

WOMEN BEWARE WOMEN by Thomas Middleton - Workshop edit
Adapted for Falconbridge Players in July 2019 by Jason Compton
falconbridgeplayers.org

BIANCA Capella, a gentlewoman from Venice

LEANTIO, a factor, Bianca's husband

Leantio's MOTHER, a widow

Lady LIVIA, a widow - also plays Juno in the masque

ISABELLA, Livia's niece - also plays the main nymph in the masque

FABRITIO, Isabella's father and Livia's brother

HIPPOLITO, Isabella's uncle and Livia's brother

GUARDIANO, the Ward's guardian

DUKE of Florence

The LORD CARDINAL, the Duke's brother

The WARD, a foolish rich young heir, ward to Guardiano

SORDIDO, the Ward's man

A LORD

MESSENGER

A page

In the Masque:

HEBE

HYMEN

GANYMEDE

Two Nymphs

Two Pages as Cupids

Summaries (Adapted from The Compendium of Renaissance Drama by Brian Jay Corrigan, see cord.ung.edu/wbw.html for more detail)

I.i The play opens with Leantio introducing his new bride to his mother. He has stolen her from a rich family in Venice and brought her home to Florence to live. Although Leantio and his mother are not wealthy, the new bride, Bianca, swears that she will be happy because she is rich in love.

I.ii Guardiano is in the last stages of negotiating with Fabritio to join his Ward and Fabritio's daughter Isabella in marriage. The Ward is stupid but rich. Fabritio insists that Isabella will marry the boy. Livia, Fabritio's sister and Isabella's aunt, objects to the men selling off Isabella for gold without so much as asking the girl's opinion about the match with Ward.

Isabella is devoted to her Uncle Hippolito (Fabritio and Livia's other brother). They are always together. Isabella and Hippolito enter, and Fabritio tells Isabella to put on her mask because she is about to be courted. The Ward and Sordido come in and act like asses.

Isabella is distraught at the idea of being matched with a rich young fool. Hippolito takes the opportunity to confess that he loves his niece. Isabella shuns her beloved uncle for suggesting even the hint of incest. She deems it better that they never see each other again.

I.iii Leantio is off to work-a trip that will keep him away for five days. Bianca asks him to stay. Leantio asks his mother to keep Bianca a secret and lock her indoors so no men may see her and lust after her. He makes his mother swear to keep Bianca a secret. While the women speak on their balcony, the St. Mark's parade passes before them. The Duke, in all his finery, passes in parade. Bianca believes that the Duke looked at her. He did, and liked what he saw.

II.i Hippolito tells his sister Livia of his love for Isabella and that Isabella rejected him. Livia hints that she may be able to help. Isabella comes in just as Hippolito leaves. Livia listens as Isabella bemoans her fate to be married to such a loathsome creature as Ward-especially when she has made a vow to be true to her wedding bed. Livia lies to Isabella, saying she does not have to obey her father Fabritio because Fabritio is not Isabella's real father, claiming Isabella's mother slept with a famous Spaniard while Fabritio was away on business. Livia makes Isabella promise not to betray this secret, especially not to Hippolito--who, conveniently, would now not be a blood relation. Did we mention this is all a big lie?

Hippolito returns, and Isabella gives herself to him. To keep up appearances, she cannot marry Hippolito because in the eyes of the world he is her uncle. She plans to marry the Ward, because a rich, stupid husband won't realize he's a cuckold. Hippolito believes that this is incest (which, in truth, it is).

Act I Scene 1 - Leantio's home

SD: *[read i.1 intro]. Enter Leantio, Mother, and Bianca*

MOTHER

How's that?

LEANTIO

Never to be repented, mother,
 Though sin be death. I had died if I had not sinned.
 And here's my masterpiece; do you now behold her.
 Look on her well, she's mine. Look on her better.
 Now say if't be not the best piece of theft
 That ever was committed. And I have my pardon for't:
 'Tis sealed from heaven by marriage.

MOTHER

Married to her!

LEANTIO

You must keep counsel, mother, I am undone else.
 If it be known, I have lost her. Do but think now
 What that loss is; life's but a trifle to't.
 From Venice her consent and I have brought her,
 From parents great in wealth, more now in rage;
 But let storms spend their furies now we have got
 A shelter o'er our quiet innocent loves.
 We are contented. Little money she's brought me.
 View but her face, you may see all her dowry,
 Save that which lies locked up in hidden virtues
 Like jewels kept in cabinets.

MOTHER

You're to blame,
 If your obedience will give way to a check,
 To wrong such a perfection.

LEANTIO

How?

MOTHER

Such a creature,
 To draw her from her fortune, which no doubt
 At the full time might have proved rich and noble!
 You know not what you have done. My life can give you
 But little helps, and my death lesser hopes.
 What ableness have you to do her right then
 In maintenance fitting her birth and virtues?—
 Which ev'ry woman of necessity looks for,

And most to go above it, not confined
 By their conditions, virtues, bloods, or births,
 But flowing to affections, wills and humours.

LEANTIO

Speak low, sweet mother. You are able to spoil as many
 As come within the hearing. If it be not
 Your fortune to mar all, I have much marvel.
 I pray, do not you teach her to rebel,
 When she's in a good way to obedience:
 To rise with other women in commotion
 Against their husbands for six gowns a year,
 And so maintain their cause, when they're once up,
 In all things else that require cost enough.
 If you can but rest quiet, she's contented
 With all conditions that my fortunes bring her to.
 Good mother, make not you things worse than they are
 Out of your too much openness, pray take heed on't,
 Nor imitate the envy of old people
 That strive to mar good sport because they are perfect.
 I would have you more pitiful to youth,
 Especially to your own flesh and blood.
 I'll prove an excellent husband, here's my hand,
 Lay in provision, follow my business roundly,
 And make you a grandmother in forty weeks.
 Go, pray salute her, bid her welcome cheerfully.

MOTHER

Gentlewoman, thus much is a debt of courtesy
 Which fashionable strangers pay each other
 At a kind meeting.

SD: She kisses Bianca

Then there's more than one
 Due to the knowledge I have of your nearness.
 I am bold to come again, and now salute you
 By th' name of daughter, which may challenge more
 Than ordinary respect.

SD: She kisses Bianca again

LEANTIO

[aside] Why, this is well now,
 And I think few mothers of threescore will mend it.

MOTHER

What I can bid you welcome to is mean,

But make it all your own. We are full of wants,
And cannot welcome worth.

LEANTIO

[aside] Now this is scurvy,
And spake as if a woman lacked her teeth.
These old folks talk of nothing but defects,
Because they grow so full of 'em themselves.

BIANCA

Kind mother, there is nothing can be wanting
To her that does enjoy all her desires.
Heaven send a quiet peace with this man's love,
And I am as rich as virtue can be poor,
Which were enough, after the rate of mind,
To erect temples for content placed here.
I have forsook friends, fortunes, and my country,
And hourly I rejoice in't. Here's my friends,
And few is the good number. [To Leantio] Thy successes,
Howe'er they look, I will still name my fortunes.
Hopeful or spiteful, they shall all be welcome.
Who invites many guests has of all sorts,
As he that traffics much drinks of all fortunes,
Yet they must all be welcome and used well.
I'll call this place the place of my birth now,
And rightly, too, for here my love was born,
And that's the birth-day of a woman's joys.
You have not bid me welcome since I came.

LEANTIO

That I did, questionless.

BIANCA

No, sure. How was't?
I have quite forgot it.

LEANTIO

Thus.

SD: Leantio kisses Bianca

BIANCA

O sir, 'tis true.
Now I remember well. I have done thee wrong.
Pray take't again, sir.

SD: Bianca kisses Leantio

LEANTIO

How many of these wrongs

Could I put up in an hour, and turn up the glass
For twice as many more!

MOTHER

Will't please you to walk in, daughter?

BIANCA

Thanks, sweet mother.

The voice of her that bare me is not more pleasing.

SD: Exeunt Mother and Bianca

LEANTIO

Though my own care and my rich master's trust

Lay their commands both on my factorship,

This day and night I'll know no other business

But her, and her dear welcome. 'Tis a bitterness

To think upon tomorrow: that I must leave her

Still to the sweet hopes of the week's end;

That pleasure should be so restrained and curbed,

After the course of a rich workmaster

That never pays till Saturday night.

But 'tis great policy

To keep choice treasures in obscurest places.

Should we show thieves our wealth, 'twould make 'em bolder.

Temptation is a devil will not stick

To fasten upon a saint; take heed of that.

The jewel is cased up from all men's eyes.

Who could imagine now a gem were kept

Of that great value under this plain roof?

But how in times of absence? What assurance

Of this restraint then? Yes, yes, there's one with her.

Old mothers know the world; and such as these,

When sons lock chests, are good to look to keys.

[SD reads remaining Act I and II.1 summaries]

Act II Scene 2 - The palace

SD: *Enter Guardiano and Livia. They have been told by the Duke to arrange a secret rendezvous with Bianca, the beauty he saw in the window.*

LIVIA

How, sir, a gentlewoman, so young, so fair
As you set forth, spied from the widow's window?

GUARDIANO

She!

LIVIA

Our Sunday-dinner woman?

GUARDIANO

And Thursday-supper woman, the same still.
I know not how she came by her, but I'll swear
She's the prime gallant for a face in Florence;
And no doubt other parts follow their leader.
The Duke himself first spied her at the window;
Then in a rapture, as if admiration
Were poor when it were single, beckoned me,
And pointed to the wonder warily,
As one that feared she would draw in her splendour
Too soon if too much gazed at. I ne'er knew him
So infinitely taken with a woman;
Nor can I blame his appetite, or tax
His raptures of slight folly: she's a creature
Able to draw a state from serious business,
And make it their best piece to do her service.
What course shall we devise? He's spoke twice now.

LIVIA

Twice?

GUARDIANO

'Tis beyond your apprehension
How strangely that one look has caught his heart.
Tis for the Duke; and if I fail your purpose,
All means to come by riches or advancement
Miss me and skip me over.

LIVIA

Let the old woman then
Be sent for with all speed; then I'll begin.

GUARDIANO

A good conclusion follow, and a sweet one,
After this stale beginning with old ware.

SD: They send a messenger to invite Bianca's mother-in-law for dinner. She accepts.

Mother enters.

LIVIA

Widow, come, come, I have a great quarrel to you.
 Faith, I must chide you that you must be sent for!
 You make yourself so strange, never come at us;
 And yet so near a neighbour, and so unkind.
 Troth, you're to blame. You cannot be more welcome
 To any house in Florence, that I'll tell you.

MOTHER

My thanks must need acknowledge so much, madam.

LIVIA

How can you be so strange then? I sit here
 Sometime whole days together without company
 When business draws this gentleman from home,
 And should be happy in society,
 Which I so well affect, as that of yours.
 I know you're alone too. Why should not we
 Like two kind neighbours, then, supply the wants
 Of one another, having tongue, discourse,
 Experience in the world, and such kind helps
 To laugh down time and meet age merrily?

MOTHER

Age, madam? You speak mirth: 'tis at my door,
 But a long journey from your ladyship yet.

LIVIA

My faith, I'm nine-and-thirty, every stroke, wench;
 And 'tis a general observation
 'Mongst knights' wives or widows, we account
 Ourselves then old when young men's eyes leave looking at's.
 'Tis a true rule amongst us, and ne'er failed yet
 In any but in one that I remember.
 Indeed she had a friend at nine-and-forty.
 Marry, she paid well for him, and in th'end
 He kept a quean or two with her own money,
 That robbed her of her plate, and cut her throat.

MOTHER

She had her punishment in this world, madam;
 And a fair warning to all other women
 That they live chaste at fifty.

LIVIA

Ay, or never, wench.
Come, now I have thy company I'll not part with't
Till after supper.

MOTHER

Yes, I must crave pardon, madam.

GUARDIANO

Nay, pray stay, widow.

LIVIA

Faith, she shall not go.
Do you think I'll be forsworn?

SD: *Guardiano sets out table and chess*

MOTHER

'Tis a great while
Till supper time; I'll take my leave then now, madam,
And come again i'th' evening, since your ladyship
Will have it so.

LIVIA

I'th' evening? By my troth, wench,
I'll keep you while I have you. You have great business, sure,
To sit alone at home! I wonder strangely
What pleasure you take in't. Were't to me, now,
I should be ever at one neighbour's house.
Come, we'll to chess or draughts. There are an hundred tricks
To drive out time till supper, never fear't, wench.

MOTHER

I'll but make one step home, and return straight, madam.

LIVIA

Why, widow, where's your mind?

MOTHER

Troth, e'en at home, madam.
To tell you truth, I left a gentlewoman
E'en sitting all alone, which is uncomfortable,
Especially to young bloods.

LIVIA

Another excuse!

MOTHER

Wife to my son, indeed—but not known, madam,
To any but yourself.

LIVIA

Now I beshrew you!

Could you be so unkind to her and me
To come and not bring her? Faith, 'tis not friendly.

MOTHER

I feared to be too bold.

LIVIA

Too bold? O, what's become
Of the true hearty love was wont to be
'Mongst neighbours in old time?

MOTHER

And she's a stranger, madam.

LIVIA

The more should be her welcome.

SD: They send a servant to fetch Bianca. Bianca enters.

BIANCA

[aside] I wonder how she comes to send for me now?

LIVIA

I heard you were alone, and 't had appeared
An ill condition in me, though I knew you not
Nor ever saw you—yet humanity
Thinks every case her own—to have kept our company
Here from you, and left you all solitary.
I rather ventured upon boldness then
As the least fault, and wished your presence here—
A thing most happily motioned of that gentleman,
Whom I request you, for his care and pity,
To honour and reward with your acquaintance;
A gentleman that ladies' rights stands for,
That's his profession.

BIANCA

'Tis a noble one,
And honours my acquaintance.

GUARDIANO

All my intentions
Are servants to such mistresses.

BIANCA

'Tis your modesty,
It seems, that makes your dèserts speak so low, sir.

SD: Livia and Mother sit to play at chess

LIVIA

Come, widow.

[To Bianca] I pray sit down, forsooth, if you have the patience

To look on two weak and tedious gamesters.

GUARDIANO

Faith, madam, set these by. The gentlewoman,
Being a stranger, would take more delight
To see your rooms and pictures.

Livia

Marry, good sir, And well remembered. I beseech you, show 'em her;
That will beguile time well; pray heartily, do, sir;
I'll do as much for you. Here, take these keys.
Show her the monument too—and that's a thing
Everyone sees not; you can witness that, widow.

MOTHER

And that's worth sight indeed, madam.

BIANCA

I fear I came to be a trouble to you—

LIVIA

Kind lady,
O, nothing less, forsooth.

BIANCA

And to this courteous gentleman
That wears a kindness in his breast so noble
And bounteous to the welcome of a stranger.

GUARDIANO

If you but give acceptance to my service,
You do the greatest grace and honour to me
That courtesy can merit.

BIANCA

I were to blame else,
And out of fashion much. I pray you, lead, sir.

SD: Guardiano leads Bianca away through the house, showing her various artworks.

BIANCA

Trust me, sir,
Mine eye ne'er met with fairer ornaments.
Sir, my opinion takes your part highly.

GUARDIANO

There's a better piece yet than all these.

SD: The Duke quietly enters.

BIANCA

Not possible, sir!

GUARDIANO

Believe it,

You'll say so when you see't. Turn but your eye now,
You're upon't presently.

SD: Bianca sees the Duke, and Guardiano quickly leaves them alone

BIANCA

O, sir!

DUKE

He's gone, beauty.

Pish, look not after him. He's but a vapour
That when the sun appears is seen no more.

SD: The Duke takes hold of Bianca

BIANCA

O, treachery to honour!

DUKE

Prithee, tremble not. I feel thy breast shake like a turtle panting
Under a loving hand that makes much on't.
You know me, you have seen me; here's a heart
Can witness I have seen thee.

BIANCA

The more's my danger.

DUKE

The more's thy happiness. Pish, strive not, sweet.
This strength were excellent employed in love now,
But here 'tis spent amiss. Strive not to seek
Thy liberty and keep me still in prison.
I am not here in vain. Have but the leisure
To think on that, and thou'lt be soon resolved.
Take warning, I beseech thee. Thou seem'st to me
A creature so composed of gentleness
And delicate meekness, such as bless the faces
Of figures that are drawn for goddesses
And makes art proud to look upon her work,
I should be sorry the least force should lay
An unkind touch upon thee.

BIANCA

[aside] O, my extremity! *[to Duke]* My lord, what seek you?

DUKE

Love.

BIANCA

'Tis gone already,
I have a husband.

DUKE

That's a single comfort.
Take a friend to him.

BIANCA

That's a double mischief,
Or else there's no religion.

DUKE

Do not tremble
At fears of thine own making.

BIANCA

Nor, great lord,
Make me not bold with death and deeds of ruin
Because they fear not you. I'm not like those
That take their soundest sleeps in greatest tempests.
Then wake I most, the weather fearfullest,
And call for strength to virtue.

DUKE

I affect
A passionate pleading 'bove an easy yielding,
But never pitied any—they deserve none—
That will not pity me. I can command—
Think upon that—yet if thou truly knewest
The infinite pleasure my affection takes
In gentle, fair entreatings, when love's businesses
Are carried courteously 'twixt heart and heart,
You'd make more haste to please me.

BIANCA

Why should you seek, sir,
To take away that you can never give?

DUKE

But I give better in exchange: wealth, honour.
She that is fortunate in a duke's favour
Lights on a tree that bears all women's wishes.
If your own mother saw you pluck fruit there,
She would commend your wit and praise the time
Of your nativity. Take hold of glory.
Do not I know you've cast away your life
Upon necessities, means merely doubtful
To keep you in indifferent health and fashion—
And can you be so much your beauty's enemy
To kiss away a month or two in wedlock

And weep whole years in wants for ever after?
 Come, play the wife, wench, and provide for ever.
 Put trust in our love for the managing
 Of all to thy heart's peace. We'll walk together
 And show a thankful joy for both our fortunes.

SD: Focus shifts to the chess game between Livia and the Mother, with Guardiano waiting nearby. From offstage, noises representing carnal acts between the Duke and Bianca would be totally suitable here.

LIVIA

Alas, poor widow, I shall be too hard for thee.

MOTHER

You're cunning at the game, I'll be sworn, madam.

LIVIA

It will be found so, ere I give you over.
 She that can place her man well—

MOTHER

As you do, madam.

LIVIA

[aside] As I shall, wench—*[back to Mother]* can never lose her game.
[Mother offers to move at chess]

Nay, nay, the black king's mine.

MOTHER

Cry you mercy, madam.

LIVIA

And this my queen.

MOTHER

I see't now.

LIVIA

Your pawn cannot come back to relieve itself.

MOTHER

I know that, madam. *[She moves at chess]*

LIVIA

You play well the whilst.
 How she belies her skill! I hold two ducats
 I give you check and mate to your white king
 Simplicity itself—your saintish king there.

SD: Bianca enters at the periphery

BIANCA

[emerges, aside] Now bless me from a blasting! I saw that now
 Fearful for any woman's eye to look on.
 Infectious mists and mildews hang at's eyes.

The weather of a doomsday dwells upon him.
 Yet since mine honour's leprous, why should I
 Preserve that fair that caused the leprosy?
 Come, poison all at once. *[Aside to Guardiano]* Thou in whose baseness
 The bane of virtue broods, I'm bound in soul
 Eternally to curse thy smooth-browed treachery,
 That wore the fair veil of a friendly welcome,
 And I a stranger. Think upon't, 'tis worth it.
 Murders piled up upon a guilty spirit
 At his last breath will not lie heavier
 Than this betraying act upon thy conscience.
 Beware of off'ring the first-fruits to sin.
 His weight is deadly who commits with strumpets
 After they have been abased and made for use;
 If they offend to th' death, as wise men know,
 How much more they then that first made 'em so?
 I give thee that to feed on. I'm made bold now,
 I thank thy treachery. Sin and I'm acquainted,
 No couple greater; and I'm like that great one
 Who, making politic use of a base villain,
 "He likes the treason well, but hates the traitor."
[to Guardiano] So I hate thee, slave.

GUARDIANO

[aside] Well, so the Duke love me,
 I fare not much amiss then. Two great feasts
 Do seldom come together in one day;
 We must not look for 'em.

BIANCA

[switching gears, addressing chess players]
 What, at it still, mother?

MOTHER

You see we sit by't. Are you so soon returned?

LIVIA

[aside] So lively and so cheerful: a good sign that.

MOTHER

You have not seen all since, sure?

BIANCA

That have I, mother,
 The monument and all. I'm so beholding
 To this kind, honest, courteous gentleman
 You'd little think it, mother; showed me all,

Had me from place to place, so fashionably.
 The kindness of some people, how't exceeds!
 Faith, I have seen that I little thought to see
 I'th' morning when I rose.

MOTHER

Nay, so I told you
 Before you saw't, it would prove worth your sight.
 I give you great thanks for my daughter, sir,
 And all your kindness towards her.

GUARDIANO

O good widow,
 Much good may't do her!—*[aside]* forty weeks hence, i'faith.

LIVIA

Supper's upon the table.
 Will't please you, gentlewoman?

BIANCA

Thanks, virtuous lady.
[Aside to Livia] You're a damned bawd.
[Aloud] I'll follow you, forsooth.
 Pray take my mother in.
[Aside to Livia] An old ass go with you.

SD: Bianca exits.

LIVIA

Then get you both before.
 Widow, I'll follow you.

SD: All but Livia exit.

[asides] Is't so: 'damned bawd'?
 Are you so bitter? 'Tis but want of use.
 Her tender modesty is sea-sick a little,
 Being not accustomed to the breaking billow
 Of woman's wavering faith, blown with temptations.
 'Tis but a qualm of honour; 'twill away;
 A little bitter for the time, but lasts not.
 Sin tastes at the first draught like wormwood-water,
 But, drunk again, 'tis nectar ever after.

ACT III SCENE 1 - Leantio's house**SD: Mother enters****MOTHER**

I would my son would either keep at home
 Or I were in my grave.
 She was but one day abroad, but ever since
 She's grown so cutted there's no speaking to her.
 So takes the new disease, methinks, in my house.
 I'm weary of my part. There's nothing likes her.
 I know not how to please her here o' late.
 And here she comes.

SD: Bianca enters**BIANCA**

This is the strangest house
 For all defects as ever gentlewoman
 Made shift withal to pass away her love in.
 Why is there not a cushion-cloth of drawn-work,
 Or some fair cut-work pinned up in my bedchamber,
 A silver and gilt casting-bottle hung by't?
 Nay, since I am content to be so kind to you
 To spare you for a silver basin and ewer,
 Which one of my fashion looks for of duty:
 She's never offered under where she sleeps.

MOTHER

She talks of things here my whole state's not worth.

BIANCA

Never a green silk quilt is there i'th' house, mother,
 To cast upon my bed?

MOTHER

No, by troth, is there,
 Nor orange tawny neither.

BIANCA

Here's a house
 For a young gentlewoman to be got with child in!

MOTHER

What, cannot children be begot, think you,
 Without gilt casting-bottles; yes, and as sweet ones?
 Tis an old saying: one may keep good cheer
 In a mean house; so may love affect
 After the rate of princes in a cottage.

BIANCA

Troth, you speak wondrous well for your old house here.
 'Twill shortly fall down at your feet to thank you,
 Or stoop when you go to bed, like a good child,
 To ask you blessing. Must I live in want
 Because my fortune matched me with your son?
 Wives do not give away themselves to husbands
 To the end to be quite cast away; they look
 To be the better used and tendered, rather,
 Higher respected, and maintained the richer.
 You hear me, mother.

SD: Bianca exits

MOTHER

Ay, too plain, methinks;
 'Tis the most sudden'st, strangest alteration.
 When she first lighted here, I told her then
 How mean she should find all things. She was pleased, forsooth,
 None better. I laid open all defects to her;
 She was contented still. But the devil's in her,
 Nothing contents her, now. Tonight my son
 Promised to be at home. Would he were come once,
 For I'm weary of my charge, and life too.

SD: Leantio enters

LEANTIO

How near am I now to a happiness
 That earth exceeds not, not another like it!
 The treasures of the deep are not so precious
 As are the cõncealed comforts of a man
 Locked up in woman's love. I scent the air
 Of blessings when I come but near the house.
 What a delicious breath marriage sends forth!

SD: Bianca enters

Now for a welcome
 Able to draw men's envies upon man;
 A kiss now that will hang upon my lip
 As sweet as morning dew upon a rose,
 And full as long. After a five-days' fast
 She'll be so greedy now, and cling about me,
 I take care how I shall be rid of her.
 And here't begins.

BIANCA

[flatly] O, sir, you're welcome home.

MOTHER

[aside] O, is he come? I'm glad on't.

LEANTIO

[aside] Why this?—as dreadful now as sudden death.

[to Bianca] Sure you're not well, Bianca! How dost, prithee?

BIANCA

I have been better than I am at this time.

LEANTIO

Alas, I thought so.

BIANCA

Nay, I have been worse, too,
Than now you see me, sir.

LEANTIO

I'm glad thou mend'st yet;
I feel my heart mend too. How came it to thee?
Has anything disliked thee in my absence?

BIANCA

No, certain; I have had the best content
That Florence can afford.

LEANTIO

Thou makes the best on't.

BIANCA

Methinks this house stands nothing to my mind.
I'd have some pleasant lodging i'th' high street, sir;
Or if 'twere near the court, sir, that were much better.
'Tis a sweet recreation for a gentlewoman
To stand in a bay window and see gallants.

LEANTIO

Now I have another temper, a mere stranger
To that of yours, it seems. I should delight
To see none but yourself.

BIANCA

I praise not that.
Too fond is as unseemly as too churlish.
I would not have a husband of that proneness
To kiss me before company for a world.
Beside, 'tis tedious to see one thing still, sir.
As good be blind and have no use of sight
As look on one thing still. What's the eye's treasure

But change of objects? You are learned, sir,
 And know I speak not ill. 'Tis full as virtuous
 For woman's eye to look on several men
 As for her heart, sir, to be fixed on one.

LEANTIO

Now thou com'st home to me. A kiss for that word.

BIANCA

No matter for a kiss, sir; let it pass.
 Let's talk of other business, and forget it.
 What news now of the pirates? Any stirring?
 Prithee, discourse a little.

MOTHER

[aside] I am glad he's here yet
 To see her tricks himself. I had lied monstrously
 If I had told 'em first.

LEANTIO

[to Bianca] Speak, what's the humour, sweet,
 You make your lip so strange? This was not wont.

BIANCA

Think of the world, how we shall live. Grow serious;
 We have been married a whole fortnight now.

LEANTIO

How, a whole fortnight? Why, is that so long?

BIANCA

'Tis time to leave off dalliance: 'tis a doctrine
 Of your own teaching, if you be remembered,
 And I was bound to obey it.

MOTHER

[aside] Like a fellow
 That rids another country of a plague,
 And brings it home with him to his own house.

SD: A knock at the door. Leantio hides Bianca away and admits the Messenger.

LEANTIO

Thou art a gem no stranger's eye must see,
 Howe'er thou please now to look dull on me.
 [to Messenger] To whom your business, pray?

MESSENGER

A young gentlewoman I was sent to.

LEANTIO

A young gentlewoman?

MESSENGER

Ay, sir, about sixteen. Why look you wildly, sir?

LEANTIO

At your strange error. You've mistook the house, sir.
There's none such here, I assure you.

MESSENGER

I assure you, too,
The man that sent me cannot be mistook.

LEANTIO

Why, who is't sent you, sir?

MESSENGER

The Duke.

LEANTIO

The Duke?

MESSENGER

Yes; he entreats her company at a banquet
At Lady Livia's house.

LEANTIO

Troth, shall I tell you, sir,
It is the most erroneous business
That e'er your honest pains was abused with.
I pray forgive me if I smile a little;
I cannot choose, i'faith, sir, at an error
So comical as this.—I mean no harm though.—
His grace has been most wondrous ill informed.

MESSENGER

Then 'tis a sure mistake. Nay, no matter.
I will return the mistake, and seek no further.

SD: Messenger exits

LEANTIO

What shall I think of first? Come forth, Bianca;
Thou art betrayed, I fear me.

BIANCA

Betrayed? How, sir?

LEANTIO

The Duke knows thee—

BIANCA

Knows me! How know you that, sir?

LEANTIO

Has got thy name.

BIANCA

[aside] Ay, and my good name too.
How should the Duke know me? Can you guess, mother?

MOTHER

Not I, with all my wits. Sure we kept house close.

LEANTIO

Kept close? Not all the locks in Italy
Can keep you women so. You have been gadding.
Thou hast been seen, Bianca, by some stranger;
Never excuse it.

BIANCA

I'll not seek the way, sir.
Do you think you've married me to mew me up
Not to be seen? What would you make of me?

LEANTIO

A good wife, nothing else.

MOTHER

What wits have I!
When you last took your leave, if you remember,
You left us both at window.
And not the third part of an hour after,
The Duke passed by in a great solemnity
To St Mark's Temple; and, to my apprehension,
He looked up twice to th' window.

LEANTIO

O, there quickened
The mischief of this hour!

BIANCA

[aside] If you call't mischief;
It is a thing I fear I am conceived with.

LEANTIO

[to Mother] Looked he up twice, and could you take no warning?

MOTHER

Why, once may do as much harm, son, as a thousand.

LEANTIO

You know, mother,
At the end of the dark parlour there's a place
So artificially contrived for a conveyance
No search could ever find it. When my father
Kept in for manslaughter, it was his sanctuary.
There will I lock my life's best treasure up, Bianca.

BIANCA

Would you keep me closer yet?
 Have you the conscience? You're best e'en choke me up, sir!
 You make me fearful of your health and wits,
 You cleave to such wild courses. What's the matter?

LEANTIO

Why, are you so insensible of your danger
 To ask that now? The Duke himself has sent for you
 To Lady Livia's, to a banquet, forsooth.

BIANCA

Now I beshrew you heartily! Has he so,
 And you the man would never yet vouchsafe
 To tell me on't till now? You show your loyalty
 And honesty at once. And so, farewell, sir.

LEANTIO

Bianca, whither now?

BIANCA

Why, to the Duke, sir.
 You say he sent for me.

LEANTIO

But thou dost not mean
 To go, I hope.

BIANCA

No: I shall prove unmannerly,
 Rude, and uncivil, mad, and imitate you.
 Come, mother, come. Follow his humour no longer.
 We shall be all executed for treason shortly.

MOTHER

Not I, i'faith; I'll first obey the Duke,
 And taste of a good banquet; I'm of thy mind.
 I'll step but up and fetch two handkerchiefs
 To pocket up some sweetmeats, and o'ertake thee.

BIANCA

[aside] Why, here's an old wench would trot into a bawd now,
 For some dry sucket or a colt in marzipan.

SD: Mother and Bianca exit

LEANTIO

O thou the ripe time of man's misery, wedlock;
 O, that's a fruit that ripens hastily
 After 'tis knit to marriage. It begins,
 As soon as the sun shines upon the bride,

A little to show colour. Blessèd powers,
 Whence comes this alteration? The distractions,
 The fears and doubts it brings are numberless,
 And yet the cause I know not. What a peace
 Has he that never marries!
 Nay, what a quietness has he 'bove mine
 That wears his youth out in a strumpet's arms,
 And never spends more care upon a woman
 Than at the time of lust; but walks away,
 And if he find her dead at his return
 His pity is soon done: he breaks a sigh
 In many parts, and gives her but a piece on't.
 But all the fears, shames, jealousies, costs, and troubles
 And still-renewed cares of a marriage bed
 Live in the issue when the wife is dead.

SD: Messenger enters

MESSENGER

Though you were pleased of late to pin an error on me,
 You must not shift another in your stead too:
 The Duke has sent me for you.

LEANTIO

How, for me, sir?

[Aside] I see then 'tis my theft. We're both betrayed.
 Well, I'm not the first has stol'n away a maid;
 My countrymen have used it.—I'll along with you, sir.

ACT 3 SUMMARY

III.ii Guardiano tells Ward what Isabella looks like. Guardiano notes that Isabella is often with her beloved Uncle Hippolito.

The Duke and his entourage, including the mother and Bianca, meet in the palace. Leantio sees the Duke and Bianca whispering, and realizes that he has been cuckolded. The Duke gives Leantio a captaincy of the fort at Rouen (which pays less than his current job but has higher status). Leantio accepts the job and the corruption of his marriage.

Meanwhile, Livia sees Leantio and becomes enamored with him.

The Ward makes crude remarks about Isabella.

Leantio tries to move on with life but feels badly about losing his wife.

Guardiano, in order to win the crown's approval of the intended marriage between Isabella and the Ward, presents Ward to the Duke. Fabritio tells the Duke of Isabella's virtues, which he has paid for at great expense. The Duke has Isabella sing for him. He wants to see Isabella and Ward dance together, but the Ward refuses to dance. The Duke suggests Isabella dance with Hippolito instead.

Livia tries to woo Leantio. She soon wins him to her lover with promises of wealth enough to make Bianca jealous.

III.iii Guardiano introduces Isabella to the Ward, who is again with Sordido. He leaves the kids alone to get acquainted and determine whether they want to marry. Sordido and Ward size her up, try to get her to laugh so they may see her teeth (as one judges horses); they sneak glances under her skirt to ensure she is not splay-footed. In short, they treat her like a piece of meat and talk about her the way Bianca was talked about in the first scene between Leantio and the mother. Ward finally determines that he likes her well enough, and they determine to marry.

ACT IV SCENE 1 - The Palace**SD: Bianca enters****BIANCA**

How strangely woman's fortune comes about!
 My friends, or kindred! 'Tis not good, in sadness,
 To keep a maid so strict in her young days.
 Restraint breeds wand'ring thoughts, as many fasting days
 A great desire to see flesh stirring again.
 I'll ne'er use any girl of mine so strictly.
 Howe'er they're kept, their fortunes find 'em out;
 I see't in me. If they be got in court
 I'll never forbid 'em the country, nor the court
 Though they be born i'th' country. They will come to't,
 And fetch their falls a thousand mile about,
 Where one would little think on't.

SD: Leantio, richly attired, enters**LEANTIO**

[aside] I long to see how my despiser looks
 Now she's come here to court. These are her lodgings.

BIANCA

How now, what silkworm's this, i'th' name of pride?
 What, is it he?

SD: Leantio bows to her**LEANTIO**

A bow i'th' hams to your greatness.
 You must have now three legs, I take it, must you not?

BIANCA

Then I must take another; I shall want else
 The service I should have; you have but two there.

LEANTIO

You're richly placed.

BIANCA

Methinks you're wondrous brave, sir.

LEANTIO

A sumptuous lodging.

BIANCA

You've an excellent suit there.

LEANTIO

A chair of velvet.

BIANCA

Is your cloak lined through, sir?

LEANTIO

You're very stately here.

BIANCA

Faith, something proud, sir.

LEANTIO

'Tis a brave life you lead.

BIANCA

I could ne'er see you
In such good clothes in my time.

LEANTIO

In your time?

BIANCA

Sure I think, sir,
We both thrive best asunder.

LEANTIO [obviously a big turn here]

You're a whore.

BIANCA

Fear nothing, sir.

LEANTIO

An impudent, spiteful strumpet.

BIANCA

O, sir, you give me thanks for your captainship.
I thought you had forgot all your good manners.

SD: Leantio shows her a lurid love letter from Livia

LEANTIO

And to spite thee as much, look there, there read,
Vex, gnaw; thou shalt find there I am not love-starved.
The world was never yet so cold or pitiless
But there was ever still more charity found out
Than at one proud fool's door, and 'twere hard, faith,
If I could not pass that. Read, to thy shame, there.
A cheerful and a beauteous benefactor, too,
As e'er erected the good works of love.

BIANCA

[aside] Lady Livia!

Is't possible? Her worship was my pand'ress.
She dote, and send, and give, and all to him?
Why, here's a bawd plagued home!—You're simply happy, sir;
Yet I'll not envy you.

LEANTIO

No, court-saint, not thou!

You keep some friend of a new fashion.
 There's no harm in your devil; he's a suckling;
 But he will breed teeth shortly, will he not?

BIANCA

Take heed you play not, then, too long with him.

LEANTIO

Why do I talk to thee of sense or virtue,
 That art as dark as death? And as much madness
 To set light before thee as to lead blind folks
 To see the monuments, which they may smell as soon
 As they behold; marry, oft-times their heads,
 For want of light, may feel the hardness of 'em.
 So shall thy blind pride my revenge and anger,
 That canst not see it now; and it may fall
 At such an hour when thou least seest of all.
 So to an ignorance darker than thy womb
 I leave thy perjured soul. A plague will come.

SD: *Leantio exits*

BIANCA

Get you gone first, and then I fear no greater;
 Nor thee will I fear long. I'll have this sauciness
 Soon banished from these lodgings, and the rooms
 Perfumed well after the corrupt air it leaves.
 His breath has made me almost sick, in troth.
 A poor, base start-up! Life! Because he's got
 Fair clothes by foul means, comes to rail, and show 'em.

SUMMARY:

Bianca complains to the Duke that Leantio is a bother to her, and tells the Duke about Leantio's affair with Livia.

The Duke resolves to get rid of Leontio. He summons Hippolito and tells him of Livia's affair, saying Hippolito's honor has been besmirched because Leantio openly flaunts his affair with Hippolito's sister, Livia. The plan works. Hippolito storms off looking for Leantio.

The Cardinal accosts his brother the Duke and upbraids him for living in sin with a strumpet. The Duke swears he will mend his ways and never lie with a strumpet again. When the Cardinal leaves the Duke soliloquizes that he will marry Bianca as soon as Hippolito makes her a widow. This, he believes, will wipe him free of the sin of adultery.

ACT IV SCENE 2***SD: Enter Hippolito, very agitated*****HIPPOLITO**

The morning so far wasted, yet his baseness
 So impudent? See if the very sun do not blush at him!
 Dare he do thus much, and know me alive?
 Put case one must be vicious, as I know myself
 Monstrously guilty: there's a blind time made for't.
 He might use only that; 'twere conscionable.
 Art, silence, closeness, subtlety, and darkness
 Are fit for such a business; but there's no pity
 To be bestowed on an apparent sinner.
 I love her good so dearly that no brother
 Shall venture farther for a sister's glory
 Than I for her preferment.

SD: Enter Leantio and a Page**LEANTIO**

[aside] Once again
 I'll see that glist'ring whore, shines like a serpent
 Now the court sun's upon her.—Page!
 I'll go in state too.—See the coach be ready.
 I'll hurry away presently.

HIPPOLITO

Yes, you shall hurry,
 And the devil after you.

SD: Hippolito strikes Leantio

Take that at setting forth.

SD: Hippolito draws his sword

Now, an you'll draw, we are upon equal terms, sir.
 Thou took'st advantage of my name in honour
 Upon my sister. I ne'er saw the stroke
 Come till I found my reputation bleeding,
 And therefore count it I no sin to valour
 To serve thy lust so. Now we are of even hand,
 Take your best course against me. You must die.

LEANTIO

[aside] How close sticks envy to man's happiness!
 When I was poor, and little cared for life,
 I had no such means offered me to die;
 No man's wrath minded me.

SD: Leantio draws his sword

Slave, I turn this to thee,
To call thee to account for a wound lately
Of a base stamp upon me.

HIPPOLITO

'Twas most fit
For a base metal. Come and fetch one now
More noble then, for I will use thee fairer
Than thou hast done thine own soul, or our honour.

SD: They fight. Hippolito wounds Leantio, who falls

And there I think 'tis for thee!

VOICES

Help, help! O, part 'em!

LEANTIO

False wife! I feel now thou'st prayed heartily for me.
Rise, strumpet, by my fall; thy lust may reign now.
My heart-string and the marriage knot that tied thee
Breaks both together.

SD: Leantio dies

HIPPOLITO

There I heard the sound on't,
And never liked string better.

SD: Enter Livia [at one door], Guardiano, Isabella, Ward, and Sordido [at another]

LIVIA

Shift for thyself. What is he thou hast killed?

HIPPOLITO

Our honour's enemy.

GUARDIANO

Know you this man, lady?

LIVIA

Leantio! My love's joy! *[To Hippolito]* Wounds stick upon thee
As deadly as thy sins. Art thou not hurt?
The devil take that fortune! And he dead!
Let him be apprehended with all speed,
For fear he scape away. Lay hands on him;
We cannot be too sure; 'tis wilful murder.

HIPPOLITO

Will you but entertain a noble patience
Till you but hear the reason, worthy sister?

LIVIA

The reason! That's a jest Hell falls a-laughing at.
Is there a reason found for the destruction

Of our more lawful loves, and was there none
 To kill the black lust 'twixt thy niece and thee
 That has kept close so long?

GUARDIANO

How's that, good madam?

LIVIA

Too true, sir. There she stands; let her deny't.
 The deed cries shortly in the midwife's arms,
 Unless the parents' sins strike it stillborn;
 And if you be not deaf and ignorant,
 You'll hear strange notes ere long.—Look upon me, wench!
 'Twas I betrayed thy honour subtly to him
 Under a false tale. It lights upon me now.—
 His arm has paid me home upon thy breast,
 My sweet beloved Leantio!

GUARDIANO

Was my judgement
 And care in choice so dev'lishly abused,
 So beyond shamefully? All the world will grin at me.

THE REST OF ACT IV and ACT V SCENE I

Livia has told everyone about Hippolito's incestuous relationship. The evidence is clear, because Isabella is pregnant with Hippolito's child. The newly married Ward takes this rather badly, having been instantly cuckolded. Many harsh words are said. Livia and Guardiano conspire revenge. They plot to kill Hippolito, because he killed Livia's lover Leantio, and to kill Isabella, for disgracing Guardiano's son, the Ward. To set up their plot they beg forgiveness from Hippolito and Isabella and ask them to participate in the masque they have planned for the Duke's wedding celebration. Everyone agrees to participate.

IV.iii, Bianca and the Duke are married. The Cardinal interrupts the wedding to deplore the use of the church to cover sin. Both the Duke and Bianca say that they are repenting by their marriage, not covering sin. The Cardinal foresees nothing but lust burning itself out upon itself and leaves with an ominous warning to the couple.

V.i To kill Hippolito, Guardiano plants spikes under a trap door and shows Ward how to spring the trap door when Hippolito is upon it. Guardiano will stamp his foot as a signal, and the Ward will drop Hippolito to his death. Guardiano also has a backup plan. If Ward misses his cue, there are boys dressed as cupids who will shoot Hippolito with poisoned arrows as if it is part of the masque. Guardiano says no one will suspect murder at a festival.

ACT V SCENE 2

SD: Flourish of trumpets. Enter Duke, Bianca, Lord Cardinal, Fabritio, and other fancy people

DUKE

Now our fair duchess, your delight shall witness
How you're beloved and honoured. All the glories
Bestowed upon the gladness of this night
Are done for your bright sake.

BIANCA

I am the more
In debt, my lord, to loves and courtesies
That offer up themselves so bounteously
To do me honoured grace without my merit.

DUKE

A goodness set in greatness, how it sparkles
Afar off like pure diamonds set in gold!

[To Bianca and Lord Cardinal]

How perfect my desires were might I witness
But a fair noble peace 'twixt your two spirits!
Good sir!

LORD CARDINAL

I profess peace, and am content.

DUKE

I'll see the seal upon't, and then 'tis firm.

LORD CARDINAL

You shall have all your wish.

SD: Cardinal kisses Bianca

DUKE

I have all indeed now.

BIANCA

But I have made surer work. This shall not blind me.
Cardinal, you die this night; the plot's laid surely.
In time of sports death may steal in securely.
For he that's most religious, holy friend,
Does not at all hours think upon his end.

DUKE

Sweet duchess, take your seat; list to the argument.

SD: The Duke reads from the theatrical program describing the masque

'There is a nymph that haunts the woods and springs,
In love with two at once, and they with her.
Equal it runs; but, to decide these things,

The cause to mighty Juno they refer,
 She being the marriage goddess. The two lovers,
 They offer sighs, the nymph a sacrifice,
 All to please Juno, who by signs discovers
 How the event shall be. So that strife dies.

BIANCA

In troth, my lord, a pretty, pleasing argument.

SD: Music plays to start the masque. Enter Hymen in yellow, Ganymede in a blue robe powdered with stars, and Hebe in a white robe with golden stars, with covered cups in their hands. They dance a short dance and bow to the Duke. Hymen gives Bianca a cup, then speaks

HYMEN

To thee, fair bride, Hymen offers up
 Of nuptial joys this the celestial cup.
 Taste it, and thou shalt ever find
 Love in thy bed, peace in thy mind.

SD: Bianca drinks

GANYMEDE

Two cups of nectar have we begged from Jove.
 Hebe, give that to innocence, I this to love.

SD: Ganymede gives a cup to the Duke. Hebe gives a cup to the Lord Cardinal. The Duke and Lord Cardinal both drink. Hebe, Hymen, and Ganymede all exit

DUKE

But soft: here's no such persons in the argument
 As these three, Hymen, Hebe, Ganymede.
 The actors that this model here discovers
 Are only four: Juno, a nymph, two lovers.

BIANCA *[trying to cover]*

This is some antemasque, belike, my lord,
 To entertain time. Now my peace is perfect,
 Let sports come on apace. Now is their time, my lord.
 Hark you, you hear from 'em!

SD: Music plays. Two nymphs enter with lighted candles. Isabella enters, dressed in flowers and garlands, bearing a censer with smoking incense in it. They set the censer and tapers on Juno's altar, with much reverence. Juno, played by Livia, hovers above suspended from a swing.

DUKE

The nymph indeed.

ISABELLA AND THE NYMPHS

Juno, nuptial goddess,
 Thou that rul'st o'er coupled bodies,

Ti'st man to woman never to forsake her,
 Thou only powerful marriage-maker,
 Pity this amazed affection.
 I love both, and both love me;
 Nor know I where to give rejection,
 My heart likes so equally,
 Till thou set'st right my peace of life
 And with thy power conclude this strife.

ISABELLA

Now with my thanks depart you to the springs,
 I to these wells of love.

SD: Nymphs exit

Thou sacred goddess
 And queen of nuptials, daughter to great Saturn,
 Sister and wife to Jove, imperial Juno,
 Pity this passionate conflict in my breast,
 This tedious war 'twixt two affections.
 Crown one with victory, and my heart's at peace.

SD: Enter Hippolito and Guardiano, dressed as shepherds

HIPPOLITO

Make me that happy man, thou mighty goddess.

GUARDIANO

But I live most in hope if truest love
 Merit the greatest comfort.

ISABELLA

I love both
 With such an even and fair affection,
 I know not which to speak for, which to wish for,
 Till thou, great arbitress 'twixt lovers' hearts,
 By thy auspicious grace design the man;
 Which pity I implore.

HIPPOLITO and GUARDIANO

We all implore it.

SD: Livia as Juno descends from the ceiling into view, with two winged Cupids holding bows and arrows

ISABELLA

And after sighs, contrition's truest odours,
 I offer to thy powerful deity
 This precious incense. May it ascend peacefully.

SD: Incense from Isabella's censer drifts up toward Livia.

[Aside] And if it keep true touch, my good aunt Juno,

'Twill try your immortality er't be long.
I fear you'll never get so nigh heaven again
When you're once down.

LIVIA

Though you and your affections
Seem all as dark to our illustrious brightness
As night's inheritance, Hell, we pity you,
And your requests are granted. You ask signs;
They shall be given you. We'll be gracious to you.
He of those twain which we determine for you
Love's arrows shall wound twice.

[Aside, feeling ill from the poison incense] This savour overcomes me.—
[back to Isabella] Now, for a sign of wealth and golden days,
Bright-eyed prosperity which all couples love,
Ay, and makes love, take that!

SD: Livia throws flaming gold upon Isabella's lap

Our brother Jove
Never denies us of his burning treasure,
T'express bounty.

SD: Isabella falls and dies

DUKE

She falls down upon't. What's the conceit of that?

FABRITIO

As overjoyed, belike. Too much prosperity overjoys us all,
And she has her lapful, it seems, my lord.

GUARDIANO [aside, about Hippolito]

All's fast. Now comes my part to toll him hither;
Then with a stamp given he's dispatched as cunningly.

SD: Hippolito goes to check on Isabella

HIPPOLITO

Stark dead. O, treachery! Cruelly made away!

SD: Hippolito strikes the floor in grief. At this signal, the offstage Ward opens the trapdoor. Guardiano falls through the trapdoor and dies.

[startled] How's that?

FABRITIO

Look, there's one of the lovers dropped away too.

DUKE

Why, sure this plot's drawn false; here's no such thing.

LIVIA

O, I am sick to th' death. Let me down quickly.
This fume is deadly. O, 't has poisoned me!

SD: Livia and the Cupids are lowered to the stage floor

My subtlety is sped: her art has quitted me;
My own ambition pulls me down to ruin.

SD: Livia, poisoned by Isabella's incense, dies.

HIPPOLITO [to Isabella]

Nay, then I kiss thy cold lips, and applaud
This thy revenge in death.

SD: The cupids shoot their poison arrows at Hippolito

FABRITIO

Look, Juno's down too
What makes she there? Her pride should keep aloft.
She was wont to scorn the earth in other shows.

HIPPOLITO

O, death runs through my blood, in a wild flame too.
Let 'em not scape; they have spoiled me. The shaft's deadly.

DUKE [the most befuddled that ever befuddled]

I have lost myself in this quite.

HIPPOLITO

My great lords, we are all confounded.

DUKE

How?

HIPPOLITO

Dead; and I worse.

FABRITIO

Dead? My girl dead? I hope
My sister Juno has not served me so.

HIPPOLITO

Lust and forgetfulness has been amongst us,
And we are brought to nothing. Some blest charity
Lend me the speeding pity of his sword
To quench this fire in blood. Leantio's death
Has brought all this upon us—now I taste it—
And made us lay plots to confound each other.
[Pointing to Livia] She, in a madness for her lover's death,
Revealed a fearful lust in our near bloods,
For which I am punished dreadfully and unlooked for;
Proved her own ruin too. Vengeance met vengeance
Like a set match, as if the plagues of sin
Had been agreed to meet here all together.
Therefore the wonder ceases.—O, this torment!

SD: Enter a Lord and an armed guard.

HIPPOLITO [aside]

Run and meet death then,
And cut off time and pain.

SD: Unable to bear the painful poison, Hippolito impales himself on a guard's halberd, and dies.

DUKE

Upon the first night of our nuptial honours,
Destruction play her triumph, and great mischiefs
Masque in expected pleasures! 'Tis prodigious;
They're things most fearfully ominous; I like 'em not.
Remove these ruined bodies from our eyes.

BIANCA [aside, looking on Lord Cardinal]

Not yet? No change? When falls he to the earth?

SD: A Lord gives the Duke a letter

LORD

Please but your excellence to peruse that paper,
Which is a brief confession from the heart
Of him that fell first, ere his soul departed;
And there the darkness of these deeds speaks plainly.

DUKE [weakened, to Lord Cardinal]

Read, read; for I am lost in sight and strength.

LORD CARDINAL

My noble brother!

BIANCA

O, the curse of wretchedness!
My deadly hand is fall'n upon my lord.
Destruction take me to thee!—Give me way.

DUKE

My heart swells bigger yet. Help here; break't ope.
My breast flies open next.

SD: The duke, who was served the Cardinal's poison, dies.

BIANCA

O, with the poison
That was prepared for thee, thee, Cardinal.
'Twas meant for thee.

LORD CARDINAL

Poor prince!

BIANCA Accursèd error!

[To Duke] Give me thy last breath, thou infected bosom,
And wrap two spirits in one poisoned vapour.

SD: Bianca kisses the Duke

Thus, thus reward thy murderer, and turn death
 Into a parting kiss. My soul stands ready at my lips,
 E'en vexed to stay one minute after thee.

LORD CARDINAL

The greatest sorrow and astonishment
 That ever struck the general peace of Florence
 Dwells in this hour.

BIANCA

So my desires are satisfied:
 I feel death's power within me.
 Thou hast prevailed in something, cursèd poison,
 Though thy chief force was spent in my lord's bosom.
 What make I here? These are all strangers to me,
 Not known but by their malice now thou'rt gone;
 Nor do I seek their pities.

SD: Bianca drinks from the poisoned cup

LORD CARDINAL

O, restrain
 Her ignorant wilful hand!

BIANCA

Now do; 'tis done.
 Leantio, now I feel the breach of marriage
 At my heart-breaking. O, the deadly snares
 That women set for women, without pity
 Either to soul or honour! Learn by me
 To know your foes. In this belief I die:
 Like our own sex we have no enemy, no enemy.
 Pride, greatness, honours, beauty, youth, ambition,
 You must all down together, there's no help for't.
 Yet this my gladness is, that I remove
 Tasting the same death in a cup of love.

SD: Bianca dies

LORD CARDINAL

Sin, what thou art these ruins show too piteously.
 Two kings on one throne cannot sit together,
 But one must needs down, for his title's wrong;
 So where lust reigns, that prince cannot reign long.

END OF PLAY