter Mosca.]

4 AVOCATORE [aside.]:
A proper man; and, were Volpone dead,
A fit match for my daughter.

VOLPONE [aside to Mosca.]:
Mosca, I was almost lost, the advocate
Had betrayed all, but now it is recovered.
Say, I am living.

MOSCA:
[ignores Volpone] Most reverend fathers,
I sooner had attended your grave pleasures,
But that my order for the funeral
Of my dear patron did require me–

VOLPONE [aside, astonished by this betrayal.]:
Mosca!

MOSCA:
Whom I intend to bury like a gentleman.

VOLPONE [aside]:
Ay, alive, and cozen me of all.

2 AVOCATORE:
Still stranger!

1 AVOCATORE:
And come about again!

4 AVOCATORE [aside.]:
It is a match, my daughter is bestow'd.

MOSCA [Aside to Volpone]:
Will you give me half?

VOLPONE:
First, I'll be hang'd.
1 AVOCATORE: [to Volpone.]
Sir, did not you affirm Volpone was alive?

VOLPONE:
Yes, and he is;
This gentleman told me so.
[aside to Mosca.] –Thou shalt have half.–

MOSCA:
[pointing to Volpone] Whose drunkard is this? I never saw his face.
[aside to Volpone] –I cannot now afford it you so cheap.

VOLPONE:
No!

1 AVOCATORE:
What say you?

VOLTORE:
The officer told me.

VOLPONE:
I did, grave fathers,
And will maintain he lives, with mine own life.
And [points to Mosca] that this creature told me.

MOSCA:
Most grave fathers, if such an insolence
As this must pass upon me, I am silent.

2 AVOCATORE:
Take him away.

VOLPONE:
Mosca!

3 AVOCATORE:
Let him be whipped,
And taught to bear himself
Toward a person of his rank.

[The Officers seize Volpone.]
MOSCA:
I humbly thank your fatherhoods.

VOLPONE [aside]:
Whipped?! And lose all that I have?!
If I confess, it cannot be much more.

4 AVOCATORE:
[to Mosca] Sir, are you married?

VOLPONE:
They will be allied anon. I must be resolute:
The Fox shall here uncase. [Throws off his disguise. SOUND EFFECT: gasps.]

MOSCA:
Patron!

VOLPONE:
Nay, now, my ruins shall not come alone;
My substance shall not screw you into a family.
I am Volpone, and [pointing to Mosca.] this is my knave;
This [to Voltore], his own knave;
This [to Corbaccio], avarice's fool;
This [to Corvino], a fool and knave.
And, reverend fathers, since we all can hope
Nothing but a sentence, let's not now despair it.

CORVINO:
May it please your fatherhoods–

1 AVOCATORE:
Silence! The knot is now undone by miracle.

3 AVOCATORE:
Nothing can more prove these innocent.

1 AVOCATORE:
[pointing to Bonario and Celia] Give them their liberty.

BONARIO:
Heaven could not long let such gross crimes be hid.

1 AVOCATORE:
Can you plead aught to stay the course of justice? 
If you can, speak.

CORVINO, VOLTORE:
We beg favour.

1 AVOCATORE:
Stand forth. First, the parasite: You appear
T' have been the chiefest plotter, and now lately
Have abused the court in the habit of a gentleman of Venice,
Being a fellow of no birth or blood.
For which our sentence is, first, thou be whipped;
Then live perpetual prisoner in our galleys.

2 AVOCATORE:
Deliver him. [Mosca is carried out.]
–Thou, Volpone, by blood a gentleman, canst not fall
Under like censure. Our judgment on thee
Is that thy wealth all be confiscate
To the hospital of the Incurabili:
And, since the most was gotten
By feigning diseases,
Thou art to lie in prison
Till thou art sick and lame indeed.– Remove him. [Volpone is taken from the bar.]

VOLPONE [as he exits]:
This is call'd mortifying of a Fox.

3 AVOCATORE:
Thou, Voltore, to take away the scandal
Thou hast given all worthy men of thy profession,
Art banish'd from their fellowship and our state.
Corbaccio, we here possess
Thy son of all thy state, and confine thee
To the monastery of San Spirito,
Where thou shalt be taught to die well.

CORBACCIO:
[not hearing] Ah! what said he?

4 AVOCATORE:
Thou, Corvino, shalt be straight row'd
Through the grand canal,
Wearing a cap with long asses' ears instead of horns,
And to expiate thy wrongs done to thy wife,
Thou art to send her home to her father,
With her dowry trebled.
And these are all your judgments....

1 AVOCATORE:
Which may not be revoked. Now you begin,
When crimes are done and past and to be punish'd,
To think what your crimes are. Away with them.
Let all that see these vices thus rewarded.
Take heart and love to study 'em! Mischiefs feed
Like beasts, till they be fat and then they bleed.

[Exeunt. SOUND EFFECT: Applause.]