

THE
LETTER-WRITERS:

Eliza Webb
Or, a New Way to Keep

A WIFE *at* HOME.

A

F A R C E,

In THREE ACTS.

As it is Acted at the

THEATRE in the *Hay-Market*.

Written by *Scriblerus Secundus*.



L O N D O N,

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The LETTER-WRITERS: Or, A NEW **WAY** to Keep a **WIFE** at **HOME.** A Farce. As it is Acted at the Theatre in the Hay-Market. Written by Scriblerus Secundus.

Dramatis Personæ.

M E N.

<i>Rakel,</i>	<i>Mr. Lacy.</i>
<i>Commons,</i>	<i>Mr. Mullart.</i>
<i>Mr. Wisdom,</i>	<i>Mr. Jones.</i>
<i>Mr. Softly,</i>	<i>Mr. Hallam.</i>
<i>Risque,</i>	<i>Mr. Reynhold.</i>
<i>John,</i>	<i>Mr. Wathan.</i>
<i>Sneaksby,</i>	<i>Mr. Davemport.</i>



<i>Mrs. Wisdom,</i>	<i>Mrs. Lacy.</i>
<i>Mrs. Softly,</i>	<i>Mrs. Mullart.</i>
<i>Betty,</i>	<i>Mrs. Stokes.</i>

Constable, Whores, Fiddlers, Servants, &c.

SCENE, *the Street.*





A

NEW WAY

To Keep a

WIFE at HOME.

ACT I. SCENE I.

SCENE, *The Street.*

Rakel, Risque.

Rakel [*Reading a Letter.*]

S I R,



OUR late Behaviour hath determined me never to see you more; if you get Entrance into this House for the future, it will not be by my Consent; for I desire you would henceforth imagine there never was any Acquaintance between you and

Lucretia Softly.

So! the Letter was thrown out at the Window, was it?

Risq. Ay, Sir, I am sure there is no good News in it, by the Face of that Jade *Susan*. I know by the Countenance of the Maid when the Mistress is in good Humour.

A 3

Rak.

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Rak. Well, may you meet with better Success in the next Expedition. Here, carry this Letter to *Mrs. Wisdom*, I'll wait here till you return with an Answer.

Risq. But, Sir —

Rak. Well, Sir?

Risq. This Affair, Sir, may end in a Blanketing, and that is a Danger I never love to run with an empty Stomach.

Rak. Sirrah! if I were to be tossed myself I would wish to be as empty as possible; but thou art such an Epicure thou art continually thinking on thy Belly.

Risq. The Reason of that is very plain, Sir; for I am continually hungry. Whilst I follow'd your Honour's Heels as a Soldier, I expected no better Fare: but since I have been promoted to the Office of Pimp, I ought to live in another manner. Would it not vex a Man to the Heart to run about gnawing his Nails like a starved Skeleton, and see every Day so many plump Brethren of the same Profession riding in their Coaches.

Rak. Bring me but an Answer to my Wish, and then —

Risq. Don't promise me, Sir — for then I shall be sure of having nothing — If you were but as like a great Man in your Riches, as you are in your Promises, I should dine oftner by two or three Days a Week than I do now.

Rak. To your Business. It is happy for the Nation that this Fellow run away from his Master; for had he become an authorised Attorney, he would have been a greater Burthen to the Town he was quartered on than our whole Regiment.

S C E N E II.

Rakel, Commons.

Com. Captain *Rakel*, your Servant.

Rak. *Jack Commons!* — My dear Rake, welcome to Town: How do all our Friends at Quarters?

Com.

Com. All in the old Way. I left your two Brother Officers with two Parsons and the Mayor of the Town, as drunk as your Drums.

Rak. Mr. Mayor indeed is a thorough honest Fellow; and hath not, I believe, been sober since he was in the Chair: He encourages that Virtue as a Magistrate which he lives by as a Publican.

Com. Very fine, faith! and if the Mayor was a Glazier, I suppose he would encourage breaking Windows too.

Rak. But prithee, what hath brought thee to Town?

Com. My own Inclinations chiefly. I resolved to take one Swing in the charming Plains of Iniquity; so I am come to take my Leave of this delicious lewd Place, of all the Rakes and Whores of my Acquaintance—to spend one happy Month in the Joys of Wine and Women, and then sneak down into the Country and go into Orders.

Rak. Ha, ha, ha. And hast thou the Impudence to pretend to a Call?

Com. Ay, Sir; the usual Call: I have the Promise of a good Living. Looke, Captain, my Call of Piety is much the same as yours of Honour—You will fight, and I shall pray for the same Reasons I assure you.

Rak. If thy Gown doth not rob thee of Sincerity, thou wilt have one Virtue under it at least.

Com. Ay, ay, Sincerity is all that can be expected; that is the chief Difference among Men. All Men have Sins; but some hide them. Vice is as natural to us as our Skins, and both would equally appear, if we had neither Cloths nor Hypocrisy to cover them.

Rak. Thou art a fine promising Holderforth, faith, and do'st begin to preach in a most orthodox manner.

Com. Pox of Preaching! will you go steal an Act or two of the new Tragedy?

Rak.

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Rak. Not I — I go to no Tragedy — but the Tragedy of *Tom Thumb*.

Com. The Tragedy of *Tom Thumb*! what the Devil is that?

Rak. Why, Sir, it is a Tragedy that makes me laugh: and if your Sermons will do as much, I shall be glad to make one of your Audience.

Com. Will you to the Tavern?

Rak. No, I am engaged.

Com. Engaged; then it must be to a Bawdy-house, and I'll along with you.

Rak. Indeed, you cannot, my young Levite; for mine is a private Bawdy-House, and you will not be admitted, even tho' you had your Gown on.

Com. If thy Engagement be not pressing, thou shalt go along with me: I will introduce thee to a charming fine Girl, a Relation of mine.

Rak. Do'st thou think me dull enough to undergo the Ceremonies of being introduced by a Relation to a modest Woman —? Hast thou a mind to marry me to her.

Com. No, Sir, she is married already. — There are a Brace of them, as fine Women as you have seen, and both married to old Husbands.

Rak. Nay, then they are worth my Acquaintance, and some other time thou shalt introduce me to them.

Com. Nay, thou shalt go drink Tea with one of them now — It is but jutt by — I dined there to day, and my Uncle is now gone abroad. Come, 'tis but two Steps into the Square here, at the first two Lamps.

Rak. The first two Lamps!

Com. Ay, no farther — Her Husband's Name is *Wisdom*.

Rak. By all that's unlucky, the very Woman I have sent *Risque* to! [*Aside.*

Com. Come, we'll go make her a Visit now, and To-morrow I'll carry thee to my Aunt *Softly*.

Rak.

Rak. Another Mistress of mine, by Lucifer. [*Aside.* Hast thou no more Female Relations in Town?

Com. No more! Won't two serve your unreasonable Appetite.

Rak. But thou seemest to be so free of them, I could wish thee, for the sake of the Publick, related to all the Beauties in *Christendom*. But, *Jack*, I hope these two Aunts of thine are not rigidly virtuous.

Com. Ha, ha, ha. — Do not I tell thee they are young and handsome, and that their Husbands are old.

Rak. And thou wilt not take it amiss if one were to dub an Uncle of thine a Cuckold.

Com. Hearkee, *Tom*, if thou had'st read as much as I, thou would'st know that Cuckold is no such Term of Reproach as it is imagined: Half the great Men in History are Cuckolds on Record. Take it amiss! ha, ha, ha. Why my Uncle himself will not; for the whole World knows he is a Cuckold already.

Rak. How!

Com. Ay, Sir, When an old Man goes publickly to Church with a young Woman, he proclaims that Title loud enough: But come, will you to my Aunt.

Rak. You must excuse me now.

Com. When I make you such another Offer you shan't refuse it: I thought you would have postpon'd any Business for a Mistress.

Rak. But I am in Pursuit of another Mistress, one I am pre-engaged to — Afterwards, Sir, I am at the Service of your whole Family.

Com. Success attend your Iniquity — I'll enquire for you at the *Tilt-Yard*. So your Servant.

Rak. Yours — A very pretty Fellow this — I find, if he should discover my Amours, he is not likely to be any Obstacle to them.

S C E N E III.

Rakel, Risque.

Rak. So, Sir.*Risq.* Sir, I have with great Dexterity deliver'd your Honour's Letter, and with equal Pleasure have brought you an Answer.*Rak.* [Reads.]*BE here at the Time you mention, my Husband is luckily out of the way. I wish your Happiness be (as you say) entirely in the Power of*

ELIZABETH WISDOM.

*Ay, now thou hast performed well indeed, and I'll give thee all the Money I have in my Pocket for an Encouragement. Odsso! I have but Six-pence about me — here, take, take this and be diligent.**Risq.* Very fine Encouragement truly! This it is to serve a poor, beggarly, lousy ——— If half this Dexterity had been employ'd in the Service of a great Man, I had been a Captain or a Middlesex Justice long ago. — But I must tug along the empty Portmanteau of this shabby No-Pay Ensign. Pox on't, what can a Man expect who is but the Rag-Carrier of a Rag-Carrier.

S C E N E IV.

*Mr. Wisdom, Mrs. Wisdom, Rakel.**Mrs. Wisd.* Sure never any thing was so lucky for us as this threatenng Letter: While my Husband imagined I should go abroad, he was almost continually at home; but now he thinks himself secure of my not venturing out, he is scarce ever with me.*Rak.* How shall I requite this Goodness which can make such a Confinement easy for my sake.*Mr. Wisd.* The Woman that thinks it worth her While to confine her self for her Gallant, thinks her self sufficiently requited by his Company.

A New Way to keep a Wife at Home. II

Betty [*Entring*] Oh! Madam, here's my Master come home: had he not quarrell'd with the Footman at the Door, he had certainly found you together.

Rak. What shall I do?

Mrs. Wisd. Step into this Closet — quick, quick, what can have sent him home so soon?

S C E N E V.

Mr. Wisdom, Mrs. Wisdom.

Oh! my Dear! you are better than your Word now; this is kind indeed to return so much earlier than your Promise.

Mr. Wisd. Mr. *Mortgageland* hath disappointed me: I'm afraid some body else hath taken him off my Hands; so let some of the Servants get me my Night-Gown and Slippers, for I intend to stay at home all the Evening.

Mrs. Wisd. Was ever such Ill-luck — they are both in my Closet. — Lord, Child, why will you put on that odious Night-Gown; indeed, it doth not become you — you don't look pretty in it, Lovey, indeed you don't.

Mr. Wisd. Pshaw! it doth not become a Wife to dislike her Husband in any Dress whatsoever.

Mrs. Wisd. Well, my Dear, if you command, I will be always ready to obey. — *Betty*, go fetch your Master's Night-Gown out of my Closet — Take care you don't open the Door too wide, lest you throw down a *China* Basin that is just within it.

Mr. Wisd. Come, give me a Kiss; you look very pretty to Night, you little wanton Rogue. — aded! I shall, I shall make thee amends for the Pleasures you miss abroad.

Mrs. Wisd. So, you won't put the Money where the Rogues order you, and you'll have your poor Wife murder'd to save twenty Guineas.

Mr. Wisd. If you stay at home, you will not be murder'd, and I shall save many a twenty Guineas.

Mrs. Wisd. But then, I shall lose all my Acquaintance by not returning their Visits.

Mr. Wisd. Then I shall lose all my Torments : and truly, if I owe this Loss to the Letter-Writer, I am very much obliged to him. I would have tied a much larger Purse to the Knocker of my Door to have kept it free from that Rat-tat-tat-tat, which continually thunder'd at it.

S C E N E VI.

Mrs. Softly, Mr. Wisdom, Mrs. Wisdom.

Mr. Softly. Mr. Wisdom, Your Servant. Madam, I am your humble Servant: A Friend of yours, *Mr. Wisdom,* expects you at *Tom's*.

Mr. Wisd. Nay, if he be come, I must leave thee for one Hour, my Dear. So, take the Key of my Closet and fetch me that Bundle of Parchment that lies in the Bureau.

Mrs. Wisd. I will, my Dear. [*This is extremely lucky.*]

S C E N E VII.

Mr. Wisdom, Mr. Softly.

Mr. Softly. Well: Doth the Plot succeed notably.

Mr. Wisd. To my Wish. She hath not ventured to stir abroad since. This Demand you have drawn upon my Wife, for 20 *l.* will be of more Service to me than a Draught on the Bank for so many Hundreds.

Mr. Soft. I wish your threatening Letter to my Wife had met with the same Success: but, alack! it hath had a quite contrary Effect. She swears, she'll go abroad the more now to shew her Courage: But that she may not appear too rash, she hath put me to the Expense of an additional Footman; and, instead of staying at home, she carries all my Blunderbusses abroad. — Her Coach, when she goes a visiting, looks like a General Officer's going to a Campaign.

Mr. Wisd. But if it came to that Extremity I would lock up my Doors, and shut her in, on Pretence of shutting Rogues out.

Mr.

Mr. Soft. But I cannot shut her Companions out: I should have a Regiment of Women on my Back for ill-using my Wife, and have a Sentence of Cuckoldom pronounced against me at all the Assemblies and Visiting-Days in Town: If I could prevail by Stratagem; well: But I am too certain of the Enemy's Strength to attempt the subduing her by Force.

Mr. Wisd. Thank my Stars, my Wife is of another Temper.

Mr. Soft. You will not take it ill, Brother *Wisdom*: but your Wife is not a Woman of that Spirit as mine is.

Mr. Wisd. No, Heaven be praised; for of all evil Spirits, that of a Woman surely is the worst.

Mr. Soft. Truly, it is a Perfection that costs a Man as much as it is worth.

Mr. Wisd. But what do you intend to do.

Mr. Soft. I know not. Something I must; for my House at present is like a Garison, I have continually Guards Mounting and Dismounting, while I know of no Enemy but my Wife, and she's within.

S C E N E VIII.

Mr. Softly, Mr. Wisdom, Mrs. Wisdom.

Mrs. Wisd. Here are the Parchments, my Dear.

Mr. Wisd. You know the Necessity of my Engagement, and will excuse me.

Mr. Soft. No Ceremony with me, Brother.

Mr. Wisd. If you will stay with my Wife till my Return, she will be much obliged to you: You may entertain one another at Picquet; you are no high Player any more than she.

Mrs. Wisd. I shall be too hard for him; for I fancy he is a Player much about your Pitch, and you know I always get the better of you.

Mr. Wisd. Well, well, to it, to it. I leave you together.

S C E N E IX.

Mr. Softly, Mrs. Wisdom.

Mr. Soft. I am but a bad Player, Madam; but to divert you.

Mrs. Wisd. How shall I get rid of him? I am not much inclined to Picquet at present, *Mr. Softly.*

Mr. Soft. Hum! very likely! any other Game that you please—— if I can play at it.

Mrs. Wisd. No, you can't play at it—— for to be plain, I am obliged to write a Letter into the Country. I hope you'll excuse me.

Mr. Soft. Oh! dear Sister! I will divert the Time with one of these News-Papers: Ay, here's the *Grub-street* Journal—— An exceeding good Paper this; and hath commonly a great deal of Wit in it.

Mrs. Wisd.—— But—— I am the worst Person in the World at writing: The least Noise disturbs me.

Mr. Soft. I am as mute as a Fish.

Mrs. Wisd. I know not how to express it, I am so ashamed of the Humour.—— but I cannot write whilst any one is in the Room.

Mr. Soft. Hum! very probable! there is no accounting for some Humours.—— Well—— you may trust me in the Closet. This Closet and I have been acquainted before now. *[Offers to go in.]*

Mrs. Wisd. By no means, I have a thing in that Closet you must not see.

S C E N E X.

Mr. Softly, Mrs. Wisdom, Commons.

Com. What is not Uncle *Wisdom* returned yet?

Mrs. Wisd. I am surprized you should return, Sir, unless you have learnt more Civility than you shewed at Dinner to day; your Behaviour then seem'd very unfit for one who intends to put on that sacred Habit you are design'd for.

Com. You may be as scurrilous as you please, Aunt: It hath been always my Resolution to see my Relations

as seldom as I can, and when I do see them, never to mind what they say. — I have been at your House too, Uncle *Softly*, and have met with just such another Reception there: But come, you and I will go drink one honest Bottle together — I have not crack'd a Bottle with you since I came to Town.

Mr. Wisd. For Heavens sake, dear Brother, do any thing to get him hence.

Mr. Soft. Well, Nephew, as far as a Pint goes.

Com. Ay, ay, a Pint is the best Introduction to a Bottle. — Aunt, will you go with us.

Mrs. Wisd. Faugh! Brute.

Com. If you won't, you may let it alone.

Mrs. Soft. Sister, your humble Servant.

Mrs. Wisd. I'll take care to prevent all Danger of a Surprize [*Locks the Door*] — there. — Captain, Captain, you may come out, the Coast is clear.

S C E N E XI.

Mrs. Softly, Rakel.

Rak. These Husbands make the most confounded long Visits.

Mrs. Wisd. Husbands! Why, I have had half a dozen Visitants since he went away; I thought you had over-heard us.

Rak. Not I truly, I have been entertaining my self with the *Whole Duty of Man*, at the other end of the Closet.

Mrs. Wisd. You are very unconcerned in Danger, Captain

Rak. Yes, Madam, Danger is my Profession, and these sort of Dangers are so common to me that they give me no Surprize. I have declar'd War with the whole Commonwealth of Husbands ever since I arriv'd at Years of Discretion.

Mrs. Wisd. Rather with the Wives I'm afraid.

Rak. No, Madam, I always consider the Wife as the Town, and the Husband as the Enemy in Possession of it. I am not for burning nor rasing where I go; but when I have driven the Enemy out of his

Fortress, I march in the most gentle peaceable manner imaginable. So, Madam, if you please, we will walk into the Closet together.

Mrs. Wisd. What to read the *Whole Duty of Man*, Ha, ha, ha.

Rak. Ay, my Angel! and you shall say, I practise what I read. — [Takes her in his Arms, Mrs. Wisdom knocks, she starts from them.]

Mr. Wisd. [without] What, have you shut your selves in?

Rak. Our selves! oh! the Devil, doth he know I am here.

Mr. Wisd. No, no, no, to your Hole, quick, quick, quick.

Mr. Wisd. Why, Child, Mr. *Softly*, don't you hear? what have you play'd your selves asleep.

Mrs. Wisd. Oh! my Dear, are you there?

S C E N E XII.

Mr. Wisdom, Mrs. Wisdom.

Mr. Wisd. [Entring.] If we were not so nearly related, I should not like this locking up together. Hey-day! Where is my Brother *Softly*?

Mrs. Wisd. Alas! my Dear, my ungracious Nephew hath been here and taken him away to the Tavern.

Mr. Wisd. Why will you suffer that Fellow to come within my Doors, when you know it is against my Will.

Mrs. Wisd. Alas, Child, I don't know how to shut your Doors against your own Relations.

Mr. Wisd. And what were you doing, hey? that you were lock'd in so close by your self.

Mrs. Wisd. I was only saying a few Prayers, my Dear; but indeed these Incendiaries run so in my Head I never think my self safe enough.

Mr. Wisd. Heaven bless the Hour I first thought of putting them there. [Aside.]

Mrs. Wisd. Well, Child, this is very good in you to come home so soon.

Mr.

Mr. Wisd. I only call on you in my way to the City; for I must speak to Alderman *Longhorns* before I sleep. I am sorry you have lost Brother *Softly*; he might have diverted you a little.

Mrs. Wisd. I can divert my self well enough in my Closet for that matter.

Mr. Wisd. Ay, do so. Reading is an innocent and instructive Diversion. I will be back with the utmost Expedition: Is your Closet lock'd, Child; there are some Papers in it which I must take with me. —

Mr. Wisd. What shall I do? ——— Lud, my Dear, I — I — have lost the Key, I think.

Mr. Wisd. Then it must be broke open; for they are of the utmost Consequence. — Nay, if you can't tell where you have laid it, I can't stay, the Lock must be broke open; I'll call up one of the Servants.

Mrs. Wisd. Nay then, Confidence assist me ——— Here, here it is, Child. — I have nothing but Assurance to trust to; and I am resolv'd to exert the utmost.

[*Opens the Door, Rakel runs against him, throws him down; he looks on Mrs. Wisdom, she points to the other Door and he runs out.*

[*Mrs. Wisdom shrieks.*

Mr. Wisd. Oh! I am murder'd.

Mrs. Wisd. The Incendiaries are come. My Dream is out, my Dream is out.

Mr. Wisd. My Horns are out.

Mrs. Wisd. Oh! my Dear, sure never any thing was so lucky as this Stay of yours. Heaven knows what he would have done to me had I been alone.

Mr. Wisd. Ay, ay, my Dear, I know what he would have done to you very well.

Mrs. Wisd. I hope you will be advis'd, and put the Money where you are desir'd before any thing worse happens.

Mr. Wisd. I shall put you out of Doors before any thing worse happens.

Mrs. Wisd. My Dear?

Mr.

Mr. Wisd. My Devil! come, come, confess, it is done already, am I one or no.

Mrs. Wisd. Are you what, my Love?

Mr. Wisd. Am I a Beast? a Monster? a Husband.

Mrs. Wisd. Defend me.—— Sure the Fright hath turn'd your Brain. Are you a Husband? yes, I hope so, or what am I?

Mr. Wisd. Ah! Crocodile! I know very well what sort of Robber was here. Nay, perhaps, he was a Robber, and you may have conspired together to rob me: I don't doubt but you was concern'd in writing the Letter too. No one likelier to extort Money from a Man than his Wife.

Mrs. Wisd. Oh! barbarous, cruel, inhuman Asperſion!

Mrs. Wisd. Is he a Conjuror as well as a Thief, and could he go through the Key-hole? How came he into that Cloſet? How came he into that Cloſet, Madam, without your Knowledge? answer me that? Did he go through the Door.

Mrs. Wisd. I swear by ——

Mr. Wisd. Hold, hold. I don't question but you will swear through a thousand Doors to get off.

Enter John.

John. Oh! Sir, this Moment, as I was walking in the Yard, I spied a Fellow offering to get in at my Lady's Cloſet Window.——

Mr. Wisd. How!

John. Dear Sir, ſtep but into the Cloſet, you will find the Window broke all to Pieces.

Mr. Wisd. The Villains!—— *John,* take the Candle and go in before me.

Mrs. Wisd. Miraculous Fortune! Now will I ſtand it out that *Rakel* got in the ſame Way. Sure it muſt have been the Devil that hath broke theſe Windows to encourage us to ſin——by this Delivery—— Oh! here comes my Husband, it is my Turn now to be angry, and his to ask Pardon.

Mr.

Mr. Wisd. John, Do you watch carefully in the Yard this Night. I protest a Man will shortly be safe no where.

Mrs. Wisd. Not when Thieves get through Key-holes.

Mr. Wisd. Come, I ask thy Pardon; I am sorry I suspected thee: I will make thee amends, I will — I will stay at home this Week with thee in spite of Business: Thou shalt tie me to thy Girdle. Nay, do not take on thus, I will buy thy Forgiveness. Here, here is a Purse to put thy Money in; and it shall not be long before I give thee some Money to put in thy Purse — you shall take the Air every Day in *Hide-Park*, and I'll go with you for a Guard: I vow you shall forgive me, I'll kiss you till you do.

Mrs. Wisd. You know the way to mollify me.

Mr. Wisd. Why, I was but in jest: I never thought you had any hand in the Letter.

Mrs. Wisd. Did you not indeed.

Mr. Wisd. No, indeed; may I be worse than robb'd if I did.

Mrs. Wisd. Well, but don't jest so any more.

Mr. Wisd. I promise you: — but I must not lose a Moment before I go into the City —

Mrs. Wisd. And will you leave me again to Night.

Mr. Wisd. You must excuse Necessity, my Dear.

Mrs. Wisd. My Dear, I shall always obey your Commands without any farther Reason.

Mr. Wisd. What a happy Man am I in a Wife! If all Women were but such Blessings to their Husbands as thou art, what a Heaven would Matrimony be.

The End of the First A C T.

A C T



ACT II. SCENE I.

SCENE *The Street.*

Rakel, and afterwards Risque.

Rak. LOVE and War I find still require the same Talents; to be unconcerned in Danger is absolutely necessary to both. I know not whether it was more lucky that I thought of this Stratagem, or that I found *Risque* on the Spot to execute it. I dare swear she will soon take the Hint: Nor do I see any other way she could possibly have come off. ——— So Rascal, what Success?

Risq. I have broke the Windows with a Vengeance, I have made room enough for your Honour to march in at the Head of a Company of Grenadiers, and all this without the least Noise. But I hope the Lady did not use your Honour very ill, that her Windows must be broken.

Rak. No, Mr. *Inquisitive*, I have done it for the Lady's sake, to give her an Opportunity of saying I broke in there; for when I was taken in the Closet, I was obliged to bring her off by pretending my self a Robber.

Risq. But if he should take you at at your Word, and prosecute you, who would bring your Honour off?

Rak. No matter: It were better fifty such as I were hang'd, than one Woman should lose her Reputation. But as the Closet was full of things of Value, my touching none would sufficiently preserve me from any villanous Imputation should the worst happen.

Risq. I fancy indeed it would be no Disgrace, to be thought to have stolen all you have in your Pocket.

Rak. What's that you are muttering? Hearkee, Rascal, be sure not to go to bed, I shall not be at home

home till early in the Morning—— Now for my unkind Mistress, I may have better Success there than I found with my kind one.

*How bless'd is a Soldier while licens'd to range;
How pleasant this Whore for that to exchange.*

Risq. Go thy Ways, young Satan; the old Gentleman himself cannot be much worse. Let me consider a little. My Master doth not come home till Morning, the Closet is full of things of Value, and I can very easily get into it.—— Agad, and I'll have a Trial. I am in no great danger of being caught in the Fact; so if I bring off a good handsome Booty—— My Master stands fair for being hang'd for it. Hey-day! What the Devil have we here?

S C E N E II.

Commons, with Whores and Musick, Risque.

Com. [*Sings*] Tol, lol de rol lol—— Now am I *Alexander the Great*, and you my *Statira* and *Roxana*, you Sons of Whores, play me *Alexander the Great's* March.

1 *Fid.* We don't know it an't please your Worship.

Com. Don't you? Why then—— play me the *Black Joke*.

2 *Wh.* Play the *White Joke*, that's my Favourite.

Com. Ay, ay, Black or White, they are all alike to me.

[*Musick plays.*]

2 *Wh.* We had better go to the Tavern, my Dear; the Justices of Peace are so severe against us, we shall be taken up and sent to *Bridewell*.

Com. The Justices be hang'd, they dare not attack a Man of my Quality: The Moment they knew me to be a Lord, they would let us all go again.

1 *Wh.* Nay, my Dear, I ask your Pardon; I did not know you were a Lord.

Com. Yes, my Dear, yes; my Lord *Kilfob*, that's my Title, of the Kingdom of *Ireland*.

Risq. [*Advancing.*] My Lord *Kilfob*, I am glad to see your Honour in *Town*.

Com.

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Com. Ha! *Ned Risque*, give me thy Hand, Boy. Come, honest *Risque*, thou shalt go to the Tavern with me, and I'll treat thee with a Whore and a Bottle of Wine ——— But hearkee. [*Whispers.*

1 *Wh.* A Lord, and so familiar with this Fellow! This is some Clerk or Apprentice strutting about with his Master's Sword on.

2 *Wh.* I fancy, *Suky*, this is a Sharper, and no Coming-down Cull.

1 *Wh.* Ay, damn him, he'll make us pop our Unders for the Reckoning: We'll not go with him.

Com. If thou can't lend me half a Crown, do; the Devil take me if I don't pay thee again To-morrow.

Risq. That I would with all my heart, but I have not one Souse I assure you — I am on Business for my Master, and in a great Hurry. ———

Com. Get thee gone for a Good-for-nothing Dog as thou art. Come, Sirrah, play on to the Tavern.

2 *Wh.* I don't know what you mean, Sir, we are no Company for such as you. ———

Com. I own you are not fit Company for a Lord; —but no matter, several Lords keep such Company, and since I stoop to you.

1 *Wh.* You stoop to us, Scrub.

2 *Wh.* You a Lord, you are some Attorney's Clerk or Haberdasher's 'Prentice.

1 *Wh.* Do you sit behind a Desk, or stand behind a Compter?

2 *Wh.* We're not for such as you, we'd have you to know, Fellow.

Com. But I am for such as you —and that I'll make you know with a Vengeance — Whores, Strumpets.

Whores. Murder, Murder, Robbery, Murder.

Com. I'll scour you with a Pox.

[*Beats them off and returns.*

2 *Fid.* I wish we were well rid of this Chap; I wish we get any thing by him.

1 *Fid.* I wish we get off with a whole Skin and a whole Fiddle.

Com.

Com. I have paid you off however.

Fid. I wish your Honour would pay us off too, for we are oblig'd to play to some Country Dances.

Com. Are not you impudent Dogs to ask any thing for such Musick? — I'll not give you a Soufe; you are a couple of wretched Scrapers, and play ten Degrees worse than the University Waits: If you had your Merit, you would have your Fiddles broke about your Heads.

Fid. Sir, You don't talk like a Gentleman.

Com. Don't I, Sir? Why then I'll act like a Gentleman. [*Draws*] This is the Way a Man of Honour pays Debts, you Dogs; I'll let out your own Guts to make Fiddle-strings of. A couple of cowardly Dogs! run away from one. Blood! I have routed the whole Army: *Hannibal* could have done no more. What Pity it is such a brave Fellow as I am should be made a Parson of.

[*Link-Boy crosses.*

Here, you, Son of a Whore, come here. Are you the Sun, or the Moon, or one of the Seven Stars.

Link. Does your Honour want a Light, Sir!

Com. Want a Light, Sir! Ay, Sir. Do you take me for a Dissenter, you Rascal; do you think I carry my Light within, Sirrah, I travel by an outward Light. So lead on, you Dog, and light me into Darkness.

*A Soph, he is Immortal
And never can decay,
For how should he return to Dust
Who daily wets his Clay.*

S C E N E III.

Rakel and Mrs. Softly.

Mrs. Soft. Forget that Letter, it was the Effect of a sudden short-liv'd Anger which arose from a lasting Love: Jealousy is surely the strongest Proof of that Passion.

Rak. It is a Proof I always wish to be without, if all my Mistresses were as forward to believe my Sincerity.

Mrs.

Mrs. Soft. All your Mistresses ——— Bravo.

Rak. I speak of you, Madam, in the Plural Number, as we do of Kings, from my Reverence; for if I have another Mistress upon Earth may I be ———

Mrs. Soft. Marry'd to her ——— which would be Curse enough on both. But do not think, Captain, that should I once discover my Rival, it would give me any Uneasiness; the Suspicion of the Falsehood raised my Anger, but the Knowledge of it would only move my Contempt: Be assur'd I have not Love enough to make me uneasy if I knew you were false; so hang Jealousy, I will believe you true.

Rak. By all the Transports we have felt together, by all the eager Raptures which this very Night hath witnessed to my Passion. ———

[Softly *bems* without.

Mrs. Soft. Oh! Heaven! My Husband is upon the Stairs. ———

Rak. A Judgment fallen upon me before I had Forsworn my self ——— Have you no Closet? no Chimney?

Mrs. Soft. None, nor any Way but this out of the Room, he must see you ——— Say nothing but Bowe, and observe me.

S C E N E IV.

Mr. Softly, Mrs. Softly, Rakel.

Mr. Soft. Sure, never Man was so put to it to get rid of a troublesome Companion.

[*Hey-day what's here?*

Mrs. Soft. Sir, I assure you, I am infinitely oblig'd to you, and so is my Husband; I am sorry he is not at home to return you Thanks.

[*She courtesies all this time to him who bows to her.*

Mr. Soft. What's the matter, Child? what hath the Gentleman done for me?

Mrs. Soft. Oh! my Dear, I am glad you are come — the Gentleman hath done a great deal for me, he hath guarded me home from the Play. Indeed, my Dear, I am infinitely obliged to the Gentleman.

Mr.

Mr. Soft. Ay, we are both infinitely oblig'd to him. Sir, I am your humble Servant; I give you a great many Thanks, Sir, for the Civility you have conferr'd on my Wife. I assure you, Sir, you never did a Favour to any who will acknowledge it more.

Rak. The Devil take me, if ever I did: I have been as civil to several Wives; but thou art the first Husband that ever thank'd me for it.

Mr. Soft. Sir, if you will partake of a small Col-lation we have within, we shall think our selves much honour'd in your Company.

Rak. Sir, the Honour would be on my side; but I am unhappily engag'd to sup with the Duke of Fleetstreet.

Mr. Soft. I hope, Sir, you will shortly give us some other Opportunity to thank you.

Mrs. Soft. Pray, Sir, do not let it be long.

Mr. Soft. Sir, my Doors will be always open to you.

Rak. All these Acknowledgments for so small a Gallantry make me ashamed: I was only fortunate in the Occasion of doing what no young Gentleman could have refused. However, Sir, I shall take the first Opportunity to kiss your Hands, and am your most obedient humble Servant. — Not a Step, Sir.

Mr. Soft. Sir, Your most humble Servant.

S C E N E V.

Mr. Softly, Mrs. Softly.

Mr. Softly. I protest one of the civilest Gentlemen I ever saw.

Mrs. Soft. Most infinitely well-bred.

Mr. Soft. I have been making a Visit to my Neighbour *Wisdom*, where whom should I meet with but that unlucky Rogue, my Nephew *Commons*, who hath taken me to the Tavern, and I protest, almost fluster'd me.

Mrs. Soft. He was here just as you went out, and as rude as ever, but I gave him a sufficient Rebuff; I fancy he'll scarce venture here again: And indeed, my Dear, he is so very scandalous, I wish you would not suffer him.

Mr. Soft. He will be settled in the Country soon, and so we shall be rid of him quite. But, my Dear, I have some News to tell you, my Brother *Wisdom* hath receiv'd just such another Letter as yours, threatening to murder her in her Chair the first time she goes abroad, unless she lays twenty Guineys under a Stone. Indeed she shews abundance of Prudence on this Occasion by keeping at home; she doth not go abroad and frighten her poor Husband as you do.

Mrs. Soft. My Sister *Wisdom* receiv'd such a Letter, I am heartily glad you have told me of it, for I owe her a Visit, and on this Occasion it would be unpardonable to neglect a Moment. — Who's there — order my Chair this Instant, and do you and the other Footmen take to your Arms.

Mr. Soft. Why, you would not visit her at this time o'Night.

Mrs. Soft. Oh! my Dear! it is time enough, it is not yet Ten. Oh! I would not for the World, when she will be sure too that I know it. My Dear, your Servant, I'll make but a short Visit, and be back again before you can be set down to Supper.

Mr. Soft. Was ever so unfortunate a Wretch as I am! All my Contrivances to keep her at home, do but send her abroad the more. But I have a virtuous Wife, however; and truly virtuous Women are so rare in this Age one cannot pay too dear for her — Oh! a virtuous Wife is a most prodigious Blessing.

S C E N E VI. *Mr. Wisdom's House.*

Rakel, *Mrs. Wisdom.*

Rak. To rally again the same Night after such a Rebuff, is, I think, Madam, a sign of uncommon Bravery.

Mrs. Wisd. What is it in me to lead you to that Rally, Captain, when I must share the chief Part of the Danger too.

Rak. Why indeed, Madam, to send me Word of this second Retreat of your Husband, was a Kindness I know but one way how to thank you for; and I will thank thee so heartily, my dear, dear, lovely Angel?

Betty.

Betty [*Entring.*] Oh! Madam! here's Mrs. *Softly* just coming up.

Rak. Mrs. *Softly*!

Mrs. Wisd. How came she to be let in, were not my Orders, Not at home?

Bet. She said she knew you were at home, and would see her.—— She will be here this Instant.

Rak. [*Offers to go into the Closet.*] The Door is lock'd.

Mrs. Wisd. And my Husband hath the Key—— It signifies not much if she sees you.

Rak. Oh! Madam, I am tenderer of your Reputation.—— This Table will hide me. [*Gets under it.*

S C E N E VII.

Mrs. Wisdom, Mrs. Softly.

Mrs. Soft. Oh! My Dear! I am exceedingly concern'd to hear of your Misfortune; I ran away the very Minute Mr. *Softly* brought me the News.

Mrs. Wisd. I am very much obliged to you, my Dear.

Mrs. Soft. But I hope you are not frighten'd, my Dear.

Mrs. Wisd. It is impossible to avoid a little Surprize on such an Occasion.

Mrs. Soft. Oh yes! a little Surprize at first; but when one hath sufficient Guards about one there can be no Danger. Have not you heard that I receiv'd just such another Letter about three Days ago?

Mrs. Wisd. And venture abroad so late!

Mrs. Soft. Ha, ha, ha! Have I not a vast deal of Courage?

Mrs. Wisd. Indeed, I think so. I am sure I have not slept one Wink these three Nights.

Mr. Soft. I have not slept much—— for I was up two of them at a Ball.

Mrs. Wisd. Why you venture abroad as fearless as if no such thing had happen'd.

Mrs. Soft. It is only the Expense of a Footman or two the more; no one would stay at home for that, you know: Sure you don't intend to confine your

self any longer on this account. I would not stay at home three Days, if I had receiv'd as many Letters as go by the Post in that time.

Mrs. Wisd. You have more Courage than I : The Apprehension of the Danger with me would quite extinguish the Pleasure.

Mrs. Soft. Oh! you cowardly Creature, there is no Pleasure without Danger; but I thank Heaven my Thoughts are always so full of the former, that I leave no room for any Meditation on the latter !

S C E N E VIII.

Mr. Wisdom, Mrs. Wisdom, Mrs. Softly, Constable, Servants.

John. I'll take my Oath I saw him go in.

Mrs. Wisd. Bless me, my Dear, what's the Matter?

Mr. Wisd. Don't be frighten'd, Child; this Fellow hath seen the Rogue that was here to Day get into the House again. *Mr. Constable,* that is the Closet-Door, you have the Key, therefore do you enter first and we'll all follow you.

John. Ay, ay, let me alone; do you but lay Hands on him, and I'll knock his Brains out.

Mrs. Soft. Lud, Sister, how you tremble? Take Example by me and don't be frighten'd. — Here, *John, Thomas,* bring up your Blunderbusses.

Mrs. Wisd. Support me, or I faint.

S C E N E IX.

Risque [*discover'd.*]

Const. You may as well submit, Sir, for we are too strong for you.

John. Confess, Sirrah! confess. How many are there of you?

Mr. Wisd. Search his Pockets, *Mr. Constable.*

Mrs. Wisd. What do I see!

Mrs. Soft. Captain *Rake's* Man!

} *Aside.*

Mr. Wisd. It is sufficient! the Goods are found upon him. Sirrah! confess your Accomplices this Moment, you have no other way to save your Life than by becoming Evidence against your Gang.

John.

John. Learn to betray your Friends, Sirrah! if you would rob like a Gentleman and not be hang'd for it.

Mr. Wisd. And so, Sir, I suppose it was you that writ the threat'ning Letter to my Wife. Why don't you speak? You may as well confess; for you will be hang'd whether you confess or no.

Const. Would it not be your wisest way to impeach your Companions; so you may not only save your Life, but get rewarded for your Roguery.

Mr. Wisd. Is the Rascal dumb? We'll find Ways to make him speak I warrant you.

S C E N E X.

To them, Commons, drunk and singing.

Com. Hey! Uncle! what a Pox do you keep open House at this time o'Night. Oons, I thought you used to sneak to Bed at soberer Hours.

Mr. Wisd. How often must I forbid you my House?

Com. Sir, you may forbid me as often as you please, when your Door is open I shall never be able to pass by.

Mr. Wisd. You shall find a very warm Reception.

Com. As warm as you please, for it is damn'd cold without: But come, where's your Liquor, you do not entertain all this Company without Wine, I hope. Why, what a Pox are all these? ——— the Militia!

Mr. Wisd. Sir, if you do not go out of my Doors this Instant you shall be forc'd out.

Com. Damn your Doors, Sir, and your Tables too, I'll turn your House out o'Doors, Sir. ———

[Over-turns the Table and discovers Rakel.

S C E N E XI.

Mr. Wisdom, Mrs. Wisdom, Mrs. Softly, Rakel, Risque, Constable, Servants.

John. More Rogues! more Rogues!

Const. I have him secure enough.

Mr. Wisd. This second Visit, Sir, is exceeding kind. I suppose, Sir, this is the honest Gentleman that conveys away the Goods, we have stop'd the Goods and shall convey you both to a proper Habitation.

Rak. Damnation!

Mrs. Wisd. Ruin'd beyond Retrieval.

} *Aside.*

Mr. Soft. May I believe my Eyes.

Mr. Wisd. [To Risque.] You will have but a short time to consider on't, so it were good for you to resolve on being an Evidence, and save your own Neck at the Expence of his.

Risq. Well, Sir, if I must peach I must, I think.

Mr. Wisd. [To Rakel.] Do you know this Gentleman, Sir?

Rak. Aside, Confusion! What shall I do?

Const. How the Rogues stare at one another! What, did you never see one another before?

Risq. Pox take him, I wish I had never seen him I'm sure; I am like to pay dear enough for his Acquaintance.

Mr. Wisd. You have no other way to prevent it than by swearing against him.

Risq. Ay, ay, Sir, I'll swear against him; he brought me to this Shame, so let him look to it: I never took these Courses till I became acquainted with that Highway-man there who hath robb'd on all the Roads of *England*.

Rak. Ha!

Const. And will you swear that this Fellow wrote the Letter to my Master, to threaten to murder my Lady whenever she went abroad.

Risq. Ay, that I will I saw him write it with my own Eyes.

Mr. Wisd. — You saw him write it?

Risq. Yes, an't please your Honour.

Mrs. Wisd. I find this Fellow will do our Business without any other Evidence. [*Aside.*

Mrs. Soft. Can this be possible? [*Aside.*

Mr. Wisd. And so if my Wife had ventur'd abroad, you had put my Design in Execution.

Risq. — She would have been murder'd the very first time, an't please your Honour.

Mr. Wisd. See there now — Did I not advise you like a Friend. — In short, I know not when it will

will

will be safe for you to stir without your own Doors.

Mrs. Wisd. And was I to have fallen by the Hands of this Gentleman?

Risq. Yes, Madam; he was to have murder'd your Ladyship, and I was to have robb'd you.

Rak. Dog! Villain!

Risq. Don't give ill Language, *Tom*, I have often told you what your Rogueries would come to, I told you, you would never leave off Thieving but at the Gallows.

Rak. Villain, be assur'd, I will be reveng'd on thee.

Risq. I desire of your Worship that we may not be put together, I do not care for such Company.

Mr. Wisd. Mr. Constable, convey them to the Round-house, let them be kept separately, and in the Morning you shall hear from me.

Rak. [*To Wisd.*] Sir, shall I beg to speak one Word with you?

Mr. Wisd. You are sure he hath no Arms about him, Mr. Constable.

Const. No, Sir, he hath no Arms about him nor any thing else.

Rak. This Prosecution will end in nothing but your own Shame; [*Apart to Wisd.*] so you had best set me at Liberty: Be assur'd that I am not the Person you take me for, my Character will make it evident that my Design was neither to rob nor to murder you; my Crime, Sir, will appear to be such as (Heaven be praised) our Laws do not hang a Man for. — As for that Fellow there, he is my Servant; but how, or with what Design he came here I cannot tell.

Mr. Wisd. And is this what you have to say, Sir?

Risq. Don't believe a word he says, Sir; for he is one of the damnedst Liars that ever was hang'd: He'll tell you he kept a Justice of Peace for a Servant, if you will believe him.

Mr. Wisd. He says he kept you as such.

Risq. Ay, there it is now. Art thou not a sad Dog, *Tom*? — But thou wilt pay for all thy Rogueries shortly.

[*Wisdom points to the Constable.*

Const. Come, bring them along; march, you poor beggarly Rascal——you a Rogue and be damn'd to you, without a Penny in your Pocket.

S C E N E XII.

Mr. Wisdom, Mrs. Wisdom, Mrs Softly.

Mr. Wisd. Don't be frighten'd, my Dear, while you are at home; you are in no Danger. Sister *Softly*, I am sorry you find my Family in such Disorder.

Mrs. Soft. I am heartily sorry for your sake, Dear Brother; but Heaven knows how soon it may be our own Fate; for I suppose you know we have receiv'd a Letter too.

Mrs. Wisd. We must find some way to break the Neck of this Trade. Here's my poor Wife will not be able to stir abroad this Winter.

Mrs. Soft. Not stir abroad this Winter! Marry forbid it; she hath staid at home longer already than I would have done, had the Danger been ten times greater: I would rather lose my Life than my Liberty —— where's the Difference? Whether one be lock'd up in one's own Grave, or one's own House. My Soul is such an Enemy to Confinement, that if my Body were confin'd it would not stay in it.

Mr. Wisd. Oh lud! here's Doctrine for my Wife. May your Body never enter my Doors again I pray Heaven. [*Aside.*] But if you have no more Fears for your self, I hope you would have some for your Husband.

Mrs. Soft. Oh! dear Sir, the Wife who loves her Husband as well as her self is an exceeding good Christian. That Man must be a most unreasonable Creature, who expects a Woman to abstain from Pleasures for his sake.

Mr. Wisd. Hoity-toity! I hope you'll allow that a Woman ought to avoid some Pleasures for the sake of her Husband.

Mrs. Soft. Oh! certainly! Ought, no doubt on't. But to speak freely, I am afraid when once a Woman's Pleasures run counter to the Interest of her Husband; when

when once she finds greater Pleasures Abroad than at Home, I am afraid all the threatenning Letters in *Europe* will not keep her from them.

Mr. Wisd. Oh lud! oh lud!

Mrs. Soft. But to shew you that I am of a contrary Opinion, I will leave the most agreeable Company in the World to go home to my Husband. — No Ceremony.

Mr. Wisd. I will see you into the Chair.

Mrs. Soft. Sister, your Servant.

Mrs. Wisd. My Dear I am yours. ——— What shall I think! *Rakel* cannot be guilty of such Villany. But then how came his Servant here? He sent him to break the Windows — and he exceeded his Commission — It must be so — and what he hath said was only forg'd to excuse himself.

IS C E N E XIII.

Mr. Wisdom, Mrs. Wisdom.

Mrs. Wisd. I wish you well home, Madam; and may you never come abroad again. My Dear, I am afraid she hath quite struck you dumb with Surprize: This Woman is a walking Contagion, and ought not to be admitted into one's House. She is able to raise a universal conjugal Rebellion in the Nation.

Mrs. Wisd. Alas! my Dear, I wish this Affair had not happen'd. I vow, I feel a sort of Pity for these poor Wretches, whom Necessity hath driven to such Courses. One of them seems so young too, that if he were forgiven perhaps he might amend.

Mrs. Wisd. His Method of robbing, perhaps, and the next time cut our Throats.

Mrs. Wisd. Strict Justice seems too rigorous in my Opinion; and tho' it may be a womanish Weakness, I could wish you would forgive them.

Mr. Wisd. Be assur'd, my Love, it is a womanish Weakness which makes you plead for the Life of a young Fellow. By the Womens Consent, we should have no Rogues hang'd till after they are Forty.

Mrs. Wisd. In one so young, Vice hath not so strong a Root.

Mr.

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Mr. Wisd. You lye, my Dear, Vice hath often the strongest Root in a young Fellow. So, say no more, I am determin'd he shall be hang'd; I will go take my Mess of Sugar-Sops and to bed. In the Morning early I will go to a Justice of the Peace.

Mrs. Wisd. But consider, my Dear, will you not provoke the rest of the Gang to Revenge?

Mr. Wisd. Fear nothing, my Dear.

While in your Husband's Arms you keep your 'Treasure
You're free from Fear of Hurt.

Mrs. Wisd. ————— or Hope of Pleasure.

The End of the Second Act.



A C T III. S C E N E I.

SCENE, *An Inner-Room in the Round-house.*

Commons, Rakel.

Com. P R ithee, *Tom*, forgive me.

Rak. Forgive thee! Death and Damnation! Do'st thou insult my Misfortunes? Do'st thou think I am come to the Tree, where I am to whine out of the World like a good Christian, and forgive all thy Enemies. If thou wilt hear my last Prayer, damn thee heartily, heartily.

Com. Amen, if I design'd thee any Mischief.

Rak. Rat your Designs; it is equal to me whether you design'd it or not, and I will forgive you and that Rascal *Risque* at the same time.

Com.

Com. Nay, but dear *Tom*, why the Danger is not so great as thou apprehendest; it will never be believ'd that thou didst intend to rob my Uncle: Thy Reputation will prevent that.

Rat. But it will be believ'd that I intended to cuckold your Uncle; my Reputation will not prevent that: And I would rather sacrifice the World than my Mistress. — Oons! I believe thou didst intend to discover me, to save the Virtue of thy Aunt.

Com. To save the Devil, you should lie with all my Aunts, or with my Mother and Sisters: Nay, I will carry a Letter for you to any of them.

Rak. Carry a Letter! If thou wilt get me two Letters that were taken out of my Pocket when I was search'd, I will forgive thee — It is in vain to keep it a Secret. Your Uncle *Wisdom* hath in his Possession a Letter from each of your Aunts, which unless we get back must ruin them both.

Com. But I suppose he hath read them already?

Rak. Then they are ruin'd already.

Com. Prithee, what are the Letters?

Rak. I believe, Sir, you may guess what Business is between them and me.

Com. Hearkee, *Tom*. — There is no Smut in them.

Rak. There is nothing more in them than from the one an Invitation to come and see her, and from the other a very civil Message that she will never see my Face again.

Const. [*Enters.*] Captain, you must go before the Justice. As for you, Sir, you have your Liberty to go where you please: I hope you will be as good as your Word, and remember to buy your Stockings at my Shop; for if I had not persuaded the Gentleman to make up the Affair, you might have gone before the Justice too.

Rak. Mr. Constable, I am oblig'd to you, and the next time you take me up I hope I shall have more Money in my Pocket. Come, noble Captain, be not dejected, I'll stand by thee whatever be the Consequence — Mr. Constable, we'll wait on you immediately. — Hearkee, I have a thought just risen may bring

bring the Ladies off in the easiest manner imaginable.

Rak. What hath the Devil inspir'd thee with ?

Com. Suppose now I should swear that I forg'd their Hands. Luckily for the Purpose I have had a Quarrel this very Day with my Uncle *Wisdom*, and another with my Aunt *Softly*; so that we may persuade the old Gentleman that I sent the Letters to you in order to be reveng'd on them. Now, if we could persuade them this.

Rak. Which we might if they were as ready to believe any thing as thou art to swear any thing; but as the Case happeneth to be quite contrary, thy Stratagem is good for nothing; so fare you well. Nothing will prosper with me whilst I keep such a wicked Fellow Company.

Com. The Invitation must be from my Aunt *Wisdom* by his being there — odd, if there be no Direction, it may do — Thou art such a dear wicked Dog, I cannot leave thee in the Lurch.

S C E N E II.

Mr. Wisdom, Mrs. Wisdom.

Mr. Wisd. Pray, no more of your Good-nature, my Dear. It is a very good-natur'd thing truly, to save one Rogue's Throat, that he may cut twenty honest People's. The Good-nature of Women is as furious as their Ill-nature; they would save or destroy without Distinction. But by this time, I suppose, my Brother *Softly* is ready. So Child, Good-morrow.

Mrs. Wisd. Nay, my Dear, I dare not trust my self even in my own House without you, now you have provok'd the Gang. So, if you are determin'd to go, you shall carry me to return my Sister's Visit.

Mr. Wisd. Indeed, my Dear, I will carry you to a Masquerade as soon. No, no; no more visiting there. If my Sister's Husband's Brother marries a mad Woman she shall not spoil my Wife; I'll carry you to no such Lectures. She will teach you more Naughtiness in
half

half an Hour than half a dozen modern Comedies; nay, than the lewd Epilogues to as many modern Tragedies.

Mrs. Wisd. Which you never suffer me to go to, tho you seldom miss your self.

Mr. Wisd. Well, I must not lose a Moment, Good-morrow.

Mrs. Wisd. So you leave me behind to be murder'd.

Mr. Wisd. You'll come to no harm, I warrant you.

Mr. Wisd. I cannot think that, when I know what you are going upon. If this generous Creature should have Honour enough to preserve my Reputation, shall I suffer him to preserve it at the Expense of a Life, which was dearer to me than Fame before, and by such an Instance of Honour will become still more precious. No, should it come to that, I will give up my Honour to preserve my Lover, and will be my self the Witness to his Innocence. ——— Who's there.

S C E N E III.

Mrs. Wisdom, Betty.

Mrs. Wisd. Call a Chair.

Bet. Madam!

Mrs. Wisd. Call a Chair.

Bet. And is your Ladyship resolv'd to venture abroad?

Mrs. Wisd. I begin to laugh at the Danger I apprehended. But, however, that I may not be too bold, order the Footman to take a Blunderbus with him: And d'ee hear, order him to hire Chairmen, and arm them with Muskets. I am resolv'd to pluck up a Spirit, *Betty*, and shew my Husband that I am like other Women.

Bet. I am heartily glad to see your Ladyship hath so much Courage; I always lik'd those Families the best where the Ladies govern'd the most. Where
Ladies

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Ladies govern there are Secrets, and where there are Secrets there are Vails — I liv'd with a Lady once who used to give her Cloths away every Month, and her Husband durst not oppose it.

Mrs. Wisd. Go, do as I bid you in a Moment, I have no Time to lose; I will but put on my Mantle and be ready.

S C E N E IV. *Mrs. Softly's House.*

Mrs. Softly [*Alone.*]

Mrs. Soft. That he should convey himself under her Table without her Knowledge is something difficult to believe. Nor can I imagine any Necessities capable of driving him to so abandon'd a Course. Her Concern seem'd to have another Cause than Fear. Besides, I remember when we were at the Masquerade together he talked to her near an Hour; and if I mistake not, she was so pleas'd with his Conversation that she gave him Encouragements which he was unlikely to have mistaken. — It must be so — whatever was his Design, she was privy to it. He is false, and so adieu, good Captain.

S C E N E V.

Mr. Softly, Mrs. Softly.

Mrs. Softly. My Dear, your Servant: No News of my Brother *Wisdom* yet; I have been considering how lucky it is that ours was not the House attack'd — we might not so happily have discover'd it. (Poor Fool, how little she suspects who the Incendiaries were.)

Mrs. Soft. Heaven send the Gang be quite broke, I shall be oblig'd to make more Servants mount the Guard now whenever I go out.

Mrs. Soft. It would be much more advisable for you to stay at home, and then no one need mount Guard upon you but your Husband.

Mrs.

Mrs. Soft. Never name it, I am no more safe at Home than Abroad; for if the Rogues should set our House on Fire, I am sure no one would wish to be in it.

Mr. Soft. Still my Arguments retort upon me, and like Food to ill Blood promote the Disease, not the Cure. Well, my Dear, take your Swing, I'll give you no more of my Advice ——— and I heartily wish you may never stay at home.

Mrs. Wisd. Why do you wish so?

Mr. Soft. Because I am sure you must be lam'd first.

Mrs. Soft. Why indeed, my Dear, I think no one would stay at home who had Legs to go abroad.

Mr. Soft. Truly, my Dear, if I were sure she would have staid at home, I would have chosen a Wife without Legs before the finest legg'd Woman in the Universe; but she who can't walk will be carry'd. I have no need to complain of your Legs, for they seldom carry you farther than your own Door. And truly, my Dear, reckoning the Number of your Attendants, you go abroad now upon a dozen Legs.

Servant [*Enters*] Sir, Mr. *Wisdom* to wait on your Worship.

Mrs. Soft. Shew him up: ——— Will you stay and hear the Trial.

Mrs. Soft. No, I have other Business; by that time I am dress'd, I expect a Lady to call on me to go to another Trial; I mean the Rehearsal of the new Opera.

S C E N E VI.

Mr. Wisdom, Mrs. Softly.

Mrs. Soft. Brother *Wisdom*, your Servant: My Wife tells me you have made a Discovery of the Incendiaries. Ha, ha, ha! she little thinks who wrote the Letters.

Mr.

Mr. Wisd. No, nor do you think who will appear to have written them.

Mr. Soft. I hope we shall not appear to have written them.

Mr. Wisd. No, no. One of the Fellows I have in Custody offers to swear it on the other.

Mr. Soft. How! but you know we cannot admit of such a Testimony, whereof we know the Falseness.

Mr. Wisd. And what then? you don't take the false Oath, do you? Are you to answer for the Sins of another.

Mr. Soft. But will not the other Circumstances do without that of the Letter?

Mr. Wisd. Yes, they will do to hang him; but will not have the same Terror on our Wives.

Mr. Soft. I am glad of it with all my Heart, I am sure I have severely paid for all the Terrors I have given my Wife: If I could bring her to be only as bad as she was before, I should think my self entirely happy. In short, Brother, I have found by woful Experience, that mending our Wives is like mending our Constitutions, when often after all our Pains we would be glad to return to our former State.

Mr. Wisd. Well, Brother, if it be so, I have no Reason to repent having been a Valetudinarian. — but let me tell you, Brother, you do not know how to govern a Wife.

Mr. Soft. And let me tell you, Brother, you do not know what it is to have a Woman of Spirit to govern.

Mr. Wisd. A Fig for her Spirit, I know what it is to have a virtuous Wife; and perhaps I am the only Man in Town that know what it is to keep a Wife at home.

Mr. Soft. Brother, do not upbraid me with my Wife's going abroad: If she doth, it is in the best Company. And for Virtue ——— for that, Sir, my Wife's Name is *Lucretia* ——— *Lucretia* the Second; and I don't question but she's as chaste as the first was.

Mr.

Mr. Wisd. Ay, ay, and I believe so too ——— But don't let the Squeamishness of your Conscience put a stop to my Success: And let me tell you, if you are not advantaged by the Stratagem, you will be disadvantaged by the Discovery; for if you put such a Secret into your Wife's Bosom, let me tell you, you are not *Solomon* the Second.

S C E N E VII.

Mr. Wisdom, Mr. Softly, Constable, Rakel, Risque, Clerk, Servants.

Servant. Sir, Here is a Constable with some Prisoners.

Mr. Soft. Bring them in. Brother *Wisdom*, I will stretch both Law and Conscience as wide as possible to serve you.

Const. Come, Gentlemen, walk in and take your Places.

Mr. Soft. Are these the two Fellows, Mr. Constable, that you found last Night broke into Mr. *Wisdom's* House.

Const. Yes, an't please your Worship.

Risq. We are the two Rogues, an't please your Worship.

Mr. Wisd. This Fellow is to be admitted Evidence against the other.

Risq. Yes, I am Evidence for the King.

Mr. Soft. Where is my Clerk? Mr. *Sneaksby*, let that Fellow be sworn.

Risq. May it please your Worship, I have a sort of Scruple of Conscience; I have been told that you are apter to hire Rogues to swear against one another than to pay them for it when they have done it. Therefore, supposing it to be all the same Case with your Worship; I should be glad to be paid before-hand.

Mr. Soft. What doth the simple Fellow mean?

Mr. Wisd. Perhaps we shall not want his Evidence; here are some Papers which were found in the other's Pocket. I have open'd one of them only, which I find to contain the whole Method of their Conspiracy.

Mr. Soft. *Mr. Sneaksby*, read these Papers.

Sneaks. [reads] *To Ensign Rakel. Parole, Plunder.*

Mr. Wisd. Plunder's the Word, agad!

Sneaksby. *For the Guard To-morrow Ensign Rakel, two Serjeants, two Corporals, one Drum and six and thirty Men.*

Mr. Soft. Why the Rogues are incorporated, they are regimented — we shall shortly have a standing Army of Rogues as well as of Soldiers.

Mr. Wisd. Six and Thirty Rogues about the Town To-day: *Mr. Softly*, we must look to our Houses, I expect to hear of several Fires and Murders before Night.

Mr. Soft. Truly, Brother *Wisdom*, I fear it will be necessary to keep the City Train'd-Bands continually under Arms.

Mr. Wisd. They won't do, Sir; they won't do. Six and thirty of these bloody Fellows would beat them all. — Sir, six and thirty of these Rogues would require at least one hundred of the Foot-Guards to cope with them.

Mr. Soft. *Mr. Sneaksby*, read on, we shall make farther Discoveries I'll engage.

Sneaksby. Here's a Woman's Hand may it please your Worship.

Mr. Soft. Read it, read it. There are Women Robbers as well as Men.

[*Sneaksby* reads.

BE here at the Time you mention, my Husband is luckily out of the Way; I wish your Happiness be as you say, entirely in the Power of Elizabeth Wisdom.

Mr. Wisd. What's that? Who's that?

Sneaksby. Elizabeth Wisdom.

Mr. Wisd. [Snatches the Letter.] By all the Plagues of Hell, my Wife's own Hand too.

Mr. Soft. I always thought she would be discover'd one time or other, to be no better than she should be.

[*Aside.*

Mr. Wisd. I am confounded, amazed, speechless.

Mr.

Mr. Soft. What's the Matter Brother *Wisdom*? Sure, your Wife doth not hold Correspondence with these People; your Wife! that durst not go abroad for fear of them; who is the only Wife in Town that her Husband can keep at home.

Mr. Wisd. Blood and Furies, I shall become the Jest of the Town.

Sneak. May it please your Worship, here is one Letter more, in a Woman's Hand too.

Mr. Soft. The same Woman's Hand, I warrant you.
[*Sneaksby* reads.]

SIR, Your late Behaviour hath determin'd me never to see you more: If you get Entrance into this House for the future, it will not be by my Consent; for I desire you would henceforth imagine there never was any Acquaintance between you and

Lucretia Softly.

Mr. Wisd. Ha!

Mr. Soft. Lucretia Softly! ——— give me the Letter. — Brother *Wisdom*, this is some Counterfeit.

Mr. Wisd. It must be so. Sure it cannot come from *Lucretia* the Second; she that is as chaste as the first *Lucretia* was. ——— She correspond with such as these who never goes out of her Doors but to the best Company in Town.

Mr. Soft. 'Tis impossible!

Mr. Wisd. You may think so; but I who understand Women better will not be so easily satisfy'd ——— I'll go fetch my Wife hither, and if she doth not acquit her self in the plainest manner, Brother *Softly*, you shall commit her and her Rogues together. ——— Ha! What do I see? An Apparition!

S C E N E VIII.

To them. Mrs. Wisdom guarded.

Mrs. Wisd. Let the rest of my Guards stay without ——— my Dear, your Servant.

Mr. Wisd. This must be some Delusion, this can't be real.

Mrs. Wisd. I see you are surpriz'd at my Courage, my Dear; but don't think I have ventur'd hither

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alone, I have a whole Regiment of Guards with me.

Mr. Wisd. You have a whole Regiment of Devils with you, my Dear.

Mrs. Wisd. Ha, ha, ha.

S C E N E IX.

To them, Mrs. Softly.

Mrs. Soft. Joy of your coming abroad, Sister *Wisdom*; I flew to meet you the Moment my Servants brought me the agreeable News you were here.

Mrs. Wisd. I am extremely oblig'd to you, Madam; but I wish this Surprize may have no ill Effect on poor *Mr. Wisdom*; he looks as if he had seen an Apparition.

Mrs. Soft. Nay, it will be a great Surprize to all your Acquaintance; you must have made a hundred Visits before it will be believ'd.

Mrs. Wisd. Oh! my Dear, I intend to make almost as many before I go home again.

Mr. Wisd. Plagues and Furies!

Mr. Soft. I fancy Brother *Wisdom*, you begin to be as weary of the Letter-Project as my self.

Mr. Wisd. Hearkee, You, Crocodile — Devil! Come here, do you know this Hand?

[*Softly shews Mrs. Softly her Letter at the same time.*

Mrs. Wisd. — Ha! [Starts.

Mr. Wisd. You counterfeited your Fear bravely, you were much terrify'd with the Thoughts of the Enemy while you kept a private Correspondence with him.

S C E N E *the Last.*

To them, Commons.

Com. So, Uncles, I see you take Turns to keep the Rendezvous. Uncle *Wisdom*, I hope you are not angry with me for what I said last Night. When a Man is drunk, you know his Reason is not sober; and when his Reason is not sober, a Man that acts according to his Reason cannot act soberly. There's Logick for you, Uncle; you see I have not forgotten all my University Learning.

Mr.

Mr. Wisd. I shall take another Opportunity, Sir, to talk with you.

Com. Well, Aunt *Wisdom*, I hope you will reconcile my Uncle to me, I should have waited on you last Night according to your Invitation when my Uncle was abroad, but I was engag'd. I receiv'd your Letter too, Madam.

Mrs. Soft. My Letter, Brute.

Com. Yes, Madam, did you not send me a Letter last Night that you would never see my Face again, desiring me to forget that I had ever any Acquaintance with you: Nay, I think you may be asham'd to own it; here's a Good-natur'd Woman that tries to make up all Differences between Relations. — Ha! what do I see! *Captain Rakel.*

Rak. You see a Man who is justly punish'd by the Shame he now suffereth for the Injury he hath done you. Those two Letters you mention I took last Night from your Bureau which you accidentally left open: And fir'd with the Praises which you have so often and so justly bestow'd on this Lady, I took that Opportunity, when she told me her Husband would be absent, to convey my self thro' the Window into the Closet. What follow'd, I need not mention any more than what I design'd.

Com. Rob my Bureau, Sir!

Rak. Nay, Dear *Jack*, forgive me, these Ladies have the greatest Reason to be offended, since the Letters being found in my Pockets had like to have caused some Suspicions which would not have been to their Advantage.

Mrs. Wisd. Excellent Creature.

Rak. But, Gentleman, if you please to look at these Letters, you will find they are not directed to me.

Mrs. Wisd. They have no Direction at all.

Mr. Soft. I told you, Brother — My Wife could not be guilty.

Mr. Wisd. I am heartily glad to find mine is not — you see, Madam, what your Disobedience to my Orders had like to have occasion'd — How often have I strictly commanded you never to write to that Fellow!

Mr.

Mrs. Wisd. His Carelessness hath cured me for the future.

Mr. Wisd. And so, Sir, you keep Company with Highway-men, do you.

Mr. Soft. What do you mean, Sir?

Mr. Wisd. Sir, You will know when your Acquaintance is sent to *Newgate*. ——— Brother *Softly*, I desire you would order a *Mittimus* for these Fellows instantly.

Com. A *Mittimus* ! for whom?

Mr. Wisd. For these honest Gentlemen, your Acquaintance, who were broke into my House.

Com. Do you know, Sir, that this Gentleman is an Officer of the Army?

Mr. Wisd. Sir, it is equal to me what he is. If he be an Officer, he only proves that a Rogue may be under a red Coat, and very shortly, you will prove that a Rogue may be under a black one.

Com. Why, Sir, you will make your selves ridiculous, that will befall you will get by it. I'll be the Captain's Witness, he had no ill Design on your House.

Mr. Wisd. And I suppose, Sir, you will be his Witness that he did not write the Letter threatening to murder my Wife.

Mrs. Soft. That I will. If any one be convicted as an Incendiary, I am afraid it will go hard with you two. ——— I over-heard your fine Plot. ——— Sister *Wisdom*, do you know this Hand. ——— This is the threatening Letter? [*Shewing a Letter.*

Mr. Wisd. Sure it cannot be my Husband's.

Mrs. Soft. As surely as that which you receiv'd was written by mine.

Mrs. Wisd. Amazement ! What can it mean ?

Mrs. Soft. Only a New Way to keep a Wife at Home; which, I dare swear, mine heartily repents of.

Mr. Soft. Ay, that I do indeed.

Mr. Wisd. And is it possible that these terrible threatening Letters can have come from our own dear Husbands?

Mrs. Soft. From those very Hands that should defend us against all our Enemies.

Mr

Mr. Soft. — Come, Brother *Wisdom*, — I see we are fairly detected; we had as good plead Guilty and sue for Mercy. I assure, you my Dear, I shall think my self very happy if you will return to your old way of Living, and go abroad just as you did before this happen'd.

Mr. Wisd. Truly, I believe it would have been soon my Interest to have made the same Bargain.

Mrs. Soft. Looke, my Dear, as for the Blunderbusses, I agree to leave them at home: But I am resolv'd not to part with the additional Footman, he must remain as a sort of Monument of my Victory.

Mr. Soft. Well, Brother *Wisdom*, what shall be done with the Prisoner? This Fellow's Oath will have no great Weight in a Court of Justice.

Mr. Wisd. Do just what you will; I am so glad and sorry, pleas'd and displeas'd, that I am almost out of my Senses.

Rak. I told you how the Prosecution would end. Upon my Honour, Sir, I had no Design upon any thing that belongs to you, but your Wife.

Mr. Wisd. Your very humble Servant, Sir. I do believe you by the Emptiness of your Pockets; but this Gentleman seem'd to have some other Design by the Fulness of his.

Mr. Soft. With what Conscience, Sirrah, did you presume to take a false Oath?

Risq. With the same, Mr. Justice, that you would have received it; when you knew it to be false. Looke, Gentlemen, you had best hold your Tongues, or I shall become Evidence for the King against you both. As for my Master, he, I hope, will forgive me; for I only intended to get the Reward, and then I would have sworn all back again — Sir, if your Honour doth not forgive me, I'll confess that I brought you the Letters from the Ladies, and spoil all yet.

Rak. By your Amendment, I know not what I may be brought to do ——— till I get you to the Regiment.

Com. Well, Uncle *Wisdom*, you are not angry, are you?

Mrs. Wisd. Let me intercede, my Dear.

Mr. Wisd. You always are interceding for him, I wish his own good Behaviour would. I think, for the sake of Religion, I will buy him what he desires, a Commission in the Army; and then the sooner he is knock'd in the Head the better.

Rak. Well, Brother, if thou do'st come among us, it may be some time or other in my Power to make thee Reparation ——— But to you, Madam, I never shall be able to give any Satisfaction for my bold Design against your Virtue.

Mrs. Wisd. Unless by desisting for the future.

Mrs. Soft. Be assur'd if my Sister forgives you the Injury you intended her, I never will.

Mr. Soft. Come, come, my Dear, you must be of a more forgiving Temper; and since Matters are like to be amicably adjusted, you shall entertain the Company at Breakfast and we will laugh away the Frolick.

Rak. Pray Ladies, let me give you this Advice: If you ever should write a Love-Letter, never sign your Name to it ——— And, Gentlemen, that you may prevent it ——— Think not by any Force or sinister Stratagem to imprison your Wives. The Laws of *England* are too generous to permit the one, and the Ladies are generally too cunning to be outwitted by the other. ——— But let this be your Maxim,

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*Those Wives for Pleasures very seldom roam,
Whose Husbands bring substantial Pleasures home.*

F I N I S.