

THE TALE ABOUT ERRORS

By the Guildford Shakespeare Young Company

First performed at St Mary's Church, April 30th 2017

MERACUSE

- | | |
|-------------------|----------|
| 1. KING ALEON | DOM |
| 2. PRINCE BENIX | LOGAN |
| 3. PRINCE JAMILLO | LUCA |
| 4. EMILE | LUCY |
| 5. MARIANA | EMMALINE |
| 6. PAULA | ERIN |
| 7. GEONATO | ISAAC |
| 8. BIANCA | MOLLY |

ARPHEUS

- | | |
|------------------|----------|
| 1. DUCHESS SOLNA | MOLLY |
| 2. LUNA | MALLIE |
| 3. ROSE | GEORGIA |
| 4. ANGELOS | CAI |
| 5. LUCIA | ERIN |
| 6. ALEON | DOM |
| 7. BENIX | LOGAN |
| 8. MARIANA | EMMALINE |
| 9. JAMILLO | LUCA |
| 10. MERCHANT | ISAAC |
| 11. ABBESS | LUCY |

ACT 1

SCENE 1

SCENE 2

SCENE 3

SCENE 4

ACT 2

SCENE 5

SCENE 6

SCENE 7

SCENE 8

SCENE 9

SCENE 10

SCENE 11

ACT 1.

SCENE 1.

Enter Emile, Mariana and Bianca.

MARIANA

Why did you choose this dress? The other was much better.

EMILE

I told you then and I'll tell you now. You have terrible taste.

MARIANA

Well, at least you won't be wearing it long.

BIANCA

It is a shame you can only wear it for a day.

MARIANA

That's not what I mean. You won't wear it long, because your new husband will soon have it off.

EMILE

It's a little late for that.

BIANCA

I still can't quite believe it. My cousin, sweet Emile, marrying the King and mother to our country's heir. Meracuse can speak of nothing else.

EMILE

I've tried not to listen. Are they being terribly rude?

MARIANA

You know the public are madly in love with you. The King may have the crown, but it's not half as beautiful as you.

BIANCA

Was that a compliment, Mariana?

EMILE

You'll have to watch yourself, cousin or you'll make a name for yourself.

MARIANA

If my name stands for anything, let it be honesty.

Enter Geonato

GEONATO

It's almost five o'clock, daughter. Time you were ready.

MARIANA

She's already got her dress, uncle. She can't sit on the church steps until the King returns from War. Who knows when that will be.

GEONATO

It may be sooner than you think. I received this letter.

Emile reads.

EMILE

My King comes tonight.

Mariana takes the letter.

MARIANA

He must be close. He was only three leagues away when he sent this.

BIANCA

Does he mention the war?

EMILE

How many have they lost?

MARIANA

No one of importance.

EMILE AND BIANCA

Cousin.

MARIANA

I mean, no one we know.

GEONATO

King Aleon has always proved himself to be a great general.

MARIANA

If only modesty were one of his virtues. See how he praises himself. I have vanquished the enemy, acting far beyond the promise of my age. I have the strength of a lion and the face of a tender lamb.

Emile takes the letter back.

EMILE

He says nothing of the kind. He exceeds expectation, though he expects little of himself.

MARIANA

Sickening. I pray you, has his brother returned?

BIANCA

Which brother do you mean?

GEONATO

I am sure my niece means Prince Benix of Pedina.

EMILE

Oh, he's returned. My king says he is on fine form.

MARIANA

If he survived then he must have avoided the fighting all together. Perhaps his boot became lodged in the mud. Any excuse would have served him.

EMILE

Surely my lord would have leant him new boots.

GEONATO

You must not mistake your cousin. There is a merry war between her and Prince Benix. Most fight with swords, but my niece prefers to use her wits.

MARIANA

And it serves me well. In our last conflict, I took four of the Prince's five wits. I should feel sorry for the man, sending him to war, with just one. Tell me, does the letter say where he can be found?

EMILE

I have happy news for you. Prince Benix is following his brother here.

MARIANA

O Lord, he will hang upon you like a disease.

EMILE

Aleon cannot think better of his brother.

BIANCA

They were inseparable in their childhoods. After all, few can tell them apart.

MARIANA

Perhaps Benix will have some visible scar, to help you. As for the other--

GEONATO

Hush. Here they come. Paula met them at the gate.

Aleon, Benix, Jamillo, Paula and others enter.

PAULA

My brother, daughter and nieces, may I present the King of Meracuse.

Emile runs and hugs Aleon.

ALEON

The moon has changed nine times since we left our throne, but my lady does not wane. She waxes with every passing day, growing more and more beautiful.

EMILE

I hope I will wane soon, or there will be a new moon.

ALEON

Then I will surround it with so much silver, that the original will pale in comparison.

GEONATO

It is good to see you, your majesty.

ALEON

Call me Aleon, father. We are all family now and once our nuptials have concluded I trust you will stay a little longer to share my home.

GEONATO

You are too kind, your majesty—I mean, Aleon.

ALEON

My reasons are purely selfish, I assure you. Who wouldn't wish to let the wide world see such a glorious bride?

BENIX

Geonato may not be so pleased. Though you are a king, your bride is still his daughter.

GEONATO

A trusted daughter and a loyal subject. I willingly hand her over.

BENIX

I fear you give her up too quickly. Is there something wrong with her, that you would be rid of her so easily?

EMILE

I do hope you will have kinder words for me when I wear my white dress.

BENIX

Madam, if I told you kind words then how would you tell me apart from your husband?

MARIANA

It amazes me that you're still talking, Benix. No one's listening.

BENIX

If it isn't Little Miss Vain. Are you truly here, or is a parrot screeching?

MARIANA

I'd rather a parrot's beak than your beastly face. Shall we go, cousin?

BENIX

If only my horse was as quick to move as you. But please, depart.

MARIANA

And leave you with the last word? I know you too well for that.

ALEON

You must stay, brother. We have many jobs for you.

BENIX

I will remain for now. Though I'll stay no longer than your marriage. The last nine months in my company must have tired you.

ALEON

I have the strength to endure you a little longer.

BENIX

The morning after you are joined, I must away.

ALEON

You'll stay a week. I'll not hear a word against it.

BENIX

Then I must be silent.

MARIANA

Is that possible?

EMILE

My Lord. Will you stay for me?

BENIX

I have been away from home too long.

EMILE

Then I must remind you that you speak to your future sister and Queen. You will stay, either as my guest, or my prisoner. You may choose.

BENIX

I will be your guest, but only to avoid the cells.

ALEON

Well said, Emile. If only I could be as persuasive as you, then this war with Arphesus would not have waged so long.

PAULA

Even your grace cannot end their hate with words. Do they still kill any man from Meracuse who sets foot on their land? Because I've heard--

ALEON

We have left the war behind us. If you will guide the way, I will follow.

PAULA

First, let me introduce our other guest. Lord Jamillo, we are happy to see you beside your brothers once more.

GEONATO

Of course. You are most welcome, my lord. If there is anything we can get for you, during your stay, you only have to ask.

JAMILLO

I thank you.

BENIX

Our younger brother doesn't like to waste his words.

GEONATO

Neither do I when there are drinks to be shared. Come on. Follow me.

Exit all but Jamillo.

Scene 2

JAMILLO

My older brother speaks sense in only one respect. I will not waste my words or time on them. I should be as decorated as they are. We fought side-by-side, but the pair see no further than their mirror. Too long have they ignored me and I will be a thorn in their sides.

EMILE

(From Off) Lord Jamillo!

JAMILLO

Any illness I cause will heal me, but I must hide my true face till then.

Jamillo hides.

Enter Emile and Mariana.

MARIANA

Jamillo?

EMILE

Lord Jamillo! Why didn't you follow to Geonato's?

MARIANA

Why do we search for him? One look from that man and I get indigestion.

EMILE

Their family has a strange effect on you. The younger brother gives you heart-burn, while the other burns your heart.

MARIANA

Surely you don't mean Aleon?

EMILE

Don't think you can fool me. I know why you claw at Benix.

MARIANA

I'd rather you had meant Aleon. Now, if only there was a man between Benix and Jamillo. One never talks, while the other never stops.

EMILE

You could silence him with a kiss?

MARIANA

I'd rather silence him with my boot.

EMILE

Please yourself, but remember, if you cannot say what you mean, then it may help to write it in verse.

Emile exits.

MARIANA

What should I make of this? My heart leaps when I see Benix, it's true. Though, my fists leap to its defence whenever he speaks. Would I have us celebrate a double wedding? It may be so, but I could never tell him. My cousin is right and I must write it in verse...

Mariana starts to write a poem...

JAMILLO

This is an opportunity if ever I smelled one.

MARIANA

"The goddess of love,
That flies like a dove,
Would have you know me
And how much I love—"

Enter Jamillo

JAMILLO

Good day, Mariana.

MARIANA

Lord Jamillo. How long have you been listening?

JAMILLO

I'm afraid you have lost the heart of my brother.

MARIANA

The truth is that he did lend it to me once, but I sent it back.

JAMILLO

I see you have a merry heart, but we are not so dissimilar, you and I.

MARIANA

How so?

JAMILLO

We only show half of our face to the world. The other half is turned towards the sun and it burns us.

MARIANA

It is true that I am sun-burnt. Every day without Benix is like a year. Worst of all, I feel ill towards my cousin, the sweetest creature on earth, for she will marry and I cannot.

JAMILLO

I'm glad you think so highly of her. It's a shame her husband will not.

MARIANA

What do you mean? Aleon's affection is obvious to all.

JAMILLO

You do not know my brother as I do. He is a King with high tastes. I hope she has the strength to survive her fall from his grace.

MARIANA

The death of her marriage would be the death of her. But this will never happen. I won't believe it.

JAMILLO

My reputation precedes me, but trust me now. We can save your cousin and place you on the path to my brother's heart.

MARIANA

It isn't possible. While my cousin marries the King, Benix is forced to make a political match. His advisors will have him marry some foreign beauty.

JAMILLO

But if the King never marries your cousin, then Benix can choose who he will. Who better than the lady who has rescued her cousin from his own brother's folly.

MARIANA

What would you have me do?

ALEON

(From Off) Jamillo!

JAMILLO

Just follow my lead.

Aleon enters

JAMILLO

Now we are alone, Mariana. You must repeat what you wrote to me. Is it possible that Emile could be in love with another?

ALEON

Strange words are on the wind.

JAMILLO

It doesn't bear thinking about. Do you really think it's true?

MARIANA

Do I think it's true?

JAMILLO

(Whispering) He is ready for the bait, but he needs more. *(Loudly)* You told me that she hasn't slept for twenty nights, awaiting his return, when she should have been thinking of Aleon alone.

MARIANA

That's right.

JAMILLO

And she has received letters from this man?

MARIANA

Yes, but she tore them into a thousand pieces, in fear of being discovered.

ALEON

I would think this was a trick if only my brother spoke, but everyone trusts this lady.

JAMILLO

We must tell Aleon, before it is too late.

MARIANA

What will we achieve by this?

ALEON

You will have revealed the truth to your King. You do not speak in private, so tell me everything.

JAMILLO

Please do not blame Mariana, brother. She was only seeking my advice.

ALEON

And what advice would you give?

JAMILLO

To be certain of the facts before moving forward. I trust your grace still intends to marry tomorrow.

ALEON

You know I do.

JAMILLO

You are an honourable man, but your lady turns her affection towards another...

MARIANA

My Lord—

JAMILLO

I know what you will say Mariana, but we must reveal it all. Emile is in love with my elder and your equal. She belongs to Benix now.

ALEON

I don't believe it. What proof can you offer?

MARIANA

Your grace. There is no proof, for Emile--

JAMILLO

Emile tore and burned his letters, but you saw her power over him.

ALEON

It is true that he wouldn't stay when I asked him to, though he obeyed her immediately. I don't want to believe you, but there has always been something hot between them.

EMILE

(From Off) Aleon?

BENIX

(From Off) Brother!

JAMILLO

They come now. Let us conceal ourselves, so we can observe them.

ALEON

We will do this and watch them closely.

JAMILLO

Come, Mariana.

Aleon, Jamillo and Mariana hide.

EMILE

It seems like no one wants to stay inside today.

BENIX

It amazes me that my brother could bear to be apart from you for a single minute. Had I been him I would have surrendered on the first day of war, so I could return to you.

EMILE

You would have done so to keep your hands clean, not to see me. I know where your heart lies.

BENIX

If I were my brother, then my heart would lie here, with this rising moon. Honestly, I will love this child, for it will surely resemble me and everyone says that I love myself above all else.

EMILE

Save one, I think.

BENIX

You promised never to tell.

EMILE

I will keep your secret for as long as it amuses me. Come, let us find the others. I suddenly feel quite faint...

Emile and Benix exit.

Enter Aleon, Jamillo and Mariana.

ALEON

My heart is dancing, but not for joy. Did you see those touching palms, those pinching fingers? Those mirrored smiles are meant for me. Not for my brother, Sir Snake.

MARIANA

This was nothing, your majesty.

ALEON

Is the way he touched her nothing? Is touching cheeks? Wishing the clock spin, so they can whisper in secret once more? I cannot marry her.

MARIANA

Aleon, my king, you mustn't be hasty. Remember my cousin as you have always known her.

ALEON

You have always been kind to me, Mariana, but now I know of this mischief, there is no turning back. When we should exchange our vows, I will shame her, in front of the congregation.

JAMILLO

It is better to prevent the plague, than cure it. Who knows what may have grown from here?

ALEON

Once again, you show me the truth, Jamillo. For nine months have I been away and so has Benix. Enough time for my lady to bear his fruit.

MARIANA

My lord, this day has taken a terrible turn--

ALEON

Peace. He returns.

Benix enters.

BENIX

Brother! I bring you great news. It may be a little before her time, but Emile is delivering your child.

ALEON

My child?

BENIX

Yes... Why do you stand here so grey in the face?

MARIANA

Your brother is not as he was, Benix.

BENIX

Whatever pains him, I have the cure. Follow me and I'll show you a miracle.

Benix exits.

MARIANA

Come, Aleon. One glimpse of the child and I'm sure all your worries will melt.

ALEON

We shall see. If not, the villains will hang.

Exit.

Scene 3

Enter Emile, Mariana, Bianca, Geonato, Paula and others.

EMILE

Take my daughter. It's unwise for her to be so close to my dress.

BIANCA

I can't get enough of this sweet cherub.

EMILE

Leave your kisses, sister and save the soft words. She needs to grow up tough and ready for the world.

BIANCA

If you want a harsh tongue, then step-forward, cousin, Mariana!

MARIANA

You must forgive me. I feel sick today.

EMILE

You'd have to be dying to bring me down today. This wedding will be a tale that shall stir the heart for centuries to come.

MARIANA

But will it be a sad tale or a merry one?

GEONATO

A merry one, of course.

PAULA

You must stand ready, neice. The King arrives.

Enter Aleon, Benix and Jamillo.

GEONATO

My most royal majesty, how I have looked forward to this day.

PAULA

Your majesty, do you come here to marry this lady?

ALEON

No, but I think you do.

PAULA

Lady, do you come here to marry your King?

EMILE

I do.

PAULA

If either of you know any reason why you should not be joined, speak now or forever hold your peace.

ALEON

Do you know of any reason, Emile?

EMILE

No, my lord.

GEONATO

Not a single person here knows an honest reason against this match.

ALEON

Your ignorance has always been your strength, Geonato. Do you mean that you would give me your daughter with an unburdened soul?

GEONATO

I give her with as much pleasure as I received her.

ALEON

Then you will be happy to receive her once more. This hobby-horse will never be my queen.

EMILE

What do you mean by this, my lord?

ALEON

Do you see me then? And can you see my brother? Can you see the difference between us?

EMILE

I don't know what you mean. Are you unwell?

GEONATO

Your majesty, I may only be your subject, but I will not let anyone treat my daughter this way. I beg you to reach your purpose.

PAULA

Shall I continue?

BENIX

Hold fast, Paula. This looks not like a nuptial.

EMILE

Stay where you are. This must be some sort of mistake.

ALEON

The mistake was yours. You mistook me for Benix and swerved to his bed.

BIANCA

Is this meant to be a joke?

MARIANA

If I may my Lord. Whatever you think has happened, you only need to look at your child to set it all aside.

ALEON

Take that girl from me. My brother's blood runs in her.

BENIX

My blood?

EMILE

Aleon, you can't think this is true.

MARIANA

How can it be? Please, just look at the baby!

JAMILLO

What would that prove? Do not test the King's patience.

MARIANA

He will know his own child when he sees it.

ALEON

I would rather be blind than look upon her. Take it from my sight.

MARIANA

Benix, say something.

BENIX

Aleon, If I need to say this, then rest assured that I have come nowhere near her. If this baby is not yours then I could travel to the ends of the earth and never meet another honest woman.

ALEON

Hold your tongue. I banish Emile from my kingdom and trust never to see her again. If I do, I will not be so merciful.

BENIX

My brother has gone mad.

MARIANA

Speak to him, Emile.

EMILE

What can I say? You know, my grace, how I have lived my life. I have been as stone, unmoved since the day you left for war and only sprung to life when you returned. I love Benix, it's true, but only as befits your brother.

ALEON

You are a traitor. You are condemned to exile and this brat must go with you, or it will be hanged.

Emile faints.

BIANCA

Sister! Help me. Help me.

MARIANA

Emile, can you hear me?

BENIX

Aleon, Look at what you have done to your wife!

ALEON

She is not my wife and that is not my child.

JAMILLO

Come, Aleon. The truth has come to light and we should away.

GEONATO

You must not leave, not before you renounce your decree.

ALEON

I am not a feather to be blown in the wind. If you refuse to take this child, then throw it in the fire. It's all the same to me.

Aleon and Jamillo exit.

BENIX

Emile, can you hear me?

BIANCA

I don't think she's breathing! That brute has killed her.

PAULA

She is coming to.

GEONATO

But what does she wake to? If the King thinks she has wronged him then where will she be safe?

PAULA

The king has had some strange dream. Look on your daughter and tell me that those are not the eyes of an honest lady.

GEONATO

What do you say, Emile? Have you given the king reason to doubt you?

EMILE

Father, if you can prove that I have been with another in the last year, month, day or decade then I give you permission to torture me and discover a thousand untold secrets I have kept from you.

BENIX

My brother has been abused and put upon. What do you say, Mariana?

MARIANA

I dare not believe it.

BENIX

You won't say it, but I saw the way you looked at my younger brother. Jamillo has not been silent in this.

GEONATO

These hands will tear him for wounding my daughter's honour.

PAULA

Be patient, brother and take my advice. To speak out against the king and his brother could be taken as treason.

GEONATO

Is there an alternative? My daughter must be protected?

PAULA

And she shall be. Let us take Emile to safety, letting it be known that she did perish today.

BENIX

How will that help?

PAULA

As long as the king is in his rage she will never be safe. In time the king may come to prize your daughter for her full worth once more. Till then I have a secret place, where I can watch over her.

BIANCA

What do you say, Emile? Could you do this?

EMILE

It's clear to me that I must be patient until I return to the heavens' favour.

MARIANA

What of the child? She will not be safe here, either.

BIANCA

She will go with Emile. Who would think to separate them?

EMILE

I would, sister. It will break my heart, but I will not have her taken to prison with me. Which of you will take her?

BENIX

I may not be her father, but I will treat her as if she was another part of me. Who would meet us and think we were not family?

MARIANA

Where will you go, Benix?

BENIX

I have a country in mind, but, for everyone's safety, I will not tell you.

MARIANA

You will have to tell me.

BENIX

Mariana, I dare not. For your safety as well as this sweet baby's.

MARIANA

If you will not tell me then you will have to walk ahead of me.

BENIX

You don't mean to come with me?

MARIANA

I do and that is the end of the matter. You will have to leave me with the last word, just this once.

PAULA

It is decided. I hope we will meet again someday and we can share our stories in happier times.

Exit.

Scene 4

BENIX

Are you going to cry on this entire journey?

MARIANA

I may weep longer than that.

BENIX

This area is known for its wild animal, yet the baby is quitter than you.

MARIANA

Nothing could hear us in this storm.

A noise.

MARIANA

How far are we from this ship of yours?

BENIX

It will not take long. My men were ready for my departure.

MARIANA

What will they do when you tell them where we're going?

BENIX

I expect many of them will leave my company. I'm counting on it.

MARIANA

And you're sure it's the best place to go? The enemy of our enemy is not our friend.

BENIX

It's the last place anyone will look for us. We have to keep the baby safe.

MARIANA

We have to do something about that.

BENIX

About what?

MARIANA

We can't keep calling her the baby. She needs a name.

BENIX

The only name I care for is my own.

MARIANA

As lovely as the name Benix is, I think we need another.

BENIX

What would you suggest?

MARIANA

Oh, I'm not the right person to decide.

BENIX

There's only you and me under this moon.

A noise.

MARIANA

You me and the wild animals.

BENIX

If we didn't have to protect this little one, I'd let the animals have me.

MARIANA

What madness is this?

BENIX

I must have done something to upset my brother. I must have given him some reason for suspicion.

MARIANA

You are not to blame for the way your brother acted. No matter how his thoughts formed, he has no excuse for dishonouring my cousin.

BENIX

It makes me ashamed to share his looks. If people look on me now, what will they see? Nothing except a villain.

MARIANA

Listen to me. You are not a villain.

BENIX

How could he slander Emile?

MARIANA

Benix, listen to me--

BENIX

All my bravery has melted into my heels. My tongue has become lead, though I'm sure you're thankful for that. What you would have done for that silence before?

MARIANA

If you gave me just a little now—

BENIX

Just thinking about my brother infects my blood. How did he come to mistrust Emile? If only I knew who was to blame then I could silence them.

MARIANA

I know, Benix.

BENIX

What did you say?

MARIANA

I said I know...

BENIX

You know what?

MARIANA

I know... I know what we should call the baby. We should call her Luna. After the moon.

BENIX

Very well. Her name will be Luna.

A noise.

BENIX

Did you hear that?

MARIANA

We must keep going.

BENIX

It's too late. Come close and shield yourself.

MARIANA

Benix. There's a shadow amongst the trees.

BENIX

If it attacks me, then take the baby and run. Did you hear me? Take the baby and run!

A bear attacks.

[Interval]

ACT 2

Scene 5

Time

Behold...

The messengers.

We bring joy

We bring terror.

We fetch for the good

And we fetch for the bad.

We are The Wings Of Time.

We fold seconds to minutes,

Hours to days,

And month to years.

Sixteen years, have we flown with you,

And now we land on foreign shores.

Look around.

Spy the sands of Arphesus,

Feel its ground beneath your feet

And witness the argument of time...

Scene 6

Aleon

I'm listening, Solna. Sentence me and be done with it.

Solna

I don't take orders from you, Aleon. The law is clear. For twenty years we have admitted no traffic between our two countries. You know, only too

well, that if anyone born in Meracuse steps foot on the shores of Arphesus they are sentenced to die. Your crown itself could not save you now.

Aleon

I would not give you the stones in my shoe, if they could save me.

Condemn me and my sorrow ends with the setting sun.

Solna

My guards believe these chains are unnecessary. But why would our rival king travel to us, in secrecy?

Aleon

You ask me to speak of my grief, but you know it all.

Solna

We know your tale and your actions were mocked as madness here. A madness that seems to have lingered.

Aleon

I have repented my actions every day since. I have scoured the earth for my child and left your land until last, for no man from Meracuse would dare venture here. I will never see my daughter again, nor my brother, who saved her from my wrath.

Solna

Do not think I will pardon you. I see you are a mere shell of the king I fought in the field, but I will not deny our law so great a prize. Yet, I will give you a day's grace. You have until this evening to find your daughter.

Aleon

Why do you prolong my misery?

Solna

You may have one more chapter to add to your tragedy, but, by dawn tomorrow, the book closes. Guards, take him away.

Scene 7

Angelos

Pin back your ears and gather round. I will spin you a tale that concerns three wanderers, tossed and turned beneath a hell-born sky...

Benix

Oh, Angelos. Must we hear this again?

Angelos

It's been a whole year since we heard it last. Would you deny Luna the chance to hear how she came to this country?

Lucia

If ever there was a time, it's her sixteenth birthday.

Benix

You tell this story on the day of her birth, on the day she bathes, the day she sleeps and the day she wakes. Luna is tired of it.

Lucia

I think Luna can decide what she's tired of. What do you say, girl?

Luna

I know the story, it's true. But you tell it so well I can hear it over and over.

Angelos

Mark these sweet words. If she never shared your looks, Benix, then who would believe that you could have such a fair daughter.

Benix

I take that as a compliment, Angelos. But you forget her mother. Would you not call her fair?

Mariana

Mind how you talk. You don't know how fierce I was in my former life.

Angelos

Not as fierce, I think, as the skies under which we found you. We stumbled across the shoreline, chasing our sheep.

Lucia

This was back in the days when our herd was beyond count and you could lose several ewes in the blink of an eye.

Angelos

Rain fell like tears and thunder drowned our ears. We could only see the cliffs for the flashes of lightning.

Lucia

We thought about returning home until the storm had turned and taking bets on what would find our sheep first, the wolves or the lightning.

Benix

If it had been the lightning, the wolves would have been in luck, for they dearly like cooked mutton.

Angelos

Another surge of light and we saw shadows moving on the beach.

Lucia

A man and a woman, cloaked and soaked to the bone, were huddling over some prize.

Angelos

What boil-brains, I thought. Only the mad and stupid would have been out in such a storm.

Mariana

I wonder which one you were.

Angelos

I must have been both to do what I did. But I'm getting ahead of myself. Let's have someone to embody these quivering bodies on the beach.

Mariana

I was there for real, I think I'll pass.

Angelos

How about you, Benix?

Benix

I'm quite comfortable, thank you.

Angelos

Then Luna shall play both her parents, this hand shall be her father and this hand her mother.

Mariana

Make me the right, for I have always been the most useful of the pair.

Luna

I will try and do you both proud. Where do you want me?

Lucia

Sit here and shiver, for you are cold from the rain.

Angelos

I threw a cloak around your shoulders and only then did I notice that you were holding a wee barne. Though I couldn't tell if it was a boy or a girl.

Lucia

You are a rude man. It was a very pretty barne.

Angelos

True, true. We took you and your child in for pity and sat you by our fire. There you ate and cried until your toes were warm again.

Luna

I hope my parents didn't cry for too long.

Lucia

I could scarcely believe your father's tale. Leaving their home for hope of a better life, they were set upon by a bear.

Angelos

To hear of him, this beast was wild and hairy with monstrous jaws that stretched wider than the largest human head.

Benix

This sounds like the perfect role for you, my dear.

Mariana

The size of my mouth is nothing, when compared to your head, but I shall play the beast. If only to attack you.

Lucia

Your father told us how the bear roared and how he stood firm against it.

Angelos

He roared back at the bear and the bear mocked him, till their roars drowned the sea itself.

Lucia

Your mother carried you into a hollow tree-trunk nearby, while the bear would have dined on your father's shoulders.

Angelos

But, as it swiped with its thick claws, your father dived into a ditch.

Lucia

And there you all hid, in stump and ditch, until the bear caught another scent and lurched into the darkness.

Benix

Leaving me with these scars.

Mariana

We've definitely heard this part of the tale. Did you learn anything new this time, Luna?

Luna

I did have one new thought. What became of the missing sheep?

Angelos

They were lost, claimed by the storm, no doubt, but we gained something much better in return.

Lucia

But remember, don't let anyone know that you're from Meracuse. If anyone asks, you're from Aradmus, just like us.

Luna

You should never have told me. You can't give away secrets if you don't know you hold them... But I will keep up the pretence while I'm in town.

Mariana

What are you going to buy for tonight's masked party? We'll need currants and prunes and raisins. And you mustn't forget the rice—

Benix

Rice? What will we do with rice?

Angelos

Fetch the drink and forget the rest.

Luna

Can I sample some before choosing which bottles to buy?

Benix

You're sixteen now, so I think a little won't hurt, but watch your tongue, wine has the habit of letting it slip.

Luna

You have my word that no traders will know our secret.

Mariana

But will we know yours? Will we finally meet your girlfriend, tonight?

Luna

You will, but you must promise to be kind. She is not like us.

Angelos

Thank heavens for that. Isn't it enough to see ourselves in the mirror, without seeing another reflect our very being?

Mariana

I'll come with you into town, dear. I have some errands that I must run.

Luna and Mariana exit.

Lucia

We will celebrate both these fair ladies, tonight.

Benix

My only shame is that I can hold no real claim to either of them. Luna knows she comes from Meracuse, but she calls me father with full faith.

Lucia

Blood or not, she is your daughter. Her quick smile is down to you.

Benix

You've had no small hand in that. Nor has Mariana.

Angelos

Her tongue only softens for Luna, though she can scold like boiling water.

Benix

I've thought long and hard for sixteen years about everything she gave up to be with us. She played no part in Luna's exile, yet she has stuck with us through it all.

Angelos

Are you thinking of finally making her your lawful wife?

Benix

If my former countrymen could see me now, they would hardly believe it.

Lucia

This is excellent news.

Benix

To mark the occasion, will you make me a ring?

Angelos

You can depend on me. I will craft a hoop worthy of Mariana's loveliness.

Benix

And you will charge me highly for it.

Angelos

If we were in better times, I would refuse, but any coin is greatly needed.

Scene 8

Jamillo

It's fifteen years since I saw my country, but my bones have not missed it.

Solna

When you crossed the ocean and swapped West for East, I would have been a fool to reject your knowledge of Meracuse. Your service since has left me in great need of you.

Jamillo

You are a ruler worthy of it. If only my brother had the same integrity.

Solna

You remind me. I have great news of your brother, the tyrant king.

Jamillo

Speak no more of him, sire. The mere thought of his name punishes me. The world is better without him.

Solna

I am glad to hear you say so. Wait until tonight and I will tell you how his story ends. Till then, tell me when you last saw my daughter, Rose.

Jamillo

I have not seen the princess for three days. She is rarely seen in court and frequently wanders outside the city's walls.

Solna

I have heard intelligence that she makes her way to the gypsy camp. What reason could she find to visit such homely folk?

Jamillo

I have heard that there is a girl, who draws her in.

Solna

I fear that she has been overtaken by some travelling sorcery. You will accompany me, as we question these gypsies. Their stupidity will be unable to hide their motives.

Jamillo

Your will is my command.

Solna

My best Jamillo. Let us put on our disguises.

Scene 9**Aleon**

I have circled the globe for sixteen years in search of my daughter. I only stopped twice, to pray for my departed wife and hear report of my younger brother's flight. I have found neither of them on my travels and there is no reason today will serve me better. Yet, if these are to be my last hours on the earth, I will wander it. But who is this that runs towards me?

Angelos enters.

Angelos

There you are. We've crafted the ring and placed it on our finest chain. Well, don't just stand there, take it.

Aleon

What do you want me to do with this?

Angelos

You know better than me. You may present it on one knee, or place it within a cup of wine, though make sure she doesn't swallow it.

Aleon

You made this for me? But I never asked for it.

Angelos

You only asked for it once, but you needn't ask me again. I'll see you later and you can give me the money. We've spent the last of ours on the party.

Aleon

If you were wise, you would take the money now, in case you never see the ring or money again.

Angelos

If I were wise, I would have sworn I never saw you. Fare well. We have much work to do.

Angelos exits.

Aleon

What should I make of this? Arphesus must have gained the better in the wars, if men can hand out golden gifts on the streets. But I am sure that man recognized me. Perhaps there is some hope here, after all.

Scene 10

Rose enters in a mask.

Rose

They call this a camp, but this is heaven and you are a goddess.

Luna

Forgive me, but you are a stranger here. I know you not.

Rose

Do you not love me?

Luna

Why, no more than reason.

Rose

Then I have been deceived, for Rose swore you did.

Luna

If you know Rose then you know her for a fool. If you keep company with her then you may remain a stranger.

Rose

Rose will not be merry to hear this news.

Luna

If she cares enough, then she will tell me herself.

Rose

Be careful what you ask for.

Rose takes off her mask.

Luna

It makes a change to see you in this lowly outfit. Dress me in a crown and I still look like a poor traveller, but your highness is obvious in any costume.

Rose

When I first met you I was low. My horse threw me at your feet and I have remained there ever since.

Luna

Oh, Rose. I'm scared that your mother could stumble upon us. How would she react if she found you, heir to the kingdom, bound to me?

Rose

What does that matter?

Luna

You wouldn't stand by me in face of the Duchess.

Rose

I am yours and not my mother's. Be merry, for your guests are arriving and we must celebrate, just as we'll celebrate our wedding one day.

Lucia enters.

Lucia

Where are your masks? Angelos has vanished, leaving me to be both cook, butler, mistress and servant. A pair of unknown friends have just arrived. I will welcome them, but you must entertain them. Quickly now.

Lucia exits.

Rose

Now, let the games begin.

Solna and Jamillo enter in masks.

Luna

Welcome, all. It is my aunt's wish that I should be hostess for the day. Will you tell me who you are?

Solna

You must pardon me, but we will not.

Luna

Then will you tell me who you are?

Jamillo

Not now. It is the custom for the hostess to guess who should be hiding beneath these visors. So says the book of a merry jests.

Rose

We are not the Duchess's jesters. Though we may deal in certain slanders.

Luna

We are no libertines, so let me see. You are surely distinguished guests, worthy of the flowers we grow here.

Rose

They suit your winter flowers only, for their hair is white.

Luna

You are both very welcome to our party.

Solna

This is the prettiest low-born girl I have ever seen. Too noble for this place.

Jamillo

She is the queen of hoops and bangles. But her rank does not befit a princess.

Lucia enters.

Solna

Pardon me, who is the young lady who talks with our host?

Lucia

I doubt I know much more than you. I have only known her for a few hours. Though, if you ask me, I would say they share a rare kind of love.

Solna

Watch further and I will show you something far rarer.

Luna

Here, sirs. Drink deep and dance.

Rose

Could you dare to refuse such a sweet offer? Whatever you are selling, I will buy, whatever the cost.

Luna

Your praises are too large. What would you have from me?

Rose

Just one dance. Place your hand in mine and let it go.

Solna

How now, gypsy. I see your mind is full of something more than dancing. When I was young I would have laid priceless gifts at my love's feet.

Rose

The only gift my love needs is my love.

Solna

And this proves your affection?

Rose

A king could give no more.

Solna

Do you feel the same, girl?

Luna

I can't speak as well, or mean better, to express my thoughts. I can only repeat the kind words I have heard.

Lucia

Unless I am much mistaken, marriage bells will not be far behind you two.

Rose

If I have my way, they will be in front of us.

Solna

Soft. Do you have a mother?

Rose

Show me a girl who does not and I'll ask her how.

Solna

Does she know about this?

Rose

She doesn't and I hope she never will.

Solna

I think the first guest of a wedding should be the mother. Or has she grown incapable and soft of mind?

Rose

She is as healthy as ever.

Solna

Then you should let her know.

Rose

I will not.

Lucia

Come now. Do you think she would grieve at your choice?

Rose

She has her own reasons against this marriage.

Solna

And would hasten your divorce.

Solna removes his disguise.

Solna

I dare not call you my daughter. I would have placed the orb of Arphesus in your hands, but you would rather hold this murky crystal. I am sorry, old

wench, that I can only shorten your life by a year.

Lucia

O, my heart!

Solna

You have raised an excellent piece of witchcraft to ensnare my blood, but I will have her beauty scratched with thorns until she can no longer be distinguished from the scorched earth you call home.

Rose

Mother, please--

Solna

As for you, daughter. You will never see this girl again. If you so much as sigh her name then you will have neither succession nor family. Follow me not. Jamillo will bring you to court and you shall count yourself lucky that you can still call it home.

Solna exits.

Lucia

Oh, my poor girl. What have you brought upon us?

Luna

How many times have I told you it would end like this? I told you our harmony would only last till its discovery.

Rose

Why do you look at me this way? I will be heir to my affection, rather than heir to my mother.

Luna

Do not think I was afraid of her. I was about to speak and tell her plainly, that the same sun shines on our camp as her court.

Lucia

I am unwound and roll towards the hangman. Oh, Luna. Did you know this was the princess?

Luna

I did and would place her back on the throne. Be gone. Look to your state.

Rose

Listen to me, Luna. I am the same as I ever was.

Jamillo

You heard your mother. This is desperate.

Rose

You must recognise this, Jamillo. I will not have all of Arphesus, all that the sun touches, or anything that the night hides, and give up my Luna.

Jamillo

I see nothing can move you, so listen close. You know that I am from Meracuse and never hoped to see its shores again, but, I will show you the way. There may you marry this mistress, while I stay and soften your mother's heart.

Rose

Do you mean this, Jamillo?

Jamillo

Lose these party frocks and don a disguise. Place a hat on your brow and muffle your face. Head to the shipyard and I will arrange your passage.

Rose

I thank, you Jamillo. Our life is in your hands.

Lucia, Luna and Rose exit.

Jamillo

Foolish youth. They run to the shipyard, but they will run aground well before they set foot on board. I will send word to the Duchess and bind them in chains. When I have prevented the loss of her only child, she will offer me land and jewels, but I will take nothing but Rose's hand. By marriage I will inherit Arphesus itself.

Scene 11

Benix

What are you doing here, Angelos? We're already late for the party.

Angelos

Benix, my debtors are at hand. I could only hold them off with the promise of the money you owe me. Will you come with me and settle this?

Benix

Of course. Do you have the ring with you?

Angelos

At least one of us is in a good humour today. When you have given my debtors the total, they will discharge me.

Benix

I don't have any money on me, Angelos. Besides, we must get to the party. Tell your gentleman to visit us there and we'll share a cup with them.

Angelos

Is that when you plan on giving Mariana the ring?

Benix

No, no. You must hide it until the right moment.

Angelos

Very good. Do you have it on you?

Benix

If I don't then I hope you do. I won't swap money for mere air.

Angelos

Leave the jokes to me, Benix. I have tried my man's patience too long already. Give me the money.

Benix

I will, as soon as you have given me the ring.

The Merchant enters with the officers.

Merchant

The hour is past, Angelos. Dispatch or be dispatched.

Angelos

Good sir. You must have heard your name on our lips.

Merchant

I am not accustomed to waiting, Angelos. If you cannot hand me the money then I'll hand you to this officer.

Angelos

Please read this note while Benix produces the ring.

Benix

I can't do that, Angelos.

Angelos

Come now. This joke wears thin. I gave it to you not half an hour ago.

Benix

You insult me to say so. I didn't see you or the ring.

Angelos

If you insist, then I call this officer. Arrest him for withholding the money.

Officer

I charge you in the Duchess's name to come with me.

Benix

Angelos, are you going to let this game run on?

Angelos

You are damaging my reputation, Benix. What course do you leave me?

Benix

Very well. Arrest me, if you dare. Or if you can.

Benix exits.

Angelos

After him. Though I called him brother, I will have my money!

The officer exits.

Merchant

Is he a respectable man?

Angelos

I have lived with him for sixteen years and never doubted it till now.

Merchant

Speak softly. He has returned.

Angelos

I see him, but why would he return so soon, without the officer?

Aleon enters.

Aleon

This is a strange land, full of sorcery. I haven't met a single man, woman or child who hasn't saluted me, as if I were their closest friend. I passed a priory just now and was asked if this ring was for my daughter.

Angelos

Look! That is the very ring and chain I mentioned.

Aleon

Could it be possible? Dare I dream that this could be?

Merchant

Peace, villain. Why do you advance your scandal, by displaying this ring so openly?

Angelos

Do you now deny that you had this ring from me?

Aleon

I'm sure I did. I never denied it.

Merchant

Yes, you did. You swore against it, even now. But your treachery shall not last. I will take you to the Duchess.

Aleon

Before you lay hands on me, listen for a short while. I can prove my honour and honesty, though it will take some believing.

Merchant

You have no credit left to spend with lies, sir. We know you well.

Aleon

But I know you not. I am only two hours old in Arphesus, as strange to this land as to your talk.

Merchant

Take him to the jail, Angelos. There he can answer for his crimes.

Aleon

My fate is already sealed. I have an appointment with the Duchess herself, this very evening.

Angelos

Oh, my poor friend. You have run mad.

Aleon

If you will not listen then I will return to the priory and hope they deny you entrance!

Aleon exits.

Merchant

After him!

Angelos

Oh my poor friend. Many a time has Mariana claimed your wits were wanting, but I never believed it till now.

Merchant

Open the abbey doors. Open them, or we shall break them down.

Mariana enters.

Mariana

What's the matter here? Your shouts would stir lost souls.

Angelos

We're after your man. Tell him to come out, so we can bind him. It would be best for his recovery.

Mariana

What is this jest, Angelos? He is not ill, save the weakness in his brain.

Angelos

Benix is distracted. He makes no sense, contradicting himself and saying he was here, when he was there. There will be nothing left of the man by the setting sun.

Merchant

Call him from the abbey, so we can lay hold of him.

The Abbess enters.

Abbess

No. Not a single creature enters my house without my leave.

Mariana

Abbess, call him forth and I will take care of this matter.

Abbess

That shall not be. He came here for sanctuary and he shall have it.

Merchant

Then I will take my complaint to the Duchess. No walls will keep her out.

Mariana

I saw the Duchess heading across the vale. She is heading to the place of execution beyond this abbey.

Angelos

Justice is on its way. I see the Duchess come.

The Duchess enters.

Solna

Subjects, why do you gather here so early?

Merchant

Oh, noble Duchess. We seek justice.

Solna

Justice from whom? What villain has wronged you?

Angelos

It will be hard to credit, but we seek justice against this abbess here.

Solna

She is a virtuous lady. There is no wrong in her heart to offend you.

Lucia enters.

Lucia

Angelos! Mariana! You have done Benix a great wrong!

Solna

Just as you have with me, woman! How dare you come before me.

Lucia

Oh, save me.

Solna

None will grant your request. My advisor told me of my daughter's flight and I will apprehend them on this very spot. You will suffer the same fate for you were complicit in their schemes.

Angelos

I see this day has split its minutes to lunacy and its seconds to despair!
Why did you come here, Lucia?

Lucia

To tell you that Benix comes after. He claims you have wronged him.

Merchant

Peace. The man is within these walls.

Lucia

Upon my life, I'm telling the truth.

Mariana

This is no lie. Look now and see how Benix has borne himself invisible.

Benix enters.

Merchant

This cannot be. Just now he entered this abbey.

Angelos

The madness is catching. Come close, Lucia, in case I fall.

Benix

Most gracious Duchess. Grant me justice. These two men, one my former friend, seek to slander my name. Will you right the wrongs against me?

Solna

Do you imagine another in my place? You can expect no justice from me. I come here to remove your head.

Angelos

Most noble, Duchess. If that is the punishment then I withdraw my complaint immediately.

Merchant

As do I. Let him pay the sum he owes and have mercy.

Solna

The sum he owes me can not be weighted in gold. He is a country of sin and has harassed our fair isle for longer than I care to tell.

Mariana

Oh, Benix. What is happening?

Benix

I know not. I would defend myself, but I'm ignorant of my crime.

Aleon enters.

Aleon

The crime is mine and I desire no defence.

Lucia

I see a pair of Benix, or my eyes deceive me.

Solna

One of these men is the shadow of the other.

Angelos

Which is the natural man and which the spirit?

Aleon

Neither, though I am the man you seek. My head is yours. I only ask this final favour, to embrace my brother one final time.

Angelos

The wonders of this day would break my dreams. I never need sleep again.

Mariana

Peace, Angelos.

Angelos

But which is which? There is nothing to distinguish them.

Benix

I am your Benix, Angelos. See the scar I was given when I fled my king.

Aleon

That king was left in Meracuse, weeping for the loss of his brother. The man you see before you is only Aleon.

Benix

I see by your face that I have not aged a single day.

Aleon

Alas, my youth is long lost. I don't know what country claimed it, for I have visited them all searching for you and hoping for my daughter.

Mariana

Oh, Aleon, she is here and the fairest child you could hope for.

Aleon

My dear, Mariana. Are you here, too? I can hardly believe my eyes, but tell me, where is my daughter?

Lucia

I know not, but here comes another equally lost. Oh, Luna, turn and run.

Luna and Rose enter.

Luna

Come, Rose. We must sail before the sun sets.

Solna

Darkness falls upon you both. You will never leave this place.

Rose

We are betrayed? Hear me, mother!

Solna

Spare me your lies, daughter. You planned to flee this country, but your plans have been overturned.

Benix

Luna? Can this be true?

Luna

It was, father. It broke my heart that we couldn't tell you.

Mariana

Is this your new love? The one you kept from us for so long?

Rose

I can only apologise. I fear our first meeting will also be our last.

Solna

For the wrongs you have all caused me, one scaffold should split to three.

Luna

Oh, please spare my love. I know I am but a lowly traveller, but let my life be enough for her.

Aleon

A lowly traveller? Oh, my fair princess. I lost a wife who was the copy of you. The heavens and earth have never seen such a wonder.

Luna

I know you not, sir. Though, you are as like my father as two eggs.

Benix

Dear daughter, I am so fond of you that I have made you all my exercise, mirth and matter, but here is the only man who can love you better.

Luna

I don't understand, father.

Mariana

Listen to me, Luna. We are not your parents.

Benix

Your true father stands before you.

Angelos

Now I know it. I am the mad one. Duchess, I implore you to arrest me.

Solna

Silence. You seek to distract me, but I will have my country's prize.

Aleon

I will not resist you, Solna. Nothing could have prepared me for this joy, but my shame remains intact. Luna, for I think that is your name, I broke your mother's heart and took her life, as surely as if I'd held a knife.

Mariana

You were not to blame, Aleon.

Abbess

Nor were you, Mariana. Yes, I know your name and you know mine.

The Abbess reveals herself as Emile.

Benix

How can this be? Is it really you, Emile?

Lucia

Emile? The deceased queen of Meracuse? What is happening?

Angelos

I am glad that your mind is lost as well. I will need a companion in my dotage.

Aleon

My sweet wife is returned from beyond the grave, or my eyes fail me.

Emile

These walls have kept their secrets for so long. My former life is a dream and my second comes to an end. By you leave, may we start a third?

Solna

Hold fast. There is much here that needs to be resolved, not least the executioner's due.

Emile

Let him remain unsatisfied. Perhaps these strange events can form better times for all. For surely our daughters can shortly lay equal claim to our once divided land. Will you come inside and hear more of this?

Solna

This would please me, if the King will have it so.

Aleon

Let my wife's words stand strong. As for the rest, let us enter these walls and we will resolve all other errors.

Angelos

If you'll exchange my chain for my side of the tale, I'll share a drink or two.

Aleon

I believe the chain was meant for my brother and he is welcome to it.

Solna

Your younger brother shall also join us. I will send guards to meet him and he shall retell you of his part in this.

Emile

Come, let us enter and talk until a new day dawns.

Exit all but Benix, Mariana and Luna.

Benix

Do not be afraid, Luna. You have gained a father and a mother, but you shall not lose us.

Luna exits.

Mariana

She shall not lose me, but I fear you may not keep me when all is in the open. Will you come hear the gossip?

Benix

I shall follow you. We came into this world as husband and wife. Let's see if we shall leave it hand I hand.