

The School for Scandal—Working Script

Cast of Characters:

Sir Peter Teazle  
Lady Teazle  
Maria

Sir Oliver Surface  
Rowley  
Joseph Surface  
Charles Surface  
Careless  
Trip

Lady Sneerwell  
Mrs. Candor  
Crabtree  
Sir Benjamin Backbite  
Snake

Servant to Lady Sneerwell  
Servant to Joseph Surface [William]

Prologue [Written by David Garrick, Esq.] *Declaimed by members of the company.*

A school for scandal! Tell me, I beseech you,  
Needs there a school this modish art to teach you?  
No need of lessons *now* the knowing think:  
We might as well be taught to eat and drink.  
Caused by a dearth of scandal, should the vapours  
Distress our fair ones, let 'em read the papers:  
Their powerful mixtures such disorders hit,  
Crave what they will, plenty they will get.

'Lud', cries my Lady, who so loves tattle  
And puts much salt and pepper in her prattle.  
Just risen at noon, all night at cards, when threshing.  
'Strong tea and scandal! Bless me, how refreshing!  
"Last night Lord L-----was caught with Lady D-----."  
For aching heads how charming that can be!'

Are we so young to think that we  
Can stop the full spring-tide of calumny?  
Know we the world so little, and its trade?  
Alas, the devil is sooner raised than laid.  
So strong, so swift, the monster there's no gagging;  
Cut scandal's head off, still the tongue is wagging.  
Yet, for your smiles, we draw a pen,  
And seek this hydra, scandal, in its den,

For your applause, all perils we would through;  
We'll fight—that's write—as knights both brave and true  
Till every drop of blood—that's ink—is spilt for *you*.

Act I, Scene 1

*Lady Sneerwell's house.*

*Lady Sneerwell at the dressing-table. Snake drinking chocolate.*

**L. SNEERWELL:** The paragraphs, you say, Mr. Snake, were all inserted?

**SNAKE:** They were, madam; and as I copied them myself in a feigned hand, there can be no suspicion whence they came.

**L. SNEERWELL:** Did you circulate the report of Lady Brittle's intrigue with Captain Boastall?

**SNAKE:** That is in as well-advanced as your ladyship could wish. In the common course of things, I think it must reach Mrs. Clackit's ears within four-and-twenty hours, and then you know the business is as good as done.

**L. SNEERWELL:** Why, truly, Mrs. Clackit has a very pretty talent and a great deal of industry.

**SNAKE:** True, madam, and has been tolerably successful in her day. To my knowledge, she has been the cause of six matches being broken off and three sons being disinherited, of four forced elopements, as many secret births, nine separations, and two divorces. Nay, I have more than once traced her causing a *tete-a-tete* in the *Town and Country Magazine*, when the parties perhaps have never seen each other's faces before in the course of their lives.

**L. SNEERWELL:** She certainly has talents, but her manner is gross.

**SNAKE:** 'Tis very true; she generally designs well, has a free tongue and a bold invention, but her coloring is too high and her outline often extravagant. She wants that delicacy of hint and mellowness of sneer which distinguishes your ladyship's scandal.

**L. SNEERWELL:** Ah, you are partial, Snake.

**SNAKE:** Not in the least. Everybody allows that Lady Sneerwell can do more with a word or a look than many can with the most labored detail, even when they happen to have a little truth on their side to support it.

**L. SNEERWELL:** Yes, my dear Snake, and I am no hypocrite to deny the satisfaction I reap from the success of my efforts. Wounded myself in the early part of my life by the envenomed tongue of slander, I confess I have since known no pleasure equal to the reducing others to the level of my own injured reputation.

- SNAKE:** Nothing can be more natural. But, Lady Sneerwell, there is one affair in which you have lately employed me, wherein I confess I am at a loss to guess your motives.
- L. SNEERWELL:** I conceive you mean with respect to my neighbor Sir Peter Teazle and his family?
- SNAKE:** I do. Here are two young men, the Surfaces, to whom Sir Peter has acted as a kind of guardian since their father's death, the elder possessing the most amiable character and universally well spoken of, the other the most dissipated and extravagant young fellow in the kingdom, without friends or character—the former an avowed admirer of your ladyship and apparently your favourite; the latter attached to Maria, Sir Peter's ward, and confessedly beloved by her. Now, on the face of these circumstances, it is utterly unaccountable to me why you, the widow of a city knight with a good settlement, should not close with the passion of a man of such character and expectations as the elder Mr. Surface—and more so why you should be so uncommonly earnest to destroy the mutual attachment subsisting between his brother Charles and Maria.
- L. SNEERWELL:** Then, at once to unravel the mystery, I must inform you that love has no share whatever in the dealings between Mr. Surface and me.
- SNAKE:** No!
- L. SNEERWELL:** His real attachment is to Maria or her fortune; but, finding in his brother a favored rival, he has been obliged to mask his pretensions and profit by my assistance.
- SNAKE:** Yet still I am more puzzled why you should interest yourself in his success.
- L. SNEERWELL:** Heavens, how dull you are! Cannot you surmise the weakness which I hitherto through shame have concealed even from you? Must I confess that Charles—that libertine, that extravagant, that bankrupt in fortune and reputation—that he it is for whom I am thus anxious and malicious and to gain whom I would sacrifice everything?
- SNAKE:** Now indeed your conduct appears consistent. But how came you and Mr. Surface so confidential?
- L. SNEERWELL:** For our mutual interest. I have found him out a long time since. I know him to be artful, selfish and malicious—in short a sentimental knave.

**SNAKE:** Yet Sir Peter vows he has not his equal in England; and, above all, he praises him as a man of sentiment, professing highly moral views of great humanity and compassion.

**L. SNEERWELL:** True, and with the assistance of his sentiments and hypocrisy he has brought Sir Peter entirely into his interest with regard to Maria.  
*Enter Servant.*

**SERVANT:** Mr. Surface.

**L. SNEERWELL:** Show him up. *Exit Servant.* He generally calls about this time; I don't wonder at people's giving him to me for a lover. *Enter Joseph Surface.*

**J. SURFACE:** My dear Lady Sneerwell, how do you do today?—Mr. Snake, your most obedient.  
**L. SNEERWELL:** Snake has just been arraigning me on our mutual attachment; but I have informed him of our real views. You know how useful he has been to us; and, believe me, the confidence is not ill-placed.

**J. SURFACE:** Madam, it is impossible for me to suspect a man of Mr. Snake's sensibility and discernment.

**L. SNEERWELL:** Well, well, no complaints now; but tell me when you saw your mistress Maria, or—what is more material to me—your brother?

**J. SURFACE:** I have not seen either since I left you; but I can inform you that they never meet. Some of your stories have taken a good effect on Maria.

**L. SNEERWELL:** Ah, my dear Snake, the merit of this belongs to you.—But do your brother's distresses increase?

**J. SURFACE:** Every hour. I am told he has had another seizure of goods in the house yesterday. In short, his dissipation and extravagance exceed anything I ever heard of.

**L. SNEERWELL:** Poor Charles!

**J. SURFACE:** True, madam; notwithstanding his vices, one can't help feeling for him. Ay, poor Charles! I'm sure I wish it was in my power to be of any essential service to him, for the man who does not share in the distresses of a brother, even though merited by his own misconduct, deserves—

**L. SNEERWELL:** O lud, you are going to be moral and forget that you are among friends.

**J. SURFACE:** Egad, that's true. I'll keep that sentiment till I see Sir Peter. However, it is certainly a charity to rescue Maria from such a libertine, who, if he is to be reclaimed, can be so only by a person of your ladyship's superior accomplishments and understanding.

**SNAKE:** I believe, Lady Sneerwell, here's company coming. I'll go and copy the letter I mentioned to you.—Mr. Surface, your most obedient.

**J. SURFACE:** Sir, your very devoted. *Exit Snake.* Lady Sneerwell, I am very sorry you have put any further confidence in that fellow.

**L. SNEERWELL:** Why so?

**J. SURFACE:** I have lately detected him in frequent conference with old Rowley, who was formerly my father's steward, and has never, you know, been a friend of mine.

**L. SNEERWELL:** And do you think he would betray us?

**J. SURFACE:** Nothing more likely. Take my word for it, Lady Sneerwell. That fellow hasn't virtue enough to be faithful even to his own villainy. Ha! Maria! *Enter Maria.*

**L. SNEERWELL:** Maria, my dear, how do you do? What's the matter?

**MARIA:** O, there is that disagreeable suitor of mine, Sir Benjamin Backbit, has just called at my guardian's with his odious uncle, Crabtree; so I slipped out and run hither to avoid them.

**L. SNEERWELL:** Is that all?

**J. SURFACE:** If my brother Charles had been of the party, ma'am, perhaps you would not have been so much alarmed.

**L. SNEERWELL:** Nay, now you are severe, for I dare swear the truth of the matter is Maria heard *you* were here.—But, my dear, what has Sir Benjamin done that you should avoid him so?

**MARIA:** O, he has done nothing; but 'tis for what he has said. His conversation is a perpetual libel on all his acquaintance.

**J. SURFACE:** Ay, and the worst of it is there is no advantage in not knowing him; for he'll abuse a stranger just as soon as his best friend—and his uncle's as bad.

**L. SNEERWELL:** Nay, but we should make allowance. Sir Benjamin is a wit and a poet.

**MARIA:** For my part, I own, madam, wit loses its respect with me when I see it in company with malice. What do you think, Mr. Surface?

**J. SURFACE:** Certainly, madam, to smile at the jest which plants a thorn in another's breast is to become a principal in the mischief.

**L. SNEERWELL:** Pshaw! There's no possibility of being witty without a little ill nature. The malice of a good thing is the barb that makes it stick. What's your opinion, Mr. Surface?

**J. SURFACE:** To be sure, madam, that conversation where the spirit of raillery is suppressed will ever appear tedious and insipid.

**L. SNEERWELL:** Well, I'll not debate how far scandal may be allowable; but in a man I am sure it is always contemptible. We have pride, envy, rivalry, and a thousand motives to depreciate each other; but the male slanderer must have the cowardice of a woman before he can betray one. *Enter Servant.*

**SERVANT:** Madam, Mrs. Candor is below, and, if your ladyship's at leisure, will leave her carriage.

**L. SNEERWELL:** Beg her to walk in. *Exit Servant.* Now, Maria, however, here is a character to your taste, for though Mrs. Candor is a little talkative, everybody allows her to be the best-natured and best sort of woman.

**MARIA:** Yes; with a very gross affectation of good nature and benevolence she does more mischief than the direct malice of old Crabtree.

**J. SURFACE:** In faith, 'tis very true, Lady Sneerwell. Whenever I hear the current running against the characters of my friends, I never think them in such danger as when Candor undertakes their defence.

**L. SNEERWELL:** Hush, here she is. *Enter Mrs. Candor.*

**MRS. CANDOR:** My dear Lady Sneerwell, how have you been this century?—Mr. Surface, what news do you hear? Though, indeed, it is no matter, for I think one hears nothing else but scandal.

**J. SURFACE:** Just so, indeed, madam.

**MRS. CANDOR:** Ah, Maria, child, what, is the whole affair off between you and Charles? His extravagance, I presume. The town talks of nothing else.

**MARIA:** I am very sorry, ma'am, the town has so little to do.

**MRS. CANDOR:** True, true, child; but there is no stopping people's tongues. I own I was hurt to hear it—as indeed I was to learn from the same quarter that your guardian Sir Peter and Lady Teazle have not agreed lately so well as could be wished.

**MARIA:** 'Tis strangely impertinent for people to busy themselves so.

**MRS. CANDOR:** Very true, child; but what's to be done? People will talk; there's no preventing it. Why, it was but yesterday I was told that Miss Gadabout had eloped with Sir Filigree Flirt; but, lord, there is no minding what one hears—though to be sure I had this from very good authority.

**MARIA:** Such reports are highly scandalous.

**MRS. CANDOR:** So they are, child. Shameful! Shameful! But the world is so censorious, no character escapes. Lud now, who would have suspected your friend Miss Prim of an indiscretion! Yet such is the ill nature of people that they say her uncle stopped her last week just as she was stepping into the York stage-coach with her dancing-master.

**MARIA:** I'll answer for it there are no grounds for the report.

**MRS. CANDOR:** O, no foundation in the world, I dare swear. No more probably than for the story circulated last month of Mrs. Festino's affair with Colonel Casino, though to be sure that matter was never rightly cleared up.

**J. SURFACE:** The license of invention some people take is monstrous indeed.

**MARIA:** 'Tis so; but in my opinion those who report such things are equally culpable.

**MRS. CANDOR:** To be sure they are. Tale-bearers are as bad as the tale-makers. 'Tis an old observation and a very true one; but what's to be done, as I said before? How will you prevent people from talking? Today Mrs. Clackit assured me Mr. and Mrs. Honeymoon were at last become mere man and wife like the rest of their acquaintances. But, lord, do you think I would report such things? No, no; tale-bearers, as I said before, are just as bad as tale-makers.

**J. SURFACE:** Ah, Mrs. Candor, if everybody had your forbearance and good nature!

**MRS. CANDOR:** I confess, Mr. Surface, I cannot bear to hear people attacked behind their backs; and when ugly circumstances come out against one's acquaintances, I own I always love to think the best. By the bye, I hope 'tis not true that your brother is absolutely ruined.

**J. SURFACE:** I am afraid his circumstances are very bad indeed, ma'am.

**MRS. CANDOR:** Ah, I heard so. But you must tell him to keep up his spirits; everybody almost is in the same way. Lord Spindle, Sir Thomas Splint, Captain Quinze, and Mr. Nickit—bankrupt, I hear, within this week! So, if Charles is undone, he'll find half his acquaintances ruined too; and that, you know, is a consolation.

**J. SURFACE:** Doubtless, ma'am, a very great one. *Enter Servant.*

**SERVANT:** Mr. Crabtree and Sir Benjamin Backbite. *Exit Servant.*

**L. SNEERWELL:** So! Maria, you see your suitor pursues you. Positively you shan't escape. *Enter Crabtree and Sir Benjamin Backbite.*

**CRABTREE:** Lady Sneerwell, I kiss your hands.—Mrs. Candor, I don't believe you are acquainted with my nephew Sir Benjamin Backbite. Egad, ma'am, he has a pretty wit, and is a pretty poet too.—Isn't he, Lady Sneerwell?

**B. BACKBITE:** O fie, uncle.

**CRABTREE:** Nay, egad, 'tis true. I back him at a rebus or a charade against the best rhymer in the kingdom. Has your ladyship heard the epigram he wrote on Lady Frizzle's feather catching fire? Do, Benjamin, repeat it—or the charade you made last night extempore at Mrs. Drowsy's conversazione. Come now, your first is the name of a fish, your second a great naval commander, and—

**B. BACKBITE:** Uncle, now prithee—

**CRABTREE:** In faith, ma'am, 'twould surprise you to hear how ready he is at these things.

**L. SNEERWELL:** I wonder, Sir Benjamin, you never publish anything.

**B. BACKBITE:** To say truth, ma'am, 'tis very vulgar to print; and as my little productions are mostly satires and lampoons on particular people, I find they circulate more by giving copies in confidence to the friends of the parties. However, I have some love-elegies, which, when favored with this lady's smiles, I mean to give to the public.

**CRABTREE:** Before heaven, ma'am, they'll immortalize you!

**B. BACKBITE:** Yes, madam; I think you will like them, when you shall see them on a beautiful page, where a neat rivulet of text shall murmur through a meadow of margin. Before Gad, they will be the most elegant things of their kind.

**CRABTREE:** But, ladies, that's true—have you heard the news?

**MRS. CANDOR:** What, sir, do you mean the report of—?

**CRABTREE:** No ma'am, that's not it. Miss Nicely is going to be married to her own footman.

**MRS. CANDOR:** Impossible!

**CRABTREE:** Ask Sir Benjamin.

**B. BACKBITE:** 'Tis very true, ma'am. Everything is fixed and the wedding-livery bespoke.

**CRABTREE:** Yes, and they *do* say there were pressing reasons for it.

**L. SNEERWELL:** Why, I *have* heard something of this before.

**MRS. CANDOR:** It can't be, and I wonder anyone should believe such a story of so prudent a lady as Miss Nicely.

**B. BACKBITE:** O, lud, ma'am, that's the very reason 'twas believed at once. She has always been so cautious and so reserved that everybody was sure there was some reason for it at bottom.

**MRS. CANDOR:** Why, to be sure, a tale of scandal is as fatal to the credit of a prudent lady of her stamp as a fever is generally to those of the strongest constitutions. But this may be all a mistake. You know, Sir Benjamin, very trifling circumstances often give rise to the most injurious tales.

**CRABTREE:** That they do, I'll be sworn, ma'am. Did you ever hear how Miss Piper came to lose her lover and her character last summer at Tunbridge? Sir Benjamin, you remember it?

**B. BACKBITE:** O, to be sure, the most whimsical circumstance.

**L. SNEERWELL:** How was it, pray?

**CRABTREE:** Why, one evening at Mrs. Ponto's assembly, the conversation happened to turn on the difficulty of breeding Nova Scotia sheep in this country. Says a young lady in company, 'I have known instances of it, for Miss Letitia Piper, a first cousin of mine, had a Nova Scotia sheep that produced twins.' 'What!', cries the old dowager Lady Dindizzy, who, you know, is as deaf as a post, 'has Miss Piper had twins?' This mistake, as you may imagine, threw the whole company into a fit of laughing. However, 'twas the next morning everywhere reported, and in a few days believed by the whole town, that Letitia Piper had actually been brought to bed of a fine boy and a girl; and in less than a week there were people who could name the father—and the farm-house where the babies were put out to nurse.

**L. SNEERWELL:** Strange indeed!

**CRABTREE:** Matter of fact, I assure you—O lud, Mr. Surface, pray is it true that your uncle Sir Oliver is coming home?

**J. SURFACE:** Not that I know of indeed, sir.

**CRABTREE:** He has been in the East Indies a long time; you can scarcely remember him, I believe. Sad comfort, whenever he returns, to hear how your brother has gone on.

**J. SURFACE:** Charles has been imprudent, sir, to be sure; but I hope no busy people have already prejudiced Sir Oliver against him. He may reform.

**B. BACKBITE:** To be sure, he may. For my part, I never believed him to be so utterly void of principle as people say; and, though he has lost all his friends, I am told nobody is better spoken of by the moneylenders.

**CRABTREE:** That's true, egad, nephew.

**B. BACKBITE:** Yet no man lives in greater splendour. They tell me—

**J. SURFACE:** This may be entertainment to you, gentlemen; but you pay very little regard to the feelings of a brother.

**MARIA:** *Aside.* Their malice is intolerable.—Lady Sneerwell, I must wish you a good morning. I'm not very well. *Exit Maria.*

**MRS. CANDOR:** O, dear, she changed color very much!

**L. SNEERWELL:** Do, Mrs. Candor, follow her; she may want assistance.

**MRS. CANDOR:** That I will, with all my soul, ma'am. Poor dear girl, who knows what her situation may be! *Exit Mrs. Candor.*

**L. SNEERWELL:** 'Twas nothing but that she could not bear to hear Charles reflected on, notwithstanding their difference.

**B. BACKBITE:** The young lady's penchant is obvious.

**CRABTREE:** But, Benjamin, you mustn't give up the pursuit for that. Follow her and put her into good humor—repeat her some of your own verses. Come, I'll assist you.

**B. BACKBITE:** Mr. Surface, I did not mean to hurt you—but, depend upon it, your brother is utterly undone.

**CRABTREE:** O lud, ay, undone as ever man was—can't raise a guinea.

**B. BACKBITE:** And everything is sold, I'm told, that was movable.

**CRABTREE:** I have seen one that was at his house. Not a thing left but some empty bottles that were overlooked, and the family pictures, which, I believe, are framed in the wainscot.

**B. BACKBITE:** And I'm very sorry to hear also some bad stories against him.

**CRABTREE:** O, he has done many mean things; that's certain.

**B. BACKBITE:** But, however, as he's your brother—

**CRABTREE:** We'll tell you all another opportunity. *Exit Crabtree and Sir Benjamin.*

**L. SNEERWELL:** Ha, ha, ha! 'Tis very hard for them to leave a subject they have not quite run down.

**J. SURFACE:** And I believe the abuse was no more acceptable to your ladyship than to Maria.

**L. SNEERWELL:** I doubt her affections are farther engaged than we imagined. But the family are to be here this evening, so you may as well dine where you are, and we shall have an opportunity of observing farther. In the meantime, I'll go and plot mischief, and you shall study sentiments.  
*All exit.*

Act I, Scene 2

*Sir Peter Teazle's house. Enter Sir Peter Teazle.*

**SIR PETER:** When an old bachelor takes a young wife, what is he to expect! 'Tis now six months since Lady Teazle made me the happiest of men, and I have been the miserablest dog ever since that ever committed wedlock. We tiffed a little going to church, and came to a quarrel before the bells were done ringing. I was more than once nearly choked with gall during the honeymoon, and had lost all comfort in life before my friends had done wishing me joy. Yet I chose with caution a girl bred wholly in the country, who never knew luxury beyond one silk gown, nor dissipation above the annual gala of a race-ball. Yet now she plays her part in all the extravagant fopperies of the fashion and the town with as ready a grace as if she had never seen a bush or a grass-plat out of Grosvenor Square! I am sneered at by old acquaintance, paragraphed in the newspapers. She dissipates my fortune and contradicts all my humors. Yet the worst of it is I fear I love her, or I should never bear all this. However, I'll never be weak enough to own it. *Enter Rowley.*

**ROWLEY:** O, Sir Peter, your servant. How is it with you, sir?

**SIR PETER:** Very bad, Master Rowley, very bad. I meet with nothing but crosses and vexations.

**ROWLEY:** What can have happened to trouble you since yesterday?

**SIR PETER:** A good question to a married man.

**ROWLEY:** Nay, I'm sure your lady, Sir Peter, can't be the cause of your uneasiness.

**SIR PETER:** Why, has anyone told you she was dead?

**ROWLEY:** Come, come, Sir Peter! You love her, notwithstanding your tempers do not exactly agree.

**SIR PETER:** But the fault is entirely hers, Master Rowley. I am myself the sweetest-tempered man alive and hate a teasing temper, and so I tell her a hundred times a day.

**ROWLEY:** Indeed!

**SIR PETER:** Ay; and what is very extraordinary, in all our disputes she is always in the wrong! But Lady Sneerwell and the set she meets at her house encourage the perverseness of her disposition. Then, to complete my vexations, Maria, my ward, whom I ought to have the power of a father over, is determined to turn rebel too, and absolutely refuses the man whom I have long resolved on for her husband, meaning, I suppose, to bestow herself on his profligate brother.

**ROWLEY:** You know, Sir Peter, I have always taken the liberty to differ with you on the subject of these two young gentlemen. I only wish you may not be deceived in your opinion of the elder. For Charles—my life on it, he will retrieve his errors yet. Their worthy father, once my honored master, was at his years nearly as wild a spark; yet, when he died, he did not leave a more benevolent heart to lament his loss.

**SIR PETER:** You are wrong, Master Rowley. On their father's death you know I acted as a kind of guardian to them both, till their uncle Oliver's eastern liberality gave them an early independence. Of course, no person could have more opportunities of judging of their hearts, and I was never mistaken in my life. Joseph is indeed a model for the young men of the age. He is a man of sentiment, and acts up to the sentiments he professes; but, for the other, take my word for it, if he had any grains of virtue by descent, he has dissipated them with the rest of his inheritance. Ah, my old friend Sir Oliver will be deeply mortified when he finds how part of his bounty has been misapplied!

**ROWLEY:** I am sorry to find you so violent against the young man because this may be the most critical period of his fortune. I came hither with news that will surprise you.

**SIR PETER:** What! Let me hear.

**ROWLEY:** Sir Oliver *is* arrived and at this moment in town.

**SIR PETER:** How! You astonish me. I thought you did not expect him this month!

**ROWLEY:** I did not, but his passage has been remarkably quick.

**SIR PETER:** Egad, I shall rejoice to see my old friend; 'tis sixteen years since we met. We have had many a day together. But does he still enjoin us not to inform his nephews of his arrival?

**ROWLEY:** Most strictly. He means, before it is known, to make some trial of their dispositions.

**SIR PETER:** Ah, there needs no art to discover their merits! However, he shall have his way. But pray, does he know I am married?

**ROWLEY:** Yes, and will soon wish you joy.

**SIR PETER:** What, as we drink health to a friend in a consumption? Ah, Oliver will laugh at me. We used to rail at matrimony together, but he has been steady to his text. Well, he must be at my house, though; I'll instantly give orders for his reception. But, Master Rowley, don't drop a word that Lady Teazle and I ever disagree.

**ROWLEY:** By no means.

**SIR PETER:** For I should never be able to stand his jokes. So I'd have him think, lord forgive me, that we are a very happy couple.

**ROWLEY:** I understand you; but then you must be very careful not to differ while he's in the house with you.

**SIR PETER:** Egad, and so we must; and that's impossible! Ah, Master Rowley, when an old bachelor marries a young wife, he deserves—no, the crime carries the punishment along with it. *All exit.*

Act II, Scene 1

*Sir Peter Teazle's house. Enter Sir Peter and Lady Teazle.*

**SIR PETER:** Lady Teazle, Lady Teazle, I'll not bear it!

**LADY TEAZLE:** Sir Peter, Sir Peter, you may bear it or not, as you please; but I ought to have my own way in everything, and what's more, I will too. What, though I was educated in the country, I know very well that women of fashion in London are accountable to nobody after they are married.

**SIR PETER:** Very well, ma'am, very well! So a husband is to have no influence, no authority?

**LADY TEAZLE:** Authority! No, to be sure. If you wanted authority over me, you should have adopted me and not married me. I am sure you were old enough.

**SIR PETER:** Old enough! Ay, there it is. Well, well, Lady Teazle, though my life may be made unhappy by your temper, I'll not be ruined by your extravagance.

**LADY TEAZLE:** My extravagance! I'm sure I'm not more extravagant than a woman of fashion ought to be.

**SIR PETER:** No, no, madam; you shall throw away no more sums on such unmeaning luxury. To spend as much to furnish your dressing-room with flowers in winter as would suffice to turn the Pantheon into a greenhouse and give an open-air festival at Christmas!

**LADY TEAZLE:** Lord, Sir Peter, am I to blame because flowers are dear in cold weather? You should find fault with the climate and not with me. For my part, I am sure I wish it was spring all the year round, and that roses grew under one's feet!

**SIR PETER:** Oons, madam, if you had been born to this, I shouldn't wonder at your talking thus. But you forget what your situation was when I married you.

**LADY TEAZLE:** No, no, I don't; 'twas a very disagreeable one, or I should never have married you.

**SIR PETER:** Yes, yes, madam; you were then in somewhat an humbler style, the daughter of a plain country squire. Recollect, Lady Teazle, when I saw you first—sitting at your tambor in a pretty figured linen gown, with a bunch of keys by your side, your hair combed smooth over a roll, and your apartment hung round with fruits in worsted of your own working.

**LADY TEAZLE:** O yes, I remember it very well, and a curious life I led! My daily occupation to inspect the dairy, superintend the poultry, make extracts from the family receipt-book and comb my Aunt Deborah's lap-dog.

**SIR PETER:** Yes, yes, ma'am; 'twas so indeed.

**LADY TEAZLE:** And then you know my evening amusements—to draw patterns for ruffles which I had not the materials to make, to play cards with the curate, to read a novel to my aunt, or to be stuck down to an old spinet to strum my father to sleep after a fox-chase.

**SIR PETER:** I am glad you have so good a memory. Yes, madam, these were the recreations I took you from. But now you must have your coach and three powdered footmen before your chair, and in summer a pair of white ponies to draw you to Kensington Gardens. No recollection, I suppose, when you were content to ride double behind the butler on a docked coach-horse.

**LADY TEAZLE:** No, I swear I never did that; I deny the butler and the coach-horse.

**SIR PETER:** This, madam, was your situation; and what have I not done for you? I have made you a woman of fashion, of fortune, of rank; in short, I have made you my wife.

**LADY TEAZLE:** Well then, and there is but one thing more you can make me to add to the obligation; and that is—

**SIR PETER:** My widow, I suppose?

**LADY TEAZLE:** Hem, hem!

**SIR PETER:** Thank you, madam. But don't flatter yourself, for, though your ill conduct may disturb my peace, it shall never break my heart, I promise you. However, I am equally obliged to you for the hint.

**LADY TEAZLE:** Then why will you endeavor to make yourself so disagreeable to me, and thwart me in every little elegant expense?

**SIR PETER:** 'Slife, madam, I say, had you any of these elegant expenses when you married me?

**LADY TEAZLE:** Lud, Sir Peter, would you have me be out of the fashion?

**SIR PETER:** The fashion indeed! What had you to do with the fashion before you married me?

**LADY TEAZLE:** For my part, I should think you would like to have your wife thought a woman of taste.

**SIR PETER:** Ay, there again—taste! Zounds, madam, you had no taste when you married me.

**LADY TEAZLE:** That's very true indeed, Sir Peter; and, after having married you, I am sure I should never pretend to taste again! But now, Sir Peter, if we have finished our daily jangle, I presume I may go to my engagement at Lady Sneerwell's.

**SIR PETER:** Ay, there's another precious circumstance; a charming set of acquaintance you have made there.

**LADY TEAZLE:** Nay, Sir Peter, they are people of rank and fortune, and remarkably tenacious of reputation.

**SIR PETER:** Yes, egad, they are tenacious of reputation with a vengeance, for they don't choose anybody should have a character but themselves. Such a crew! Ah, many a wretch has gone to execution who has done less mischief than those utterers of forged tales, coiners of scandal, and clippers of reputation.

**LADY TEAZLE:** What, would you restrain the freedom of speech?

**SIR PETER:** O, they have made you just as bad as anyone of the society.

**LADY TEAZLE:** Why, I believe I do bear a part with a tolerable grace. But I vow I have no malice against the people I abuse. When I say an ill-natured thing, 'tis out of pure good humor; and I take it for granted they deal exactly in the same manner with me. But, Sir Peter, you know you promised to come to Lady Sneerwell's too.

**SIR PETER:** Well, well, I'll call in just to look after my own character.

**LADY TEAZLE:** Then indeed you must make haste after me, or you'll be too late. So good-bye to ye. *Exit Lady Teazle.*

**SIR PETER:** So. I have gained much by my intended expostulations. Yet with what a charming air she contradicts everything I say, and how pleasingly she shows her contempt of my authority. Well, though I can't make her love me, there is a satisfaction in quarrelling with her, and I think she never appears to such advantage as when she's doing everything in her power to plague me. *Exit Sir Peter.*

Act II, Scene 2

*Lady Sneerwell's house. Lady Sneerwell, Mrs. Candor, Crabtree, Sir Benjamin Backbite, and Joseph Surface in attendance.*

**L. SNEERWELL:** Nay, positively, we will hear it.

**J. SURFACE:** Yes, yes, the epigram, by all means.

**B. BACKBITE:** Plague on it, uncle! 'Tis mere nonsense.

**CRABTREE:** No, no; before Gad, very clever for an extempore.

**B. BACKBITE:** But, ladies, you should be acquainted with the circumstance. You must know that one day last week, as Lady Betty Curriple was taking the dust in Hyde Park in a sort of open-air carriage, she desired me to write some verses on her ponies, upon which I took out my pocket-book and in one moment produced the following:  
Sure never were seen two such beautiful ponies;  
Other horses are clowns, and these macaronies.  
Nay, to give 'em this title, I'm sure, isn't wrong:  
Their legs are so slim, and their tails are so long.

**CRABTREE:** There, ladies! Done in the smack of a whip, and on horseback too.

**J. SURFACE:** A very Phoebus mounted, indeed, Sir Benjamin.

**B. BACKBITE:** O, dear sir, trifles, trifles! *Enter Lady Teazle and Maria.*

**MRS. CANDOR:** I must have a copy.

**L. SNEERWELL:** Lady Teazle. I hope we shall see Sir Peter.

**LADY TEAZLE:** I believe he'll wait on your ladyship presently.

**L. SNEERWELL:** Maria, my love, you look grave. Come, you shall sit down to cards with Mr. Surface.

**MARIA:** I take very little pleasure in cards. However, I'll do as your ladyship pleases.

**LADY TEAZLE:** *Aside.* I am surprised Mr. Surface should sit down with her. I thought he would have embraced this opportunity of speaking to me before Sir Peter came.

**MRS. CANDOR:** *To Crabtree and Backbite.* Now I'll die but you are so scandalous I'll forswear your society.

**LADY TEAZLE:** What's the matter, Mrs. Candor?

**MRS. CANDOR:** They'll not allow our friend Miss Vermilion to be handsome.

**L. SNEERWELL:** O, surely she's a pretty woman.

**CRABTREE:** I am very glad you think so, ma'am.

**MRS CANDOR:** She has charming fresh color.

**LADY TEAZLE:** Yes, when it is fresh put on.

**MRS. CANDOR:** O, fie, I'll swear her color is natural. I have seen it come and go.

**LADY TEAZLE:** I dare swear you have, ma'am. It goes of a night and comes again in the morning.

**MRS. CANDOR:** Ha, ha, ha! How I hate to hear you talk so. But surely, now, her sister is, or was, very handsome.

**CRABTREE:** Who? Mrs. Evergreen? O lud, she's six-and-fifty if she's an hour.

**MRS. CANDOR:** Now, positively, you wrong her. Fifty-two or fifty-three at the utmost, and I don't think she looks more.

**B. BACKBITE:** Ah, there is no judging by her looks, unless one could see her face.

**L. SNEERWELL:** Well, well. If Mrs. Evergreen does take some pains to repair the ravages of time, you must allow she effects it with great ingenuity; and surely that's better than the careless manner in which the Widow Ochre caulks her wrinkles.

**B. BACKBITE:** Nay, now, Lady Sneerwell, you are severe upon the widow. Come, come, it is not that she paints so ill; but when she has finished her face, she joins it on so badly to her neck that she looks like a mended statue, in which the connoisseur sees at once that the head's modern, though the trunk's antique.

**CRABTREE:** Ha, ha, ha! Well said, nephew!

**MRS. CANDOR:** Ha, ha, ha! Well, you make me laugh; but I vow I hate you for't. What do you think of Miss Simper?

**B. BACKBITE:** Why, she has very pretty teeth.

**LADY TEAZLE:** Yes, and on that account, when she is neither speaking nor laughing (which very seldom happens), she never absolutely shuts her mouth, but leaves it always on a jar as it were.

**MRS. CANDOR:** How can you be so ill-natured?

**LADY TEAZLE:** Nay, I allow even that's better than the pains Mrs. Prim takes to conceal her losses in front. She draws her mouth till it positively resembles the aperture of a poor's-box, and all her words appear to slide out edgeways.

**L. SNEERWELL:** Very well, Lady Teazle. I see you can be a little severe.

**LADY TEAZLE:** In defense of a friend it is but justice. But here comes Sir Peter to spoil our pleantry! *Enter Sir Peter Teazle.*

**SIR PETER:** Ladies, your most obedient. *Aside.* Mercy on me, here is the whole set! A character dead at every word, I suppose.

**MRS. CANDOR:** I am rejoiced you are come, Sir Peter. They have been so censorious; they will allow good qualities to nobody—not even good nature to our friend Mrs. Pursy.

**LADY TEAZLE:** What, the fat dowager, who was at Mrs. Codille's last night?

**MRS. CANDOR:** Nay, her bulk is her misfortune, and, when she takes such pains to get rid of it, you ought not to reflect on her.

**L. SNEERWELL:** That's very true indeed.

**LADY TEAZLE:** Yes, I know she almost lives on acids and small whey, laces herself by pulleys, and often in the hottest noon of summer you may see her on a little squat pony, with her hair platted up behind like a drummer's, and puffing round the Ring on a full trot.

**MRS. CANDOR:** I thank you, Lady Teazle, for defending her.

**SIR PETER:** Yes, a good defense, truly.

**MRS. CANDOR:** But Sir Benjamin is as censorious as Miss Sallow.

**CRABTREE:** Yes, and she is a curious being to pretend to be censorious—an awkward, gawky, without any one good point under heaven!

**MRS. CANDOR:** Positively, you shall not be so very severe. Miss Sallow is a relation of mine by marriage, and, as for her person, great allowance is to be made, for, let me tell you, a woman labors under many disadvantages who tries to pass for a girl at six-and-thirty.

**L. SNEERWELL:** Though surely she is handsome still. And for the weakness in her eyes, considering how much she reads by candle light, it is not to be wondered at.

**MRS. CANDOR:** True. And then as to her manner, upon my word, I think it is particularly graceful, considering she never had the least education, for you know her mother was a Welsh milliner and her father a sugar-baker at Bristol.

**B. BACKBITE:** Ah, you are both of you too good-natured!

**SIR PETER:** *Aside.* Yes, damned good-natured! This their own relation! Mercy on me!

**B. BACKBITE:** And Mrs. Candor is of so moral a turn, she can sit for an hour to hear Lady Stucco talk sentiment.

**LADY TEAZLE:** Nay, I vow Lady Stucco is very well with the dessert after dinner, for she's like the French fruit one cracks for mottos—made up of paint and proverb.

**MRS. CANDOR:** Well, I never will join in ridiculing a friend; and so I constantly tell my cousin Ogle, and you all know what pretensions she has to be critical in beauty.

**CRABTREE:** O, to be sure she has herself the oddest countenance that ever was seen. 'Tis a collection of features from all the different countries of the globe.

**B. BACKBITE:** So she has indeed. Her face resembles a common table at Spa, where no two guests are of a nation.

**CRABTREE:** Or a congress at the close of a general war, wherein all the members, even to her eyes, appear to have a different interest, and her nose and chin are the only parties likely to join issue.

**MRS. CANDOR:** Ha, ha, ha!

**SIR PETER:** *Aside.* Mercy on my life! A person they dine with twice a week!

**MRS. CANDOR:** Nay, but I vow you shall not carry the laugh off so, for give me leave to say that Mrs. Ogle—

**SIR PETER:** Madam, madam, I beg your pardon. There's no stopping these good gentlemen's tongues; but when I tell you, Mrs. Candor, that the lady they are abusing is a particular friend of mine, I hope you'll not take her part.

**L. SNEERWELL:** Well said, Sir Peter. But you are a cruel creature—too phlegmatic yourself for a jest and too peevish to allow wit in others.

**SIR PETER:** Ah, madam, true wit is more nearly allied to good nature than your ladyship is aware of.

**LADY TEAZLE:** True, Sir Peter. I believe they are so near akin that they can never be united.

**B. BACKBITE:** Or rather, madam, suppose them man and wife, because one so seldom see them together.

**LADY TEAZLE:** But Sir Peter is such an enemy to scandal, I believe he would have it put down by Parliament.

**SIR PETER:** Before heaven, madam, if they were to consider the sporting with reputation of as much importance as poaching on manors, and pass an Act for the Preservation of Fame, I believe there are many would thank them for the Bill.

**LADY TEAZLE:** O lud, Sir Peter, would you deprive us of our privileges?

**SIR PETER:** Ay, madam. And then no person should be permitted to kill characters or run down reputations, but qualified old maids and disappointed widows.

**L. SNEERWELL:** Go, you monster.

**MRS. CANDOR:** But sure you would not be quite so severe on those who only report what they hear.

**SIR PETER:** Yes, madam; in all cases of slander circulation, whenever the drawer of the lie was not to be found, the injured party should have a right to come on any of the endorsers.

**CRABTREE:** Well, for my part, I believe there never was a scandalous tale without some foundation.

**L. SNEERWELL:** Come, ladies, shall we sit down to cards in the next room? *Enter Servant; whispers to Sir Peter. Lady Sneerwell exits to card room.*

**SIR PETER:** *To Servant.* I'll be with them directly. *Exit Servant. Aside.* I'll get away unperceived.

**LADY TEAZLE:** Sir Peter, you are not leaving us?

**SIR PETER:** Your ladyship must excuse me; I'm called away by particular business. But I leave my character behind me. *Exit Sir Peter.*

**B. BACKBITE:** Well, certainly, Lady Teazle, that lord of yours is a strange being. I could tell you some stories of him would make you laugh heartily if he wasn't your husband.

**LADY TEAZLE:** O, pray don't mind that. Come, do let's hear 'em. *Lady Teazle, Backbite, Crabtree and Candor exit to card room.*

**J. SURFACE:** Maria, I see you have no satisfaction in this society.

**MARIA:** How is it possible I should? If to raise malicious smiles at the infirmities and misfortunes of those who have never injured us be the province of wit or humor, heaven grant me a double portion of dullness.

**J. SURFACE:** Yet they appear more ill-natured than they are. They have no malice at heart.

**MARIA:** Then is their conduct still more contemptible, for in my opinion nothing could excuse the intemperance of their tongues but a natural and ungovernable bitterness of mind.

**J. SURFACE:** But can you, Maria, feel thus for others and be unkind to me alone? Is hope to be denied the tenderest passion?

**MARIA:** Why will you distress me by renewing this subject?

**J. SURFACE:** Ah, Maria, you would not treat me thus and oppose your guardian's, Sir Peter's, wishes, but that I see that profligate Charles is still a favored rival.

**MARIA:** Ungenerously urged. But, whatever my sentiments of that unfortunate young man are, be assured I shall not feel more bound to give him up because his distresses have lost him the regard even of a brother. *Enter Lady Teazle.*

**J. SURFACE:** Nay, but, Maria, do not leave me with a frown. By all that's honest, I swear—*aside* Gad's life, here's Lady Teazle! *To Maria.* You must not, no, you shall not, for though I have the greatest regard for Lady Teazle—

**MARIA:** Lady Teazle!

**J. SURFACE:** Yet, were Sir Peter to suspect—

**LADY TEAZLE:** What's this, pray? Do you take her for me!—Child, you are wanted in the next room. *Exit Maria.* What is all this, pray?

**J. SURFACE:** O, the most unlucky circumstance in nature. Maria has somehow suspected the tender concern which I have for your happiness and threatened to acquaint Sir Peter with her suspicions, and I was just endeavoring to reason with her when you came.

**LADY TEAZLE:** Indeed; but you seemed to adopt a very tender method of reasoning. Do you usually argue on your knees?

**J. SURFACE:** O, she's a child, and I thought a little bombast—but, Lady Teazle, when are you to give me your judgement on my library as you promised?

**LADY TEAZLE:** No, no, I begin to think it would be imprudent, and you know I admit you as a lover no further than fashion requires.

**J. SURFACE:** True, a mere platonic escort—what every London wife is entitled to.

**LADY TEAZLE:** Certainly one must not be out of fashion. However, I have so much of my country prejudices left that, though Sir Peter's ill humour may vex me ever so, it never shall provoke me to—

**J. SURFACE:** The only revenge in your power. Well, I applaud your moderation.

**LADY TEAZLE:** Go, you are an insinuating wretch. But we shall be missed; let us join the company.

**J. SURFACE:** But we had best not return together.

**LADY TEAZLE:** Well, don't stay, for Maria shan't come to hear any more of your reasoning, I promise you. *Exit Lady Teazle.*

**J. SURFACE:** A curious dilemma, truly, my politics have run me into. I wanted at first only to ingratiate myself with Lady Teazle that she might not be my enemy with Maria, and I have—I don't know how—become her serious lover. Sincerely, I begin to wish I had never made such a point of gaining so very good a character, for it has led me into so many cursed rogueries that I fear I shall be exposed at last. *Exit Joseph Surface.*

Act II, Scene 3

*Sir Peter Teazle's. Enter Sir Oliver Surface and Rowley.*

**SIR OLIVER:** Ha, ha, ha! And so my old friend is married, hey? A young wife out of the country! Ha, ha, ha! That he should have stood bluff to old bachelor so long and sink into a husband at last!

**ROWLEY:** But you must not rally him on the subject, Sir Oliver. 'Tis a tender point, I assure you, though he has been married only seven months.

**SIR OLIVER:** Then he has been just half a year on the stool of repentance. Poor Peter! But you say he has entirely given up Charles, never sees him, hey?

**ROWLEY:** His prejudice against him is astonishing, and, I am sure, greatly increased by a jealousy of him with Lady Teazle, which he has been industriously led into by a scandalous society in the neighborhood, who have contributed not a little to Charles's ill name. Whereas the truth is, I believe, if the lady is partial to either of them his brother is the favorite.

**SIR OLIVER:** Ay, I know. There are a set of malicious prating prudent gossips, both male and female, who murder characters to kill time and will rob a young fellow of his good name before he has years to know the value of it. But I am not to be prejudiced against my nephew by such, I promise you. No, no! If Charles has done nothing false or mean, I shall compound for his extravagance.

**ROWLEY:** Then, my life on it, you will reclaim him. Ah, sir, it gives me new life to find that your heart is not turned against him, and that the son of my good old master has one friend, however, left.

**SIR OLIVER:** What, shall I forget, Master Rowley, when I was at his years myself, egad, my brother and I were neither of us very prudent youths? And yet I believe you have not seen many better men than your old master was.

**ROWLEY:** Sir, 'tis this reflection gives me assurance that Charles may yet be a credit to his family. But here comes Sir Peter.

**SIR OLIVER:** Egad, so he does. Mercy on me, he's greatly altered, and seems to have a settled married look. One may read husband in his face at this distance.  
*Enter Sir Peter.*

**SIR PETER:** Ha, Sir Oliver, my old friend! Welcome to England a thousand times!

**SIR OLIVER:** Thank you, thank you, Sir Peter! And, in faith, I am as glad to find you well, believe me.

**SIR PETER:** Ah, 'tis a long time since we met—sixteen years, I fear, and many a cross accident in the time.

**SIR OLIVER:** Ay, I have had my share. But, what, I find you are married. Hey, my old boy! Well, well, it can't be helped, and so I wish you joy with all my heart.

**SIR PETER:** Thank you, thank you, Sir Oliver. Yes, I have entered into the happy state, but we'll not talk of that now.

**SIR OLIVER:** True, true, Sir Peter; old friends should not begin on grievances at first meeting. No, no, no.

**ROWLEY:** *To Sir Oliver.* Take care, pray, sir.

**SIR OLIVER:** Well, so one of my nephews, I find, is a wild rogue, hey?

**SIR PETER:** Wild! Ah, my old friend, I grieve for your disappointment there. He's a lost young man indeed. However, his brother will make you amends. Joseph is indeed what a youth should be; everybody in the world speaks well of him.

**SIR OLIVER:** I am sorry to hear it; he has too good a character to be an honest fellow. Everybody speaks well of him! Pshaw! Then he has bowed as low to knaves and fools as to the honest dignity of genius or virtue.

**SIR PETER:** What, Sir Oliver, do you blame him for not making enemies?

**SIR OLIVER:** Yes, if he has merit enough to deserve them.

**SIR PETER:** Well, well, you'll be convinced when you know him. 'Tis edification to hear him converse; he professes the noblest sentiments.

**SIR OLIVER:** Ah, plague on his sentiments! If he salutes me with a scrap of morality in his mouth, I shall be sick directly. But, however, don't mistake me, Sir Peter. I don't mean to defend Charles's errors. But, before I form my judgement of either of them, I intend to make a trial of their hearts; and my friend Rowley and I have planned something for the purpose.

**ROWLEY:** And Sir Peter shall own he has been for once mistaken.

**SIR PETER:** O, my life on Joseph's honor!

**SIR OLIVER:** Well, come; give us a bottle of good wine, and we'll drink the lads' healths and tell you our scheme.

**SIR PETER:** *Allons* then.

**SIR OLIVER:** And don't, Sir Peter, be so severe against your old friend's son. Od's my life, I am not sorry that he has run out of the course a little. For my part, I hate to see prudence clinging to the green suckers of youth; 'tis like ivy round a sapling and spoils the growth of the tree. *All exit.*

Act III, Scene 1

*Sir Peter Teazle's. Sir Peter, Sir Oliver, and Rowley.*

**SIR PETER:** Well then, we will see this fellow first and have our wine afterwards. But how is this, Master Rowley? I don't see the jet of your scheme.

**ROWLEY:** Why, sir, this Mr. Stanley whom I was speaking of is nearly related to them by their mother. He was once a merchant in Dublin, but has been ruined by a series of undeserved misfortunes. He has applied by letter since his confinement both to Mr. Surface and Charles. From the former he has received nothing but evasive promises of future service, while Charles has done all that his extravagance has left him power to do, and he is at this time endeavoring to raise a sum of money, part of which, in the midst of his own distresses, I know he intends for the service of poor Stanley.

**SIR OLIVER:** Ah, he is my brother's son!

**SIR PETER:** Well, but how is Sir Oliver personally to—

**ROWLEY:** Why, sir, I will inform Charles and his brother that Stanley has obtained permission to apply in person to his friends; and, as they have neither of them ever seen him, let Sir Oliver assume his character, and he will have a fair opportunity of judging at least of the benevolence of their dispositions. And, believe me, sir, you will find in the youngest brother one who in the midst of folly and dissipation has still, as our immortal bard expresses it, 'a tear for pity and a hand open as day for melting charity'.

**SIR PETER:** Pshaw! What signifies his having an open hand, or purse either, when he has nothing left to give! Well, well, make the trial if you please. But where is the fellow whom you brought for Sir Oliver to examine relative to Charles's affairs?

**ROWLEY:** Below, waiting his commands, and no one can give him better intelligence. This, Sir Oliver, is a friendly moneylender, who, to do him justice, has done everything in his power to bring your nephew to a proper sense of his extravagance.

**SIR PETER:** Pray let us have him in.

**ROWLEY:** *To Servant offstage.* Desire Mr. Morris to walk upstairs.

**SIR PETER:** But why should you suppose he will speak the truth?

**ROWLEY:** O, I have convinced him that he has no chance of recovering certain sums advanced to Charles, but through the bounty of Sir Oliver, who he knows is arrived; so that you may depend on his fidelity to his interest. I have also another evidence in my power, one Snake, whom I have detected in a matter little short of forgery, and shall shortly produce to remove some of your prejudices, Sir Peter, relative to Charles and Lady Teazle.

**SIR PETER:** I have heard too much on that subject.

**ROWLEY:** Here comes the man. *Enter Morris, introduced by Rowley.* This is Sir Oliver.

**SIR OLIVER:** Sir, I understand you have lately had great dealings with my nephew Charles.

**MORRIS:** Yes, Sir Oliver, I have done all I could for him, but he was ruined before he came to me for assistance.

**SIR OLIVER:** That was unlucky, truly, for you have had no opportunity of showing your talents.

**MORRIS:** None at all. I hadn't the pleasure of knowing his distresses till he was some thousands worse than nothing.

**SIR OLIVER:** Unfortunate indeed! But I suppose you have done all in your power for him, honest Morris?

**MORRIS:** Yes, he knows that. This very evening I was to have brought him a gentleman from the city who doesn't know him and will, I believe, advance him some money.

**LORD PETER:** What, one Charles has never had money from before?

**MORRIS:** Yes, Mr. Premium of Crutched Friars, formerly a broker.

**SIR PETER:** Egad, Sir Oliver, a thought strikes me. Charles, you say, doesn't know Mr. Premium.

**MORRIS:** Not at all.

**SIR PETER:** Now then, Sir Oliver, you may have a better opportunity of satisfying yourself than by an old romancing tale of a poor relation. Go with my friend Morris and represent Mr. Premium, and then I'll answer for it you will see your nephew in all his glory.

**SIR OLIVER:** Egad, I like this idea better than the other, and I may visit Joseph afterwards as old Stanley.

**SIR PETER:** True, so you may.

**ROWLEY:** Well, this is taking Charles rather at a disadvantage, to be sure. However, Morris, you understand Sir Peter and will be faithful.

**MORRIS:** You may depend upon me. This is near the time I was to have gone.

**SIR OLIVER:** I'll accompany you as soon as you please, Morris. But hold; how must I talk? There's certainly some cant of usury and mode of treating that I ought to know.

**SIR PETER:** O, there's not much to learn. The great point, as I take it, is to be exorbitant enough in your demands—hey, Morris?

**MORRIS:** Yes, that's a very great point.

**SIR OLIVER:** I'll answer for it I'll not be wanting in that. I'll ask him eight or ten per cent on the loan, at least.

**MORRIS:** If you ask him no more than that, you'll be discovered immediately.

**SIR OLIVER:** Hey, what the plague! How much then?

**MORRIS:** That depends upon the circumstances. If he appears not very anxious for the supply, you should require only forty or fifty per cent; but if you find him in great distress and want the moneys very bad, you may ask double.

**SIR PETER:** A good honest trade you're learning, Sir Oliver.

**SIR OLIVER:** Truly I think so, and not unprofitable.

**MORRIS:** Then, you know, you haven't the moneys yourself, but are forced to borrow them for him of a friend.

**SIR OLIVER:** O, I borrow it of a friend, do I?

**MORRIS:** Yes, and your friend is an unconscionable dog, but you can't help it.

**SIR OLIVER:** My friend is an unconscionable dog, is he?

**MORRIS:** Yes, and he himself hasn't the moneys by him, but is forced to sell stock at a great loss.

**SIR OLIVER:** He is forced to sell stock, is he? At a great loss, is he? Well, that's very kind of him.

**SIR PETER:** In faith, Sir Oliver—Mr. Premium, I mean—you'll soon be master of the trade.

**SIR OLIVER:** So, so. Morris shall give me further instructions as we go together.

**SIR PETER:** You will not have much time, for your nephew lives hard by.

**SIR OLIVER:** O, never fear; my tutor appears so able that, though Charles lived in the next street, it must be my own fault if I am not a complete rogue before I turn the corner. *Exit Sir Oliver and Moses.*

**SIR PETER:** So. Now I think Sir Oliver will be convinced. You are partial, Rowley, and would have prepared Charles for the other plot.

**ROWLEY:** No, upon my word, Sir Peter—

**SIR PETER:** Well, go bring me this Snake, and I'll hear what he has to say presently. I see Maria and want to speak with her. *Exit Rowley.* I should be glad to be convinced my suspicions of Lady Teazle and Charles were unjust. I have never yet opened my mind on this subject to my friend Joseph. I'm determined I will do it. He will give me his opinion sincerely. *Enter Maria.* So, child, has Mr. Surface returned with you?

**MARIA:** No, sir; he was engaged.

**SIR PETER:** Well, Maria, do you not reflect, the more you converse with that amiable young man, what return his partiality for you deserves?

**MARIA:** Indeed, Sir Peter, your persistence on this subject distresses me extremely. You compel me to declare that I know no man who has ever paid me a particular attention whom I would not prefer to Mr. Surface.

**SIR PETER:** So! Here's perverseness! No, no, Maria; 'tis Charles only whom you would prefer. 'Tis evident his vices and follies have won your heart.

**MARIA:** This is unkind, sir. You know I have obeyed you in neither seeing nor corresponding with him. I have heard enough to convince me that he is unworthy my regard. Yet I cannot think it blameworthy if, while my understanding severely condemns his vices, my heart suggests some pity for his distresses.

**SIR PETER:** Well, well, pity him as much as you please, but give your heart and hand to a worthier object.

**MARIA:** Never to his brother.

**SIR PETER:** Go, perverse and obstinate! But take care, madam. You have never yet known what the authority of a guardian is; don't compel me to inform you of it.

**MARIA:** I can only say you shall not have just reason. 'Tis true by my father's will I am for a short period bound to regard you as his substitute, but must cease to think you so, when you would compel me to be miserable. *Exit Maria.*

**SIR PETER:** Was ever man so crossed as I am! Everything conspiring to fret me! I hadn't been involved in matrimony a fortnight before her father, a hale and hearty man, died on purpose, I believe, for the pleasure of plaguing me with the care of his daughter. But here comes my helpmate! She appears in great good humor. How happy I should be if I could tease her into loving me, though but a little. *Enter Lady Teazle.*

**LADY TEAZLE:** Lud, Sir Peter. I hope you haven't been quarrelling with Maria. It isn't using me well to be ill-humored when I am not by!

**SIR PETER:** Ah, Lady Teazle, you might have the power to make me good-humored at all times.

**LADY TEAZLE:** I am sure I wish I had, for I want you to be in a charming sweet temper at this moment. Do be good-humored now, and let me have two hundred pounds, will you?

**SIR PETER:** Two hundred pounds! What, aren't I to be in a good humor without paying for it? But speak to me thus, and in faith there's nothing I could refuse you. You shall have it; but seal me a bond for the repayment.

**LADY TEAZLE:** O, no! *Offers hand to be kissed.* There, my note of hand will do as well.

**SIR PETER:** *Kisses hand.* And you shall no longer reproach me with not giving you an independent settlement; I mean shortly to surprise you. But shall we always live thus, hey?

**LADY TEAZLE:** If you please. I'm sure I don't care how soon we leave off quarrelling, provided you'll own you were tired first.

**SIR PETER:** Well, then let our future contest be who shall be most obliging.

**LADY TEAZLE:** I assure you, Sir Peter, good nature becomes you. You look now as you did before we were married, when you used to walk with me under the elms and tell me stories of what a gallant you were in your youth and chuck me under the chin—you would—and ask me if I thought I could love an old fellow who would deny me nothing, didn't you?

**SIR PETER:** Yes, yes, and you were kind and attentive.

**LADY TEAZLE:** Ay, so I was, and would always take your part when my acquaintance used to abuse you and turn you into ridicule.

**SIR PETER:** Indeed!

**LADY TEAZLE:** Ay, and when my cousin Sophy has called you a stiff peevish old bachelor and laughed at me for thinking of marrying one who might be my father, I have always defended you, and said I didn't think you so ugly by any means and that I dared say you'd make a very good sort of husband.

**SIR PETER:** And you prophesied right, and we shall certainly now be the happiest couple.

**LADY TEAZLE:** And never differ again.

**SIR PETER:** No, never; though at the same time, indeed, my dear Lady Teazle, you must watch your temper very narrowly, for in all our little quarrels, my dear, if you recollect, my love, you always began first.

**LADY TEAZLE:** I beg your pardon, my dear Sir Peter; indeed you always gave the provocation.

**SIR PETER:** Now, see, my angel, take care! Contradicting isn't the way to keep friends.

**LADY TEAZLE:** Then don't you begin it, my love!

**SIR PETER:** There now! You—you are going on! You don't perceive, my life, that you are just doing the very thing which you know always makes me angry.

**LADY TEAZLE:** Nay, you know, if you will be angry without any reason—

**SIR PETER:** There, now, you want to quarrel again.

**LADY TEAZLE:** No, I am sure I don't; but if you will be so peevish—

**SIR PETER:** There, now, who begins first?

**LADY TEAZLE:** Why, you, to be sure. I said nothing but there's no bearing your temper.

**SIR PETER:** No, no, madam; the fault's in your own temper.

**LADY TEAZLE:** Ay, you are just what my cousin Sophy said you would be.

**SIR PETER:** Your cousin Sophy is a forward impertinent—

**LADY TEAZLE:** You are a great bear, I'm sure, to abuse my relations.

**SIR PETER:** Now may all the plagues of marriage be doubled on me if ever I try to be friends with you any more.

**LADY TEAZLE:** So much the better.

**SIR PETER:** No, no, madam; 'tis evident you never cared a pin for me, and I was a madman to marry you—a pert rural coquette that had refused half the honest squires in the neighborhood.

**LADY TEAZLE:** And I am sure I was a fool to marry you—an old dangling bachelor who was single at fifty only because he never could meet anyone who would have him.

**SIR PETER:** Ay, ay, madam; but you were pleased enough to listen to me. You never had such an offer before.

**LADY TEAZLE:** No! Didn't I refuse Sir Tivy Terrier, who everybody said would have been a better match, for his estate is just as good as yours, and he has broke his neck since we have been married!

**SIR PETER:** I have done with you, madam. You are an unfeeling, ungrateful—but there's an end of everything. I believe you capable of anything that's bad. Yes, madam, I now believe the reports relative to you and Charles, madam—yes, madam, you and Charles—are not without grounds.

**LADY TEAZLE:** Take care, Sir Peter. You had better not insinuate any such thing! I'll not be suspected without cause, I promise you.

**SIR PETER:** Very well, madam, very well; a separate maintenance, as soon as you please. Yes, madam, or a divorce. I'll make an example of myself for the benefit of all old bachelors. Let us separate, madam.

**LADY TEAZLE:** Agreed, agreed—and, now, my dear Sir Peter, we are of a mind once more, we may be the happiest couple, and never differ again, you know. Ha, ha! Well, you are going to be in a passion, I see, and I shall only interrupt you. So, bye-bye! *Exit Lady Teazle.*

**SIR PETER:** Plagues and tortures! Can't I make her angry neither! O, I am the miserablest fellow. But I'll not bear her presuming to keep her temper. No she may break my heart, but she shan't keep her temper. *Exit Sir Peter.*

Act III, Scene 2

*Charles Surface's house. Enter Trip, Morris and Sir Oliver.*

**TRIP:** Here, Master Morris. If you'll stay a moment, I'll try whether Mr.—what's the gentleman's name?

**SIR OLIVER:** Mr.—*Aside.* Morris, what *is* my name?

**MORRIS:** Mr. Premium.

**TRIP:** Premium. Very well. *Exit Trip.*

**SIR OLIVER:** To judge by the servants, one wouldn't believe the master was ruined. But, what, sure this was my brother's house?

**MORRIS:** Yes, sir. Mr. Charles bought it of Mr. Joseph with the furniture, pictures, etc. just as the old gentleman left it. Sir Peter thought it a great piece of extravagance in him!

**SIR OLIVER:** In my mind the other's economy in selling it to him was more reprehensible by half. *Enter Trip.*

**TRIP:** My master says you must wait, gentlemen. He has company and can't speak with you yet.

**SIR OLIVER:** If he knew who it was wanted to see him, perhaps he wouldn't have sent such a message.

**TRIP:** Yes, yes, sir; he knows you are here. I didn't forget little Premium. No, no, no.

**SIR OLIVER:** Very well. And, I pray, sir, what may be your name?

**TRIP:** Trip, sir; my name is Trip, at your service.

**SIR OLIVER:** Well then, Mr. Trip, you have a pleasant sort of a place here, I guess.

**TRIP:** Why, yes; here are three or four of us pass our time agreeably enough. But then our wages are sometimes a little in arrear, and not very great either—but, apropos, Morris, have you been able to get me that little bill discounted?

**SIR OLIVER:** *Aside.* Wants to raise money too! Mercy on me! Has his distresses, I warrant, like a lord!

**MORRIS:** 'Twas not to be done indeed, Mr. Trip.

**TRIP:** Good lack, you surprise me. My friend Brush has endorsed it, and I thought when he put his mark on the back of a bill 'twas as good as cash.

**MORRIS:** No, 'twouldn't do.

**TRIP:** A small sum, but twenty pounds *bell rings offstage*—Gad, I heard the bell. I believe, gentlemen, I can now introduce you.—Don't forget, little Morris.—This way, gentlemen. *To Morris.* You know—

**SIR OLIVER:** *Aside.* If that man be a shadow of his master, this is the temple of dissipation indeed! *All exit.*

Act III, Scene 3

*Another room in Charles Surface's house.  
Charles and Careless at a table with wine, etc.*

**C. SURFACE:** Before heaven, 'tis true! There's the great degeneracy of the age. Many of our acquaintance have taste, spirit and politeness; but, plague on it, they won't drink.

**CARELESS:** It is so indeed, Charles. They give in to all the substantial luxuries of the table, and abstain from nothing but wine and wit.

**C. SURFACE:** O, certainly society suffers by it intolerably, for now, instead of the social spirit of raillery that used to form over a glass of bright burgundy, their conversation is become just like the spa water they drink, which has the pertness and flatulence of champagne without its spirit or flavor.

**CARELESS:** But what are they to do who love play better than wine? There's Harry diets himself for gaming and is now under a hazard-regimen to remember the rules of the game.

**C. SURFACE:** Then he'll have the worst of it. What, you wouldn't train a horse for the course by keeping him from corn. For my part, egad, I am now never so successful as when I am a little merry. Let me throw on a bottle of champagne and I never lose. At least I never feel my losses, which is exactly the same thing. And then what man can pretend to be a believer in love who is an abjurer of wine? 'Tis the test by which the lover knows his own heart. Fill a dozen bumpers to a dozen beauties, and she that floats to the top is the maid that has bewitched you.

**CARELESS:** Now then, Charles, be honest and give us your real favorite.

**C. SURFACE:** Why, I have withheld her only in compassion to you. If I toast her, you must toast another her equal, which is impossible—on earth!

**CARELESS:** O then we'll find some canonized vestal or heathen goddess that will do, I warrant.

**C. SURFACE:** Her then. Maria, Maria.

**CARELESS:** Maria who?

**C. SURFACE:** O damn the surname! 'Tis too formal to be registered in love's calendar. But now, beware; we must have beauty superlative.

**CARELESS:** Nay, we'll stand to the toast, though your mistress should want an eye; and I'll give you the song instead of the lady. *Sings; teaches audience the chorus.*  
*Here's to the maiden of bashful fifteen,  
Here's to the widow of fifty,  
Here's to the flaunting, extravagant quean,  
And here's to the housewife that's thrifty.*  
Chorus *Let the toast pass,  
Drink to the lass.*  
*Here's to the maid with a bosom of snow,  
Now to her that's as brown as a berry.*  
*Here's to the wife with a face full of woe,  
And now to the damsel that's merry.*  
Chorus *Let the toast pass,  
Drink to the lass.*  
*For let 'em be clumsy or let 'em be slim,  
Young or ancient, I care not a feather.*  
*So fill a pint bumper quite up to the brim,  
And let us e'en toast 'em together!*  
Chorus *Let the toast pass,  
Drink to the lass.*  
*I'll warrant she'll prove an excuse for the glass!*

**C. SURFACE:** Bravo, bravo! *Enter Trip, whispers to Charles.* Ah, Careless, you must excuse me a little—

**CARELESS:** Nay, prithee, Charles, what now? This is one of your peerless beauties, I suppose, has dropped in by chance.

**C. SURFACE:** No, faith, to tell you the truth, 'tis a moneylender and a broker who are come by appointment.

**CARELESS:** O damn it, let's have them in.

**C. SURFACE:** Egad, with all my heart.—Trip, bid the gentlemen walk in; though there's one of them a stranger, I can tell you. *Exit Trip.*

**CARELESS:** Charles, let us give them some generous burgundy and perhaps they'll grow conscientious.

**C. SURFACE:** O hang 'em, no! Wine does but draw forth a man's natural qualities, and to make them drink would only be to whet their knavery. *Enter Trip, Sir Oliver, Morris.* So. Honest Morris, walk in; walk in, pray, Mr. Premium.—That's the gentleman's name, isn't it, Morris?

**MORRIS:** Yes, sir.

**C. SURFACE:** Sit down, Mr. Premium.—Glasses, Careless.—Sit down, Morris.—Come, Mr. Premium, I'll give you a toast. Here's success to usury.

**MORRIS:** Success to usury.

**C. SURFACE:** Right, Morris. Usury is prudence and industry and deserves to succeed.

**SIR OLIVER:** Then here is all the success it deserves.

**CARELESS:** No, no, that won't do, Mr. Premium; you have objected to the toast, and must drink it in a pint bumper.

**MORRIS:** O pray, sir, consider Mr. Premium's a gentleman.

**CARELESS:** And therefore loves good wine.

**SIR OLIVER:** Nay, pray, gentlemen. I did not expect this usage.

**C. SURFACE:** No, hang it, Careless; Mr. Premium's a stranger.

**SIR OLIVER:** *Aside.* Od, I wish I was well out of this company.

**CARELESS:** Plague on 'em then! If they won't drink, we'll not sit down with 'em. Come, Charles—*Starts to exit.*

**C. SURFACE:** Careless!

**CARELESS:** Well.

**C. SURFACE:** Perhaps I may want you.

**CARELESS:** O you know I am always ready. Word, note, or bond; 'tis all the same to me. *Exit Careless.*

**MORRIS:** Sir, this is Mr. Premium, a gentleman of the strictest honor and secrecy, and always performs what he undertakes.—Mr. Premium, this is—

**C. SURFACE:** Pshaw, have done! Sir, my friend Morriss is a very honest fellow, but a little slow at expression. He'll be an hour giving us our titles. Mr. Premium, the plain state of the matter is this. I am an extravagant young fellow, who wants money to borrow; you I take to be a prudent old fellow, who has got money to lend. I am blockhead enough to give fifty per cent sooner than not have it, and you, I presume, are rogue enough to take a hundred if you could get it. Now, sir, you see we are acquainted at once, and may proceed to business without farther ceremony.

**SIR OLIVER:** Exceeding frank, upon my word. I see, sir, you are not a man of many compliments.

**C. SURFACE:** O no, sir; plain dealing in business I always think best.

**SIR OLIVER:** Sir, I like you the better for it. However, you are mistaken in one thing; I have no money to lend. But I believe I could procure some of a friend. But then he's an unconscionable dog—isn't he, Morris?—and must sell stock to accommodate you, mustn't he, Morris?

**MORRIS:** Yes, indeed! You know I always speak the truth, and scorn to tell a lie.

**C. SURFACE:** Right! People that speak truth generally do. But these are trifles, Mr. Premium. What, I know money isn't to be bought without paying for it.

**SIR OLIVER:** Well, but what security could you give? You have no land, I suppose?

**C. SURFACE:** Not a molehill, nor a twig, but what's in beaupots out at the window.

**SIR OLIVER:** Nor any stock, I presume.

**C. SURFACE:** Nothing but livestock, and that's only a few pointers and ponies. But pray, Mr. Premium, are you acquainted at all with any of my connections?

**SIR OLIVER:** Why, to say truth, I am.

**C. SURFACE:** Then you must know that I have a devilish rich uncle in the East Indies, Sir Oliver Surface, from whom I have the greatest expectations.

**SIR OLIVER:** That you have a wealthy uncle I have heard; but how your expectations will turn out is more, I believe, than you can tell.

**C. SURFACE:** O no, there can be no doubt about it. They tell me I'm a prodigious favorite, and that he talks of leaving me everything.

**SIR OLIVER:** Indeed this is the first I've heard on it.

**C. SURFACE:** Yes, yes, 'tis just so. Morris knows 'tis true—don't you, Morris?

**MORRIS:** O yes, I'll swear to it.

**SIR OLIVER:** *Aside.* Egad, they'll persuade me presently I'm at Bengal.

**C. SURFACE:** Now I propose, Mr. Premium, if it's agreeable to you, to grant a *post-obit* on Sir Oliver's life, though at the same time the old fellow has been so liberal to me that I give you my word I should be very sorry to hear anything had happened to him.

**SIR OLIVER:** Not any more than I should, I assure you. But the bond you mention happens to be just the worst security you could offer me, for I might live to a hundred and never recover the principal.

**C. SURFACE:** O, yes, you would. The moment Sir Oliver dies, you know you'd come on me for the money.

**SIR OLIVER:** But, I have heard he is as hale and healthy as any man of his years in this world.

**C. SURFACE:** There again you are misinformed. No, no, the climate has hurt him considerably. Poor Uncle Oliver. Yes, he breaks apace, I'm told, and so much altered lately that his nearest relations don't know him.

**SIR OLIVER:** No! Ha, ha, ha! So much altered lately that his relations don't know him! Ha, ha, ha! That's droll, egad! Ha, ha, ha!

**C. SURFACE:** Ha, ha! You're glad to hear that, little Premium.

**SIR OLIVER:** No, no, I'm not.

**C. SURFACE:** Yes, yes, you are. Ha, ha, ha! You know that mends your chance.

**SIR OLIVER:** But I'm told Sir Oliver is coming over; nay, some say he is actually arrived.

**C. SURFACE:** Pshaw! Sure I must know better than you whether he's come or not. No, no, rely on it; he is at this moment at Calcutta—isn't he, Morris?

**MORRIS:** O yes, certainly.

**SIR OLIVER:** Very true; as you say, you must know better than I. Though I have it from pretty good authority—haven't I, Morris?

**MORRIS:** Yes, most undoubted.

**SIR OLIVER:** But, sir, as I understand you want a few hundreds immediately, is there nothing you would dispose of?

**C. SURFACE:** How do you mean?

**SIR OLIVER:** For instance, now, I have heard that your father left behind him a great quantity of massy old plate.

**C. SURFACE:** O lud, that's gone, long ago. Morris can tell you how better than I can.

**SIR OLIVER:** *Aside.* Good lack! all the family race cups and corporation bowls!—*To Charles.* Then it was also supposed that his library was one of the most valuable and complete—

**C. SURFACE:** Yes, yes. So it was—vastly too much so for a private gentleman. For my part, I was always of a communicative disposition, so I thought it a shame to keep so much knowledge to myself.

**SIR OLIVER:** *Aside.* Mercy on me! Learning that had run in the family like an heirloom!—*To Charles.* So, so. Nothing of the family property left, I suppose?

**C. SURFACE:** Not much indeed, unless you have a mind to the family pictures. I have got a room full of ancestors above; and if you have a taste for old paintings, egad, you shall have ‘em a bargain.

**SIR OLIVER:** Hey, and the devil! Sure you wouldn’t sell your forefathers, would you?

**C. SURFACE:** Every man of ‘em to the best bidder.

**SIR OLIVER:** What, your great-uncles and -aunts?

**C. SURFACE:** Ay, and my great-grandfathers and -grandmothers too.

**SIR OLIVER:** *Aside.* Now I give him up!—What the plague! *To Charles.* Have you no compassion for your own kindred?

**C. SURFACE:** Nay, my little broker, don’t be angry. What need you care, if you have your money’s worth?

**SIR OLIVER:** Well, I’ll be the purchaser. I think I can dispose of the family. *Aside.* O, I’ll never forgive him this—never! *Enter Careless.*

**CARELESS:** Come, Charles; what keeps you?

**C. SURFACE:** I can’t come yet, in faith! We are going to have a sale above. Here’s little Premium will buy all my ancestors.

**CARELESS:** O, burn your ancestors!

**C. SURFACE:** No, he may do that afterwards if he pleases. Stay, Careless, we want you. Egad, you shall be auctioneer. So come along with us.

**CARELESS:** O, have with you, if that’s the case. I can handle a hammer as well as a dice-box!

**SIR OLIVER:** *Aside.* O the profligates!

**C. SURFACE:** Come, Morris; you shall be appraiser if we want one.—Gad’s life, little Premium, you don’t seem to like the business.

**SIR OLIVER:** O, yes, I do vastly. Ha, ha! Yes, yes, I think it a rare joke to sell one’s family by auction. Ha, ha! *Aside.* O, the prodigal!

**C. SURFACE:** To be sure, when a man wants money, where the plague should he get assistance, if he can’t make free with his own relations! *All exit.*

Act IV, Scene 1

*Picture room at Charles Surface’s. Enter Charles, Sir Oliver, Morris, Careless.*

**C. SURFACE:** Walk in, gentlemen, pray walk in! Here they are, the family of Surfaces up to the Conquest.

**SIR OLIVER:** And, in my opinion, a goodly collection.

**C. SURFACE:** Ay, ay, these are done in the true spirit of portrait-painting—no volunteer grace or expression, not like the works of your modern Raphael, who gives you the strongest resemblance, yet contrives to make your own portrait independent of you, so that you may sink the original and not hurt the picture. No, no; the merit of these is the inveterate likeness, all stiff and awkward as the originals, and like nothing in human nature beside!

**SIR OLIVER:** Ah, we shall never see such figures of men again.

**C. SURFACE:** No, I hope not. You see, Master Premium, what a domestic character I am. Here I sit of an evening, surrounded by my family. But come, get to your pulpit, Mr. Auctioneer. Here’s an old gouty chair of my grandfather’s will answer the purpose.

**CARELESS:** Ay, ay, this will do. But, Charles, I have never a hammer, and what’s an auctioneer without his hammer?

**C. SURFACE:** Egad, that’s true. What parchment have we here? ‘Richard, heir to Thomas...’ Our genealogy in full! Here, Careless, you shall have no common bit of mahogany; here’s the family tree for you, you rogue. This shall be your hammer, and now you may knock down my ancestors with their own pedigree.

**SIR OLIVER:** *Aside.* What an unnatural rogue! An *ex post facto* parricide!

**CARELESS:** Yes, yes, here's a list of your generation indeed. Faith, Charles, this is the most convenient thing you could have found for the business, for 'twill serve not only as a hammer, but a catalogue into the bargain. But come, begin. A-going, a-going, a-going!

**C. SURFACE:** Bravo, Careless! Well, here's my great uncle, Richard Ravelin—a marvellous good general in his day, I assure you. He served in the Duke of Marlborough's wars, and got that cut over his eye at the Battle of Malplaquet. What say you, Mr. Premium? Look at him! There's a hero for you! Not cut out of his feathers, as your modern clipped captains are, but enveloped in wig and regimentals as a general should be. What do you bid?

**MORRIS:** Mr. Premium would have you speak.

**C. SURFACE:** Why then, he shall have him for ten pounds, and I am sure that's not dear for a staff officer.

**SIR OLIVER:** *Aside.* Heaven deliver me! His famous Uncle Richard for ten pounds!—*To Charles.* Very well, sir; I take him for that.

**C. SURFACE:** Careless, knock down my Uncle Richard. Here now is a maiden sister of his, my Great-Aunt Deborah, done by Kneller, thought to be in his best manner, and a very formidable likeness. There she is, you see—a shepherdess feeding her flock. You shall have her for five pounds ten. The sheep are worth the money.

**SIR OLIVER:** *Aside.* Ah, poor Deborah! A woman who set such a value on herself!—*To Charles.* Five pound ten! She's mine.

**C. SURFACE:** Knock down my Aunt Deborah! Here now are two that were a sort of cousins of theirs.—You see, Morris, these pictures were done some time ago, when beaux wore wigs, and the ladies wore their own hair.

**SIR OLIVER:** Yes, truly, head-dresses appear to have been a little lower in those days.

**C. SURFACE:** Well, take that couple for the same.

**MORRIS:** 'Tis good bargain.

**C. SURFACE:** Careless!—This now is a grandfather of my mother's, a learned judge, well known on the western circuit.—What do you rate him at, Morris?

**MORRIS:** Four guineas.

**C. SURFACE:** Four guineas! Gad's life, you don't bid me the price of his wig!—Mr. Premium, you have more respect for the woolsack; do let us knock his lordship down at fifteen.

**SIR OLIVER:** By all means.

**CARELESS:** Gone.

**C. SURFACE:** And there are two brothers of his, William and Walter Blunt Esquires, both Members of Parliament, and noted speakers, and—what's very extraordinary—I believe this is the first time they were ever bought and sold.

**SIR OLIVER:** That's very extraordinary indeed! I'll take them at your price for the honor of Parliament.

**CARELESS:** Well said, little Premium. I'll knock 'em down at forty.

**C. SURFACE:** Here's a jolly fellow. I don't know what relation, but he was mayor of Manchester. Take him at eight pounds.

**SIR OLIVER:** No, no; six will do for the mayor.

**C. SURFACE:** Come, make it guineas and I'll throw you the two aldermen there into the bargain.

**SIR OLIVER:** They're mine.

**C. SURFACE:** Careless, knock down the mayor and aldermen. But, plague on it, we shall be all day, retailing in this manner. Do let us deal wholesale. What say you, little Premium? Give me three hundred pounds for the rest of the family in the lump.

**CARELESS:** Ay, ay, that will be the best way.

**SIR OLIVER:** Well, well, anything to accommodate you. They are mine. But there is one portrait, which you have always passed over.

**CARELESS:** What, that ill-looking little fellow over the settee?

**SIR OLIVER:** Yes, sir, I mean that, though I don't think him so ill-looking a little fellow by any means.

**C. SURFACE:** What, that? O that's my Uncle Oliver. 'Twas done before he went to India.

**CARELESS:** Your Uncle Oliver! Gad! Then you'll never be friends, Charles; that now to me is as stern a looking rogue as ever I saw—an unforgiving eye, and a damned disinheriting countenance! An inveterate knave, depend on it!—Don't you think so, little Premium?

**SIR OLIVER:** Upon my soul, sir, I do not; I think it is as honest a looking face as any in the room, dead or alive. But I suppose your Uncle Oliver goes with the rest of the lumber.

**C. SURFACE:** No, hang it, I'll not part with the old fellow. He's been very good to me, and, egad, I'll keep his picture, while I've a room to put it in.

**SIR OLIVER:** *Aside.* The rogue's my nephew, after all!—*To Charles.* But, sir, I have somehow taken a fancy to that picture.

**C. SURFACE:** I'm sorry for it, for you certainly will not have it. Oons, haven't you got enough of 'em?

**SIR OLIVER:** *Aside.* I forgive him everything!—*To Charles.* But, sir, when I take a whim in my head, I don't value money. I'll give as much for that as for all the rest.

**C. SURFACE:** Don't tease me, Master Broker; I tell you I'll not part with it, and there's an end on it.

**SIR OLIVER:** *Aside.* How like his father the dog is!—*To Charles.* Well, well, I have done. *Aside.* I did not perceive it before, but I think I never saw such a resemblance.—*To Charles.* Well, sir, here is a draft for your sum.

**C. SURFACE:** Why, 'tis for eight hundred pounds!

**SIR OLIVER:** You will not let Oliver go?

**C. SURFACE:** Zounds, no, I tell you once more.

**SIR OLIVER:** Then never mind the difference; we'll balance another time. But give me your hand on the bargain. You are an honest fellow, Charles. I beg pardon, sir, for being so free.—Come, Morris.

**C. SURFACE:** Egad, this is a whimsical old fellow.—But harkee, Premium. You'll prepare lodgings for these gentlemen?

**SIR OLIVER:** Yes, yes, I'll send for them in a day or two.

**C. SURFACE:** But hold! Do now send a genteel conveyance for them, for I assure you they were most of them used to ride in their own carriages.

**SIR OLIVER:** I will, I will, for all but Oliver.

**C. SURFACE:** Ay, all but the little honest nabob.

**SIR OLIVER:** You're fixed on that?

**C. SURFACE:** Peremptorily.

**SIR OLIVER:** *Aside.* A dear extravagant rogue!—*To Charles.* Good day.—*To Morris.* Come, Morris. *Aside.* Let me hear now who dares call him profligate! *Exit Sir Oliver and Morris.*

**CARELESS:** Why, this is the oddest genius of the sort I ever saw.

**C. SURFACE:** Egad, he's the prince of brokers, I think. I wonder how the devil Morris got acquainted with so honest a fellow. Ha, here's Rowley. Do go, Careless. I'll join you in a moment.

**CARELESS:** I will. But don't now let that old blockhead persuade you to squander any of that money on old musty debts, or any such nonsense, for tradesmen, Charles, are the most exorbitant fellows!

**C. SURFACE:** Very true, and paying them is only encouraging them.

**CARELESS:** Nothing else.

**C. SURFACE:** Ay, ay; never fear. *Exit Careless.* So. This was an odd old fellow indeed! Let me see; two thirds of this is mine by right. Five hundred and thirty pounds, before heaven! I find one's ancestors are more valuable relations than I took 'em for! Ladies and gentlemen, your most obedient and very grateful humble servant. *Enter Rowley.* Ha, old Rowley! Egad, you are just come in time to take leave of your old acquaintance.

**ROWLEY:** Yes, I heard they were going. But I wonder you can have such spirits under so many distresses.

**C. SURFACE:** Why, there's the point. My distresses are so many that I can't afford to part with my spirits; but I shall be rich and bad-tempered all in good time. However, I suppose you are surprised that I am not sorrowful at parting with so many near relations. To be sure 'tis very affecting. But, rot 'em, you see they never move a muscle; so why should I?

**ROWLEY:** There's no making you serious a moment.

**C. SURFACE:** Yes, faith. I am so now. Here, my honest Rowley, here; get me this changed, and take a hundred pounds of it immediately to old Stanley.

**ROWLEY:** A hundred pounds. Consider only—

**C. SURFACE:** Gad's life, don't talk about it. Poor Stanley's wants are pressing, and if you don't make haste we shall have someone call that has a better right to the money.

**ROWLEY:** Ah, there's the point! I never will cease dunning you with the old proverb—

**C. SURFACE:** 'Be just before you're generous', hey! Why, so I would if I could; but justice is an old lame hobbling beldam, and I can't get her to keep pace with generosity, for the soul of me.

**ROWLEY:** Yet, Charles, believe me, one hour's reflection—

**C. SURFACE:** Ay, ay, it's all very true; but harkee, Rowley, while I have, by heaven I'll give. So, damn the economy; and now for hazard. *All exit.*

Act IV, Scene 2

*The parlor at Charles Surface's. Enter Sir Oliver and Morris.*

**MORRIS:** Well, sir, I think, as Sir Peter said, you have seen Mr. Charles in high glory. 'Tis pity he's so extravagant.

**SIR OLIVER:** True; but he wouldn't sell my picture.

**MORRIS:** And loves drink so much.

**SIR OLIVER:** But he wouldn't sell my picture.

**MORRIS:** And bad company.

**SIR OLIVER:** But he wouldn't sell my picture. O here's Rowley! *Enter Rowley.*

**ROWLEY:** So, Sir Oliver, I find you have made a purchase.

**SIR OLIVER:** Yes, yes, our young rake has parted with his ancestors like old tapestry.

**ROWLEY:** And here has he commissioned me to redeliver you part of the purchase money—I mean, though, in your necessitous character of old Stanley.

**MORRIS:** Ah, there is the pity of all! He is so damned charitable.

**ROWLEY:** And I have left a hosier and two tailors in the hall, who, I'm sure, won't be paid, and this hundred would satisfy 'em!

**SIR OLIVER:** Well, well, I'll pay his debts, and his benevolences too. But now I am no more a broker and you shall introduce me to the elder brother as old Stanley.

**ROWLEY:** Not yet awhile. Sir Peter, I know, means to call there about this time.

**SIR OLIVER:** Just as you say, Rowley. *Exit Morris and Rowley. Aside.* But he wouldn't sell my picture, the young rogue. *Exit.*

Act IV, Scene 3

*A library at Joseph Surface's. Enter Joseph Surface and Servant.*

**J. SURFACE:** No letter from Lady Teazle?

**SERVANT:** No, sir.

**J. SURFACE:** *Aside.* I am surprised she hasn't sent if she is prevented from coming. Sir Peter certainly does not suspect me. Yet I wish I may not lose the heiress through the scrape I have drawn myself in with the wife. However, Charles's imprudence and bad character are great points in my favor. *Knocking offstage.*

**SERVANT:** Sir, I believe that must be Lady Teazle.

**J. SURFACE:** Hold! See whether it is or not before you go to the door. I have a particular message for you if it should be my brother.

**SERVANT:** *Looks out the window.* 'Tis her ladyship, sir. She always leaves her chair at the milliner's in the next street.

**J. SURFACE:** Stay, stay. Draw that screen before the window. *Servant draws screen.* That will do. My opposite neighbor is a maiden lady of so curious a temper! *Exit Servant.* I have a difficult hand to play in this affair. Lady Teazle has lately suspected my views on Maria, but she must by no means be let into that secret, at least not till I have her more in my power. *Enter Lady Teazle.*

**LADY TEAZLE:** What, sentiment in soliloquy! Have you been very impatient now? O lud, don't pretend to look grave. I vow I couldn't come before.

**J. SURFACE:** O madam, punctuality is a species of constancy, a very unfashionable quality in a lady.

**LADY TEAZLE:** Upon my word, you ought to pity me. Do you know that Sir Peter is grown so ill-tempered to me of late, and so jealous! Of Charles too! That's the best of the story, isn't it?

**J. SURFACE:** *Aside.* I am glad my scandalous friends keep that up.

**LADY TEAZLE:** I am sure I wish he would let Maria marry him, and then perhaps he would be convinced. Don't you, Mr. Surface?

**J. SURFACE:** *Aside.* Indeed I do not.—*To Lady Teazle.* O certainly I do, for then my dear Lady Teazle would also be convinced how wrong her suspicions were of my having any design on the silly girl.

**LADY TEAZLE:** Well, well, I'm inclined to believe you. But isn't it provoking to have the most ill-natured things said to one? And there's my friend Lady Sneerwell has circulated I don't know how many scandalous tales of me, and all without any foundation too. That's what vexes me.

**J. SURFACE:** Ay, madam, to be sure, that is the provoking circumstance. Without foundation. Yes, yes, there's the mortification indeed, for when a slanderous story is believed against one, there certainly is no comfort like the consciousness of having deserved it.

**LADY TEAZLE:** No, to be sure, then I'd forgive their malice; but to attack me who am really so innocent, and who never say an ill-natured thing of anybody—that is, of any friend! And then Sir Peter too, to have him so peevish and so suspicious, when I know the integrity of my own heart; indeed 'tis monstrous.

**J. SURFACE:** But, my dear Lady Teazle, 'tis your own fault if you suffer it. When a husband entertains a groundless suspicion of his wife and withdraws his confidence from her, the original compact is broke, and she owes it to the honor of her sex to endeavor to outwit him.

**LADY TEAZLE:** Indeed! So that, if he suspects me without cause, it follows that the best way of curing his jealousy is to give him reason for it.

**J. SURFACE:** Undoubtedly, for your husband should never be deceived in you, and in that case it becomes you to be frail in compliment of his discernment.

**LADY TEAZLE:** To be sure, what you say is very reasonable. And when the consciousness of my own innocence—

**J. SURFACE:** Ah, my dear madam, there is the great mistake. 'Tis this very conscious innocence that is of the greatest prejudice to you. What is it makes you negligent of forms and careless of the world's opinion? Why, the consciousness of your innocence. What makes you thoughtless in your conduct and apt to run into a thousand little imprudences? Why, the consciousness of your innocence. What makes you impatient of Sir Peter's temper and outrageous at his suspicions? Why, the consciousness of your innocence.

**LADY TEAZLE:** 'Tis very true.

**J. SURFACE:** Now, my dear Lady Teazle, if you would but once make a trifling *faux pas*, you can't conceive how cautious you would grow, and how ready to humor and agree with your husband.

**LADY TEAZLE:** Do you think so?

**J. SURFACE:** O, I'm sure on it. And then you would find all scandal would cease at once, for, in short, your character at present is like a person who is absolutely dying of too much health.

**LADY TEAZLE:** So, so. Then I perceive your prescription is that I must sin in my own defense, and part with my virtue to preserve my reputation.

**J. SURFACE:** Exactly so, upon my credit, ma'am.

**LADY TEAZLE:** Well, certainly this is the oddest doctrine, and the newest receipt for avoiding calumny.

**J. SURFACE:** An infallible one, believe me. Prudence, like experience, must be paid for.

**LADY TEAZLE:** Why, if my understanding were once convinced—

**J. SURFACE:** O, certainly, madam, your understanding *should* be convinced. Yes, yes; heaven forbid I should persuade you to do anything you *thought* wrong. No, no; I have too much honor to desire it.

**LADY TEAZLE:** Don't you think we may as well leave honor out of the argument?

**J. SURFACE:** Ah, the ill effects of your country education, I see, still remain with you.

**LADY TEAZLE:** I fear they do indeed, and I will fairly own to you that if I could be persuaded to do wrong it would be by Sir Peter's ill usage sooner than your honorable logic, after all.

**J. SURFACE:** Then, by this hand which he is unworthy of—*Enter Servant.* ‘Sdeath, you blockhead! What do you want?

**SERVANT:** I beg pardon, sir; but I thought you wouldn’t choose Sir Peter to come up without announcing him?

**J. SURFACE:** Sir Peter! Oons and the devil!

**LADY TEAZLE:** Sir Peter! O lud! I’m ruined, I’m ruined.

**SERVANT:** Sir, ‘twasn’t I let him in.

**LADY TEAZLE:** O I’m undone. What will become of me now, Mr. Logic? O mercy, he’s on the stairs. I’ll get behind here. And if ever I am so imprudent again—*she goes behind the screen/fan.*

**J. SURFACE:** Give me that book! *Servant gives Joseph book, pretends to adjust Joseph’s hair. Enter Sir Peter.*

**SIR PETER:** *Aside.* Ay, ever improving himself!—*To Joseph.* Mr. Surface, Mr. Surface!

**J. SURFACE:** O, my dear Sir Peter, I beg your pardon. I have been dozing over a stupid book! Well, I am much obliged to you for this call. You haven’t been here, I believe, since I fitted up this room. Books, you know, are the only things I am a coxcomb in.

**SIR PETER:** ‘Tis very neat indeed. Well, well, that’s proper. And you make even your screen a source of knowledge—hung, I perceive, with maps.

**J. SURFACE:** O yes, I find great use in that screen.

**SIR PETER:** I dare say you must, certainly, when you want to find anything in a hurry.

**J. SURFACE:** *Aside.* Ay, or hide anything in a hurry either.

**SIR PETER:** Well, I have a little private business.

**J. SURFACE:** *To Servant.* You needn’t stay.

**SERVANT:** No, sir. *Exit Servant.*

**J. SURFACE:** Here’s a chair, Sir Peter. I beg—

**SIR PETER:** Well, now we are alone, there *is* a subject, my dear friend, on which I wish to unburden my mind to you—a point of the greatest moment to my peace. In short, my good friend, Lady Teazle’s conduct of late has made me extremely unhappy.

**J. SURFACE:** Indeed I’m very sorry to hear it.

**SIR PETER:** Yes, ‘tis but too plain she has not the least regard for me; but, what’s worse, I have pretty good authority to suspect that she must have formed an attachment to another.

**J. SURFACE:** You astonish me.

**SIR PETER:** Yes, and, between ourselves, I think I have discovered the person.

**J. SURFACE:** How! You alarm me exceedingly!

**SIR PETER:** Ah, my dear friend, I knew you would sympathize with me.

**J. SURFACE:** Yes, believe me, Sir Peter, such a discovery would hurt me just as much as it would you.

**SIR PETER:** I am convinced of it. Ah, it is a happiness to have a friend whom one can trust even with one’s family secrets. But have you no guess who I mean?

**J. SURFACE:** I haven’t the most distant idea. It can’t be Sir Benjamin Backbite.

**SIR PETER:** O, no. What say you to Charles?

**J. SURFACE:** My brother? Impossible!

**SIR PETER:** Ah, my dear friend, the goodness of your own heart misleads you; you judge others by yourself.

**J. SURFACE:** Certainly, Sir Peter, the heart that is conscious of its own integrity is ever slow to credit another’s treachery.

**SIR PETER:** True, but your brother has no sentiment, no morals, you see; you never hear him talk so.

**J. SURFACE:** Yet I can’t but think that Lady Teazle herself has too much principle.

**SIR PETER:** Ay, but what’s her principle against the flattery of a handsome, lively young fellow?

**J. SURFACE:** That’s very true,

**SIR PETER:** And then you know the difference of our ages makes it very improbable that she should have a great affection for me; and, if she were to be frail and I were to make it public, why, the town would only laugh at me, the foolish old bachelor who had married a girl.

**J. SURFACE:** That's true, to be sure; they *would* laugh.

**SIR PETER:** Laugh! Ay, and make ballads and paragraphs and the devil knows what of me.

**J. SURFACE:** No, you must never make it public.

**SIR PETER:** But, then again, that the nephew of my old friend Sir Oliver should be the person to attempt such a wrong hurts me more nearly.

**J. SURFACE:** Ay, there's the point; when ingratitude bars the dart of injury, the wound has double danger in it.

**SIR PETER:** Ay, I that was in a manner left his guardian, in whose house he had been so often entertained, who never in my life denied him my advice.

**J. SURFACE:** O, 'tis not to be credited. There may be a man capable of such baseness, to be sure, but for my part, till you can give me positive proofs, I cannot but doubt it. However, if this should be proved on him, he is no longer a brother of mine! I disclaim kindred with him, for the man who can break through the laws of hospitality and attempt the wife of his friend deserves to be branded as the pest of society.

**SIR PETER:** What a difference there is between you! What noble sentiments!

**J. SURFACE:** Yet I cannot suspect Lady Teazle's honor.

**SIR PETER:** I am sure I wish to think well of her and to remove all ground of quarrel between us. She has lately reproached me more than once with having made no settlement on her, and in our last quarrel she almost hinted that she should not break her heart if I was dead. Now, as we seem to differ in our ideas of expense, I have resolved she shall be her own mistress in that respect for the future; and if I were to die she shall find that I have not been inattentive to her interest while living. Here, my friend, are the drafts of two deeds which I wish to have your opinion on. By one she will enjoy eight hundred a year independent while I live, and by the other the bulk of my fortune after my death.

**J. SURFACE:** This conduct, Sir Peter, is indeed truly generous! *Aside.* I wish it may not corrupt my pupil.

**SIR PETER:** Yes, I am determined she shall have no cause to complain, though I would not have her acquainted with the latter instance of my affection yet awhile.

**J. SURFACE:** *Aside.* Nor I, if I could help it.

**SIR PETER:** And now, my dear friend, if you please we will talk over the situation of your hopes with Maria.

**J. SURFACE:** No, no, Sir Peter; another time, if you please.

**SIR PETER:** I am sensibly chagrined at the little progress you seem to make in her affection.

**J. SURFACE:** I beg you will not mention it. What are my disappointments when your happiness is in debate! *Aside.* ‘Sdeath, I should be ruined every way.

**SIR PETER:** And though you are so averse to my acquainting Lady Teazle with your passion, I am sure she’s not your enemy in the affair.

**J. SURFACE:** Pray, Sir Peter, now oblige me. I am really too much affected by the subject we have been speaking on to bestow a thought on my own concerns. The man who is entrusted with his friend’s distresses can never—*Enter Servant.* Well, sir?

**SERVANT:** Your brother, sir, is speaking to a gentleman in the street and says he knows you are within.

**J. SURFACE:** ‘Sdeath, blockhead, I’m not within; I’m out for the day.

**SIR PETER:** Stay, hold; a thought has struck me. You shall be at home.

**J. SURFACE:** Well, well, let him up. *Exit Servant.* He’ll interrupt, Sir Peter. However—

**SIR PETER:** Now, my good friend, oblige me, I entreat you. Before Charles comes, let me conceal myself somewhere. Then do you tax him on the point we have been talking on, and his answers may satisfy me at once.

**J. SURFACE:** O fie, Sir Peter! Would you have me join in so mean a trick? To entrap my brother—

**SIR PETER:** Nay, you tell me you are *sure* he is innocent. If so, you do him the greatest service in giving him an opportunity to clear himself; and you will set my heart at rest. Come, you shall not refuse me. Here, behind this screen will be—*goes to screen.* Hey, what the devil! There seems to be one listener here already. I’ll swear I saw a petticoat.

**J. SURFACE:** Ha, ha, ha! Well, this is ridiculous enough. I'll tell you, Sir Peter. Though I hold a man of intrigue to be a most despicable character, yet you know it doesn't follow that one is to be an absolute celibate either. Harkee. 'Tis a little French milliner, a silly rogue that plagues me; and, having some character, on your coming she ran behind the screen.

**SIR PETER:** Ah, you rogue! But, egad, she has overheard all I have been saying of my wife.

**J. SURFACE:** O, 'twill never go any further; you may depend on it.

**SIR PETER:** No! Then, in faith, let her hear it out. Here's a closet will do as well.

**J. SURFACE:** Well, go in then.

**SIR PETER:** Sly rogue, sly rogue! *He hides.*

**J. SURFACE:** A very narrow escape indeed! And a curious situation I'm in! To part man and wife in this manner!

**LADY TEAZLE:** *Peeks around screen.* Couldn't I steal off?

**J. SURFACE:** Keep close, my angel.

**SIR PETER:** *Peeks out.* Joseph, tax him home.

**J. SURFACE:** Back, dear friend!

**LADY TEAZLE:** *Peeks out.* Couldn't you lock Sir Peter in?

**J. SURFACE:** Be still, my life.

**SIR PETER:** *Peeks out.* You're sure the little milliner won't blab?

**J. SURFACE:** In, in, my good Sir Peter! *Aside.* Before Gad, I wish I had a key to the door. *Enter Charles Surface.*

**C. SURFACE:** Hollo! Brother, what has been the matter? Your fellow wouldn't let me up at first. What, have you had a wench with you?

**J. SURFACE:** None, brother, I assure you.

**C. SURFACE:** But what has made Sir Peter steal off? I thought he had been with you.

**J. SURFACE:** He *was*, brother, but, hearing you were coming, he did not choose to stay.

**C. SURFACE:** What, was the old gentleman afraid I wanted to borrow money of him?

**J. SURFACE:** No, sir; but I am sorry to find, Charles, that you have lately given that worthy man grounds for great uneasiness.

**C. SURFACE:** Yes, they tell me I do that to a great many worthy men. But how so, pray?

**J. SURFACE:** To be plain with you, brother, he thinks you are endeavoring to gain Lady Teazle's affections from him.

**C. SURFACE:** Who, I? O lud, not I, upon my word. Ha, ha, ha! So the old fellow has found out that he has got a young wife, has he? Or, what's worse, has her ladyship discovered that she has an old husband?

**J. SURFACE:** This is no subject to jest on, brother. He who can laugh—

**C. SURFACE:** True, brother, as you were going to say. Then, seriously, I never had the least idea of what you charge me with upon my honor.

**J. SURFACE:** Well, it will give Sir Peter great satisfaction to hear this.

**C. SURFACE:** To be sure, I once thought the lady seemed to have taken a fancy to me; but, upon my soul, I never gave her the least encouragement. Besides, you know my attachment to Maria.

**J. SURFACE:** But, sure, brother, even if Lady Teazle had betrayed the fondest partiality for you—

**C. SURFACE:** Why, lookee, Joseph. I hope I shall never deliberately do a dishonorable action; but, if a pretty woman married to a man old enough to be her father—

**J. SURFACE:** Well!

**C. SURFACE:** Why, I believe I should be obliged to borrow a little of your morality; that's all. But, brother, do you know now that you surprise me exceedingly by naming *me* with Lady Teazle, for, faith, I always understood *you* were her favorite?

**J. SURFACE:** O, for shame, Charles; this retort is foolish.

**C. SURFACE:** Nay, I swear I have seen you exchange such significant glances.

**J. SURFACE:** Nay, nay, sir, this is no jest.

**C. SURFACE:** Egad, I'm serious. Don't you remember? One day when I called here—

**J. SURFACE:** Nay, prithee, Charles—

**C. SURFACE:** And found you together.

**J. SURFACE:** Zounds, sir, I insist—

**C. SURFACE:** And another time when your servant—

**J. SURFACE:** Brother, brother, a word with you. *Aside.* Gad, I must stop him.

**C. SURFACE:** Informed me, I say, that—

**J. SURFACE:** Hush! I beg your pardon, but Sir Peter has overheard all we have been saying. I knew you would clear yourself, or I should not have consented.

**C. SURFACE:** How, Sir Peter! Where is he?

**J. SURFACE:** Softly. There.

**C. SURFACE:** O, before heaven, I'll have him out.—Sir Peter, come forth.

**J. SURFACE:** No, no!

**C. SURFACE:** I say, Sir Peter, come into court. *Charles pulls in Sir Peter.* What, my old guardian, what, turn inquisitor and take evidence, incog.?

**SIR PETER:** Give me your hand, Charles; I believe I have suspected you wrongfully. But you mustn't be angry with Joseph; 'twas my plan.

**C. SURFACE:** Indeed!

**SIR PETER:** But I acquit you. I promise you I don't think near so ill of you as I did; what I have heard has given me great satisfaction.

**C. SURFACE:** Egad, then 'twas lucky you didn't hear any more—*half aside* wasn't it, Joseph?

**SIR PETER:** Ah, you would have retorted on him.

**C. SURFACE:** Ay, ay; that was a joke.

**SIR PETER:** Yes, yes; I know his honor too well.

**C. SURFACE:** But you might as well have suspected him as me in this matter for all that—*half aside* mightn't he, Joseph?

**SIR PETER:** Well, well, I believe you.

**J. SURFACE:** *Aside.* Would they were both well out of the room. *Enters Servant, whispers to Joseph.*

**SIR PETER:** And in future, perhaps, we may not be such strangers.

**J. SURFACE:** *Aside, to Servant.* Lady Sneerwell! Stop her by all means. *Exit Servant.* Gentlemen, I beg pardon; I must wait on you down stairs. Here is a person come on particular business.

**C. SURFACE:** Well, you can see him in another room. Sir Peter and I haven't met a long time and I have something to say to him.

**J. SURFACE:** *Aside.* They must not be left together. I'll contrive to send Lady Sneerwell away, and return directly. *Aside to Sir Peter.* Sir Peter, not a word of the French milliner.

**SIR PETER:** O not for the world! *Exit Joseph.* Ah, Charles, if you associated more with your brother, one might indeed hope for your reformation. He is a man of sentiment. Well, there is nothing in the world so noble as a man of sentiment!

**C. SURFACE:** Pshaw! He is too moral by half, and so apprehensive of his good name, as he calls it, that I suppose he would as soon let a priest into his house as a girl.

**SIR PETER:** No, no, come, come, you wrong him. No, no, Joseph is no rake, but he is not such a saint in that respect either. *Aside.* I have a great mind to tell him; we should have a laugh.

**C. SURFACE:** O hang him! He's a very religious recluse, a young hermit.

**SIR PETER:** Harkee; you must not abuse him. He may chance to hear of it again, I promise you.

**C. SURFACE:** Why, you won't tell him?

**SIR PETER:** No, but—this way—*Aside.* Egad, I'll tell him!—*To Charles.* Harkee. Have you a mind to have a good laugh at Joseph?

**C. SURFACE:** I should like it of all things.

**SIR PETER:** Then, in faith, we will. *Aside.* I'll be quit with him for discovering me. *To Charles.* He had a girl with him when I called.

**C. SURFACE:** What, Joseph! You jest.

**SIR PETER:** Hush! A little French milliner. And the best of the jest is she's in the room now.

**C. SURFACE:** The devil she is.

**SIR PETER:** Hush. I tell you. *Points to screen.*

**C. SURFACE:** Behind the screen! 'Slife, let us unveil her.

**SIR PETER:** No, no! He's coming. You shan't indeed.

**C. SURFACE:** O, egad, we'll have a peep at the little milliner.

**SIR PETER:** Not for the world. Joseph will never forgive me.

**C. SURFACE:** I'll stand by you.

**SIR PETER:** Od's, here he is. *Struggles with Charles. Joseph enters as Charles throws down the screen.*

**C. SURFACE:** Lady Teazle!—by all that's wonderful!

**SIR PETER:** Lady Teazle!—by all that's horrible!

**C. SURFACE:** Sir Peter, this is one of the smartest French milliners I ever saw! Egad, you seem all to have been diverting yourselves here at hide-and-seek, and I don't see who is out of the secret! Shall I beg your ladyship to inform me? Not a word! Brother, will you please to explain the matter? What, morality dumb too? Sir Peter, though I found you in the dark, perhaps you are not so now? All mute! Well, though I can make nothing of the affair, I suppose you perfectly understand one another. So I'll leave you to yourselves. Brother, I'm sorry to find you have given that worthy man so much uneasiness! Sir Peter, there's nothing in the world so noble as a man of sentiment! *Exit Charles. Joseph, Sir Peter and Lady Teazle stand for some time looking at one another.*

**J. SURFACE:** Sir Peter, notwithstanding I confess that appearances are against me, if you will afford me your patience, I make no doubt but I shall explain everything to your satisfaction.

**SIR PETER:** If you please.

**J. SURFACE:** The fact is, sir, that Lady Teazle, knowing my pretensions to your ward Maria—I say Lady Teazle, being apprehensive of the jealousy of your temper, and knowing my friendship to the family—she, sir, I say, called here, in order that I might explain those pretensions; but on your coming, being apprehensive, as I said, of your jealousy, she withdrew. And this, you may depend on it, is the whole truth of the matter.

**SIR PETER:** A very clear account, upon my word, and I dare swear the lady will vouch for every article of it.

**LADY TEAZLE:** For not one word of it, Sir Peter.

**SIR PETER:** How! Don't you even think it worthwhile to agree in the lie?

**LADY TEAZLE:** There is not one syllable of truth in what that gentleman has told you.

**SIR PETER:** I believe you, upon my soul, ma'am.

**J. SURFACE:** *Aside to Lady Teazle.* 'Sdeath, madam, will you betray me?

**LADY TEAZLE:** Good Mr. Hypocrite, by your leave, I will speak for myself.

**SIR PETER:** Ay, let her alone, sir. You'll find she'll make out a better story than you without prompting.

**LADY TEAZLE:** Hear me, Sir Peter. I came hither on no matter relating to your ward, and even ignorant of this gentleman's pretensions to her. But I came, seduced by his insidious arguments, at least to listen to his pretended passion, if not to sacrifice your honor to his baseness.

**SIR PETER:** Now I believe the truth is coming indeed.

**J. SURFACE:** The woman's mad.

**LADY TEAZLE:** No, sir; she has recovered her senses, and your own arts have furnished her with the means.—Sir Peter, I do not expect you to credit me; but the tenderness you expressed for me, when I am sure you could not think I was a witness to it, has penetrated to my heart. And, had I left the place without the shame of discovery, my future life should have spoke the sincerity of my gratitude. As for that smooth-tongued hypocrite, who would have seduced the wife of his too credulous friend, while he affected honorable addresses to his ward, I behold him now in a light so truly despicable, that I shall never again respect myself for having listened to him. *Exit Lady Teazle.*

**J. SURFACE:** Notwithstanding all this, Sir Peter, heaven knows—

**SIR PETER:** That you are a villain! And so I leave you to your conscience.

**J. SURFACE:** You are too rash, Sir Peter. You shall hear me! The man who shuts out conviction by refusing to—

**SIR PETER:** O! *Exit Sir Peter followed by Joseph attempting to speak to him.*

Act V, Scene 1

*The library at Joseph Surface's. Enter Joseph and Servant.*

**J. SURFACE:** Mr. Stanley! Why should you think I would see him? You must know he comes to ask something!

**SERVANT:** Sir, I should not have let him in, but that Mr. Rowley came to the door with him.

**J. SURFACE:** Pshaw! Blockhead, to suppose that I should now be in a temper to receive visits from poor relations! Well, why don't you show the fellow up?

**SERVANT:** I will, sir. Why, sir, it was not my fault that Sir Peter discovered my lady.

**J. SURFACE:** Go, fool! *Exit Servant.* Sure fortune never played a man of my policy such a trick before. My character with Sir Peter, my hopes with Maria—destroyed in a moment! I'm in a rare humour to listen to other people's distresses. I shan't be able to bestow a benevolent sentiment on Stanley. So, here he comes, and Rowley with him. I *must* try to recover myself and put a little charity into my face, however. *Exit Joseph. Enter Sir Oliver and Rowley.*

**SIR OLIVER:** What, does he avoid us? That was he, was it not?

**ROWLEY:** It was, sir. But I fear you are come a little too abruptly; his nerves are so weak, that the sight of a poor relation may be too much for him. I should have gone first, to break you to him.

**SIR OLIVER:** A plague on his nerves! Yet this is he whom Sir Peter extols as a man of the most benevolent way of thinking!

**ROWLEY:** As to his way of thinking, I can't pretend to decide, for, to do him justice, he appears to have as much speculative benevolence as any private gentleman in the kingdom, though he is seldom so pleased as to indulge himself in the exercise of it.

**SIR OLIVER:** Yet he has a string of charitable sentiments, I suppose, at his fingers' ends!

**ROWLEY:** Or rather at his tongue's end, Sir Oliver; for I believe there is no sentiment he has more faith in than that 'charity begins at home'.

**SIR OLIVER:** And his, I presume, is of that domestic sort which never stirs abroad at all.

**ROWLEY:** I fear you'll find it so. But he's coming. I mustn't seem to interrupt you; and you know, immediately as you leave him, I come in to announce your arrival in your real character.

**SIR OLIVER:** True; and afterwards you'll meet me at Sir Peter's.

**ROWLEY:** Without losing a moment. *Exit Rowley.*

**SIR OLIVER:** So. I don't like the complaisance of his features. *Enter Joseph and Servant.*

**J. SURFACE:** Sir, I beg you ten thousand pardons for keeping you a moment waiting. Mr. Stanley, I presume?

**SIR OLIVER:** At your service.

**J. SURFACE:** Sir, I beg you will do me the honor to sit down. I entreat you, sir.

**SIR OLIVER:** Dear sir, there's no occasion. *Aside.* Too civil by half!

**J. SURFACE:** I have not the pleasure of knowing you, Mr. Stanley; but I am extremely happy to see you look so well. You were nearly related to my mother, I think, Mr. Stanley?

**SIR OLIVER:** I was, sir—so nearly that my present poverty, I fear, may do discredit to her wealthy children. Else I should not have presumed to trouble you.

**J. SURFACE:** Dear sir, there needs no apology. He that is in distress, though a stranger, has a right to claim kindred with the wealthy. I am sure I wish I was in that class, and had it in my power to offer you even a small relief.

**SIR OLIVER:** If your uncle Sir Oliver were here, I should have a friend.

**J. SURFACE:** I wish he were, sir, with all my heart. You should not want an advocate with him, believe me, sir.

**SIR OLIVER:** I should not need one; my distresses would recommend me. But I imagined his bounty had enabled you to become the agent of his charity.

**J. SURFACE:** My dear sir, you were strangely misinformed. Sir Oliver is a worthy man, a very worthy sort of man. But avarice, Mr. Stanley, is the vice of age. I will tell you, my good sir, in confidence, what he has done for me has been a mere nothing, though people, I know, have thought otherwise; and for my part I never chose to contradict the report.

**SIR OLIVER:** What, has he never transmitted you bullion, rupees, pagodas?

**J. SURFACE:** O, dear sir, nothing of the kind. No, no, a few presents now and then. China, shawls, tea, song-birds, and Indian crackers. Little more, believe me.

**SIR OLIVER:** *Aside.* Here's gratitude for twelve thousand pounds! Song-birds and Indian crackers!

**J. SURFACE:** Then, my dear sir, you have heard, I doubt not, of the extravagance of my brother. There are very few would credit what I have done for that unfortunate young man!

**SIR OLIVER:** *Aside.* Not I for one!

**J. SURFACE:** The sums I have lent him! Indeed I have been exceedingly to blame. It was an amiable weakness! However, I don't pretend to defend it, and now I feel it doubly culpable, since it has deprived me of the power of serving *you*, Mr. Stanley, as my heart directs.

**SIR OLIVER:** *Aside.* Dissembler!—*To Joseph.* Then, sir, you cannot assist me?

**J. SURFACE:** At present, it grieves me to say, I cannot; but whenever I have ability you may depend upon hearing from me.

**SIR OLIVER:** I am extremely sorry.

**J. SURFACE:** Not more than I am, believe me. To pity, without the power to relieve, is still more painful than to ask and be denied.

**SIR OLIVER:** Kind sir, your most obedient humble servant.

**J. SURFACE:** You leave me deeply affected, Mr. Stanley. *To Servant.* William, be ready to open the door.

**SIR OLIVER:** O, dear sir, no ceremony.

**J. SURFACE:** Your very obedient.

**SIR OLIVER:** Sir, your most obsequious.

**J. SURFACE:** You may depend upon hearing from me, whenever I can be of service.

**SIR OLIVER:** Sweet sir, you are too good.

**J. SURFACE:** In the meantime I wish you health and spirits.

**SIR OLIVER:** Your ever grateful and perpetual humble servant.

**J. SURFACE:** Sir, yours as sincerely.

**SIR OLIVER:** *Aside.* Now I am satisfied! *Exit Sir Oliver and Servant.*

**J. SURFACE:** This is one bad effect of a good character; it invites applications from the unfortunate, and there needs no small degree of social deftness to gain the reputation of benevolence without incurring the expense. *Enter Rowley and Servant.*

**ROWLEY:** Mr. Surface, your servant. I was apprehensive of interrupting you, though my business demands immediate attention, as this note will inform you.

**J. SURFACE:** Always happy to see Mr. Rowley. *Reads.* How! ‘Oliver Surface’! My uncle arrived!

**ROWLEY:** He is indeed—we have just parted—quite well after a speedy voyage, and impatient to embrace his worthy nephew.

**J. SURFACE:** I am astonished!—*To Servant.* William, stop Mr. Stanley, if he’s not gone.

**ROWLEY:** O, he’s out of reach, I believe.

**J. SURFACE:** Why didn’t you let me know this when you came in together?

**ROWLEY:** I thought you had particular business. But I must be gone to inform your brother, and appoint him here to meet your uncle. He will be with you in a quarter of an hour.

**J. SURFACE:** So he says. Well, I am strangely overjoyed at his coming. *Aside.* Never, to be sure, was anything so damned unlucky!

**ROWLEY:** You will be delighted to see how well he looks.

**J. SURFACE:** O, I’m rejoiced to hear it. *Aside.* Just at this time!

**ROWLEY:** I’ll tell him how impatiently you expect him.

**J. SURFACE:** Do, do; pray give my best duty and affection. Indeed I cannot express the sensations I feel at the thought of seeing him! *Exit Rowley*. His coming just at this time is the cruellest piece of ill fortune! *Exit Joseph*.

Act V, Scene 2

*At Sir Peter Teazle's. Enter Mrs. Candor.*

**MRS. CANDOR:** She says she will see nobody at present, even a friend such as I. She begs to be excused, so says the maid. I shall be glad to see her if it be only for a moment, for I am sure she must be in great distress. How provoking! I'm not mistress of half the circumstances! We shall have the whole affair in the newspapers with the names of the parties at length, before I dropped the story at a dozen houses. *Enter Sir Benjamin Backbite*. O, dear Sir Benjamin, you have heard, I suppose?

**B. BACKBITE:** Of Lady Teazle and Mr. Surface?

**MRS. CANDOR:** And Sir Peter's discovery?

**B. BACKBITE:** O, the strangest piece of business to be sure.

**MRS. CANDOR:** Well, I never was so surprised in my life! I am so sorry for all parties; indeed I am.

**B. BACKBITE:** Now I don't pity Sir Peter at all. He was so extravagantly partial to Mr. Joseph.

**MRS. CANDOR:** Mr. Joseph! Why, 'twas with Charles Lady Teazle was detected.

**B. BACKBITE:** No such thing. Mr. Surface is the gallant.

**MRS. CANDOR:** No, no, Charles is the man. 'Twas Mr. Surface brought Sir Peter on purpose to discover them.

**B. BACKBITE:** I tell you I have it from one—

**MRS. CANDOR:** And I have it from one—

**B. BACKBITE:** Who had it from one who had it—

**MRS. CANDOR:** From one immediately—but here's Lady Sneerwell. Perhaps she knows the whole affair. *Enter Lady Sneerwell*.

**L. SNEERWELL:** So, my dear Mrs. Candor, here's a sad affair of our friend Lady Teazle.

**MRS. CANDOR:** Ay! My dear friend, who could have thought it!

**L. SNEERWELL:** Well, there is no trusting appearances. Though, indeed, she was always too lively for me.

**MRS. CANDOR:** To be sure her manners were a little too free; but she was very young.

**L. SNEERWELL:** And had indeed some good qualities.

**MRS. CANDOR:** So she had indeed. But have you heard the particulars?

**L. SNEERWELL:** No; but everybody says that Mr. Surface—

**B. BACKBITE:** Ay, there; I told you Mr. Joseph Surface was the man.

**MRS. CANDOR:** No, no, indeed; the assignation was with Charles.

**L. SNEERWELL:** With Charles! You alarm me, Mrs. Candor.

**MRS. CANDOR:** Yes, yes, he was the lover. Mr. Joseph Surface, do him justice, was only the informer.

**B. BACKBITE:** Well, I'll not dispute with you, Mrs. Candor, but, be it which it may, I hope that Sir Peter's wound will not—

**MRS. CANDOR:** Sir Peter's wound! O mercy! I didn't hear a word of their fighting.

**L. SNEERWELL:** Nor I a syllable!

**B. BACKBITE:** No! What, no mention of the duel?

**MRS. CANDOR:** Not a word.

**B. BACKBITE:** O lord, yes, yes; they fought before they left the room.

**L. SNEERWELL:** Pray let us hear.

**MRS. CANDOR:** Ay, do oblige us with the duel.

**B. BACKBITE:** 'Sir', says Sir Peter, immediately after the discovery, 'you are a most ungrateful fellow'.

**MRS. CANDOR:** Ay, to Charles.

**B. BACKBITE:** No, no, to Mr. Surface. 'A most ungrateful fellow; and old as I am, sir' says he, 'I insist on immediate satisfaction'.

**MRS. CANDOR:** Ay, that must have been to Charles, for 'tis very unlikely Mr. Surface should go to fight in his own house.

**B. BACKBITE:** Gad's life, ma'am, not at all. 'Giving me immediate satisfaction.' On this, Lady Teazle, seeing Sir Peter in such danger, ran out of the room in strong hysterics, and Charles after her, calling out for hartshorn and water! Then, madam, they began to fight with swords—*Enter Crabtree.*

**CRABTREE:** With pistols, nephew. I have it from undoubted authority.

**MRS. CANDOR:** O, Mr. Crabtree, then it is all true.

**CRABTREE:** Too true indeed, ma'am, and Sir Peter's dangerously wounded.

**B. BACKBITE:** By a thrust in *seconde*, quite through his left side.

**CRABTREE:** By a bullet lodged in the thorax.

**MRS. CANDOR:** Mercy on me! Poor Sir Peter!

**CRABTREE:** Yes, ma'am; though Charles would have avoided the matter if he could.

**MRS. CANDOR:** I knew Charles was the person.

**B. BACKBITE:** O, my uncle, I see, knows nothing of the matter.

**CRABTREE:** But Sir Peter taxed him with the basest ingratitude.

**B. BACKBITE:** That I told you, you know.

**CRABTREE:** Do, nephew, let me speak. And insisted on an immediate—

**B. BACKBITE:** Just as I said.

**CRABTREE:** Od's life, nephew, allow others to know something too. A pair of pistols lay on the bureau; for Mr. Joseph Surface, it seems, had come the night before late from Salt Hill, where he had been to see the Montem procession with a friend who has a son at Eton. So, unluckily, the pistols were left charged.

**B. BACKBITE:** I heard nothing of this.

**CRABTREE:** Sir Peter forced Charles to take one, and they fired—it seems, pretty nearly together. Charles’s shot took place, as I told you, and Sir Peter’s missed. But, what is very extraordinary, the ball struck against a little bronze bust of Pliny that stood over the chimney piece, grazed out of the window at a right angle, and wounded the postman, who was just coming to the door with a double letter from Northamptonshire.

**B. BACKBITE:** My uncle’s account is more circumstantial, I must confess; but I believe mine is the true one for all that.

**L. SNEERWELL:** *Aside.* I am more interested in this affair than they imagine and must have better information. *Exit Lady Sneerwell.*

**MRS. CANDOR:** But pray where is Sir Peter at present?

**CRABTREE:** O, they brought him home, and he is now in the house, though the servants are ordered to deny it.

**MRS. CANDOR:** I believe so. And Lady Teazle, I suppose, attending him?

**CRABTREE:** Yes, yes. I saw a physician enter just before me.

**B. BACKBITE:** Hey, who comes here?

**CRABTREE:** O, this is he; the physician, depend on it.

**MRS. CANDOR:** O certainly, it must be the physician, and now we shall know. *Enter Sir Oliver.*

**CRABTREE:** Well, doctor, what hopes?

**MRS. CANDOR:** Ay, doctor, how’s your patient?

**B. BACKBITE:** Now, doctor, isn’t it a wound with a small-sword?

**CRABTREE:** A bullet lodged in the thorax, for a hundred!

**SIR OLIVER:** Doctor! A wound with a small-sword! And a bullet in the thorax! Oons, are you mad, good people?

**B. BACKBITE:** Perhaps, sir, you are not a doctor.

**SIR OLIVER:** Truly I am to thank you for my degree, if I am.

**CRABTREE:** Only a friend of Sir Peter’s then, I presume. But, sir, you must have heard of this accident?

**SIR OLIVER:** Not a word!

**CRABTREE:** Not of his being dangerously wounded?

**SIR OLIVER:** The devil he is!

**B. BACKBITE:** Run through the body.

**CRABTREE:** Shot in the breast.

**B. BACKBITE:** By one Mr. Surface.

**CRABTREE:** Ay, the younger.

**SIR OLIVER:** Hey! What the plague! You seem to differ strangely in your accounts. However, you agree that Sir Peter is dangerously wounded?

**B. BACKBITE:** O, yes, we agree there.

**CRABTREE:** Yes, yes, I believe there can be no doubt of that.

**SIR OLIVER:** Then, upon my word, for a person in that situation he is the most imprudent man alive, for here he comes walking as if nothing at all were the matter. *Enter Sir Peter Teazle.* Od's heart, Sir Peter, you are come in good time, I promise you, for we had just given you over.

**B. BACKBITE:** Egad, uncle, this is the most sudden recovery!

**SIR OLIVER:** Why, man, what do you do out of bed with a small-sword through your body, and a bullet lodged in your thorax!

**SIR PETER:** A small-sword and a bullet?

**SIR OLIVER:** Ay, these gentlemen would have killed you, without law or physic, and wanted to dub me a doctor, to make me an accomplice.

**SIR PETER:** Why, what is all this?

**B. BACKBITE:** We rejoice, Sir Peter, that the story of the duel is not true, and are sincerely sorry for your other misfortunes.

**SIR PETER:** *Aside.* So, so; all over town already.

**CRABTREE:** Though, Sir Peter, you were certainly vastly to blame to marry at all, at your years.

**SIR PETER:** Sir, what business is that of yours?

**MRS. CANDOR:** Though, indeed, as Sir Peter made so good a husband, he's very much to be pitied!

**SIR PETER:** Plague on your pity, ma'am; I desire none of it.

**B. BACKBITE:** However, Sir Peter, you must not mind the laughing and jests you will meet with on this occasion.

**SIR PETER:** Sir, I desire to be master in my own house.

**CRABTREE:** 'Tis no uncommon case, that's one comfort.

**SIR PETER:** I insist on being left to myself. Without ceremony, I insist on your leaving my house directly!

**MRS. CANDOR:** Well, well, we are going; and, depend on it, we'll make the best report of you we can.

**SIR PETER:** Leave my house!

**CRABTREE:** And tell how hardly you have been treated.

**SIR PETER:** Leave my house!

**B. BACKBITE:** And how patiently you bear it.

**SIR PETER:** Fiends! Vipers! Furies! O that their own venom would choke them. *Exit Mrs. Candor, Sir Benjamin, Crabtree.*

**SIR OLIVER:** They are very provoking indeed, Sir Peter. *Enter Rowley.*

**ROWLEY:** I heard high words. What has ruffled you, Sir Peter?

**SIR PETER:** Pshaw, what signifies asking? Do I ever pass a day without my vexations?

**SIR OLIVER:** Well I'm not inquisitive. I come only to tell you that I have seen both my nephews in the manner we proposed.

**SIR PETER:** A precious couple they are!

**ROWLEY:** Yes, and Sir Oliver is convinced that your judgement was right, Sir Peter.

**SIR OLIVER:** Yes, I find Joseph is indeed the man, after all.

**ROWLEY:** Yes, as Sir Peter says, he's a man of sentiment.

**SIR OLIVER:** And acts up to the sentiments he professes.

**ROWLEY:** It certainly is edification to hear him talk.

**SIR OLIVER:** O, he's a model for the young men of the age! But how's this, Sir Peter? You don't join in your friend Joseph's praise as I expected.

**SIR PETER:** Sir Oliver, we live in a damned wicked world, and the fewer we praise the better.

**ROWLEY:** What, do *you* say so, Sir Peter, who were never mistaken in your life?

**SIR PETER:** Pshaw! Plague on you both! I see by your sneering you have heard the whole affair. I shall go mad among you!

**ROWLEY:** Then, to fret you no longer, Sir Peter, we are indeed acquainted with it all. I met Lady Teazle coming from Mr. Surface's so humbled that she deigned to request *me* to be her advocate with you.

**SIR PETER:** And does Sir Oliver know all too?

**SIR OLIVER:** Every circumstance!

**SIR PETER:** What, of the closet, and the screen, hey?

**SIR OLIVER:** Yes, yes, and the little French milliner. O, I have been vastly diverted with the story. Ha, ha!

**SIR PETER:** 'Twas very pleasant!

**SIR OLIVER:** I never laughed more in my life, I assure you. Ha, ha!

**SIR PETER:** O vastly diverting. Ha, ha!

**ROWLEY:** To be sure, Joseph, with his sentiments Ha, ha!

**SIR PETER:** Yes, yes, his sentiments. Ha, ha! A hypocritical villain!

**SIR OLIVER:** Ay, and that rogue Charles! To pull Sir Peter out of the closet! Ha, ha!

**SIR PETER:** Ha, ha! 'Twas devilish entertaining, to be sure.

**SIR OLIVER:** Ha, ha! Egad, Sir Peter, I should like to have seen your face when the screen was thrown down. Ha, ha!

**SIR PETER:** Yes, yes; my face when the screen was thrown down. Ha, ha! O, I must never show my head again!

**SIR OLIVER:** But come, come. It isn't fair to laugh at you neither, my old friend; though, upon my soul, I can't help it.

**SIR PETER:** O, pray don't restrain your mirth on my account. It does not hurt me at all. I laugh at the whole affair myself. Yes, yes, I think being a standing jest for all one's acquaintances a very happy situation. O yes, and then, of a morning, to read the paragraphs about Mr. S \_\_\_\_\_, Lady T \_\_\_\_\_ and Sir P \_\_\_\_\_ will be so entertaining!

**ROWLEY:** Without affectation, Sir Peter, you may despise the ridicule of fools. But I see Lady Teazle going towards the next room. I am sure you must desire reconciliation as earnestly as she does.

**SIR OLIVER:** Perhaps my being here prevents her coming to you. Well, I'll leave honest Rowley to mediate between you. But he must bring you all presently to Mr. Surface's, where I am now returning—if not to reclaim a libertine, at least to expose hypocrisy.

**SIR PETER:** Ah, I'll be present at your discovering yourself there with all my heart, though 'tis a vile unlucky place for discoveries.

**ROWLEY:** We'll follow. *Exit Sir Oliver.*

**SIR PETER:** She is not coming here, you see, Rowley.

**ROWLEY:** No, but she has left the door of that room open, you perceive. See, she is in tears!

**SIR PETER:** Certainly a little mortification appears very becoming in a wife. Don't you think it will do her good to let her pine a little?

**ROWLEY:** O, this is ungenerous of you.

**SIR PETER:** Well, I know not what to think. You remember, Rowley, the letter I found of hers, evidently intended for Charles?

**ROWLEY:** A mere forgery, Sir Peter, laid in your way on purpose. This is one of the points which I intend Snake shall give you conviction on.

**SIR PETER:** I wish I were once satisfied of that. She looks this way. What a remarkably elegant turn of the head she has! Rowley, I'll go to her.

**ROWLEY:** Certainly.

**SIR PETER:** Though, when it is known that we are reconciled, people will laugh at me ten times more!

**ROWLEY:** Let them laugh, and retort their malice only by showing them you are happy in spite of it.

**SIR PETER:** In faith, so I will! And, if I'm not mistaken, we may yet be the happiest couple in the country.

**ROWLEY:** Nay, Sir Peter, he who once lays aside suspicion—

**SIR PETER:** Hold, my dear Rowley. If you have any regard for me, never let me hear you utter anything like a sentiment. I have enough of *them* to serve me the rest of my life. *All exit.*

Act V, Scene 3

*The library at Joseph Surface's. Enter Joseph and Lady Sneerwell.*

**L. SNEERWELL:** Impossible! Will not Sir Peter immediately be reconciled to Charles, and of consequence no longer oppose his union with Maria? The thought is distraction to me!

**J. SURFACE:** Can passion furnish a remedy?

**L. SNEERWELL:** No, nor cunning either. O, I was a fool, an idiot, to league with such a blunderer!

**J. SURFACE:** Sure, Lady Sneerwell, I am the greatest sufferer; yet you see I bear the accident with calmness.

**L. SNEERWELL:** Because the disappointment doesn't reach your *heart*; your interest only attached you to Maria. Had you felt for her what I have for that ungrateful libertine, neither your temper nor hypocrisy could prevent your showing the sharpness of your vexation.

**J. SURFACE:** But why should your reproaches fall on me for this disappointment?

**L. SNEERWELL:** Are not you the cause of it? What had you to do, to abate in your pursuit of Maria to pervert Lady Teazle by the way? Had you not a sufficient field for your roguery in blinding Sir Peter and supplanting your brother? I hate such an avarice of crimes. 'Tis an unfair monopoly and never prospers.

**J. SURFACE:** Well, I admit I have been to blame. I confess I deviated from the direct road of wrong. But I don't think we're so totally defeated neither.

**L. SNEERWELL:** No!

**J. SURFACE:** You tell me you have made a trial of Snake since we met, and that you still believe him faithful to us.

**L. SNEERWELL:** I do believe so.

**J. SURFACE:** And that he has undertaken, should it be necessary, to swear and prove that Charles is at this time contracted by vows and honor to your ladyship, which some of his former letters to you will serve to support.

**L. SNEERWELL:** This indeed might have assisted.

**J. SURFACE:** Come, come; it is not too late yet. *Knocking offstage.* But hark! This is probably my uncle Sir Oliver. Retire to that room. We'll consult farther when he's gone.

**L. SNEERWELL:** Well, but if he should find you out too.

**J. SURFACE:** O, I have no fear of that. Sir Peter will hold his tongue for his own credit's sake, and you may depend on it I shall soon discover Sir Oliver's weak side.

**L. SNEERWELL:** I have no lack of confidence in your abilities; only be constant to one roguery at a time.

**J. SURFACE:** I will, I will. *Exit Lady Sneerwell.* So. 'Tis confounded hard after such bad fortune to be baited by one's confederate in evil. Well, at all events, my character is so much better than Charles's that I certainly—Hey! What! This is not Sir Oliver, but old Stanley again! Plague on it, that he should return to tease me now! We shall have Sir Oliver come and find him here and—*Enter Sir Oliver and Servant.* Gad's life, Mr. Stanley, why have you come back to plague me just at this time? You must not stay now, upon my word!

**SIR OLIVER:** Sir I hear your uncle Oliver is expected here; and though he has been so penurious to you, I'll try what he'll do for me.

**J. SURFACE:** Sir, 'tis impossible for you to stay now. So I must beg—come any other time, and I promise you you shall be assisted.

**SIR OLIVER:** No, Sir Oliver and I must be acquainted.

**J. SURFACE:** Zounds, sir, then I insist on your quitting the room directly.

**SIR OLIVER:** Nay, sir!

**J. SURFACE:** Sir, I insist on it. *To Servant.* Here, William, show this gentleman out.— Since you compel me, sir, not one moment. This is such insolence. *Enter Charles.*

**C. SURFACE:** Hey-dey! What's the matter now? What the devil, have you got hold of my little broker here! Zounds, brother, don't hurt little Premium.—What's the matter, my little fellow?

**J. SURFACE:** So! He has been with you too, has he?

**C. SURFACE:** To be sure he has! Why, 'tis as honest a little—but sure, Joseph, you have not been borrowing money too, have you?

**J. SURFACE:** Borrowing? No! But, brother, you know here we expect Sir Oliver every—

**C. SURFACE:** O Gad, that's true! He mustn't find the little broker here, to be sure.

**J. SURFACE:** Yet Mr. Stanley insists—

**C. SURFACE:** Stanley? Why, his name's Premium.

**J. SURFACE:** No, no, Stanley.

**C. SURFACE:** No, no, Premium.

**J. SURFACE:** Well, no matter which, but—

**C. SURFACE:** Ay, ay, Stanley or Premium, 'tis the same thing, as you say, for I suppose he goes by half a hundred names. *Knock offstage.*

**J. SURFACE:** Death! Here's Sir Oliver at the door. *Knock again.* Now I beg, Mr. Stanley—

**C. SURFACE:** Ay, and I beg, Mr. Premium—

**SIR OLIVER:** Gentlemen!

**J. SURFACE:** Sir, by heaven, you shall go.

**C. SURFACE:** Ay, out with him certainly.

**SIR OLIVER:** This violence—

**J. SURFACE:** 'Tis your own fault.

**C. SURFACE:** Out with him, to be sure. *Enter Sir Peter, Lady Teazle, Marie and Rowley.*

**SIR PETER:** My old friend Sir Oliver! Hey, what in the name of wonder! Here are dutiful nephews! Assault their uncle at the first visit!

**LADY TEAZLE:** Indeed, Sir Oliver, 'twas well we came in to rescue you.

**ROWLEY:** Truly it was, for I perceive, Sir Oliver, the character of old Stanley was no protection to you.

**SIR OLIVER:** Nor of Premium either. The necessities of the former couldn't extort a shilling from that benevolent gentleman, and now, egad, I stood a chance of faring worse than my ancestors and being knocked down without being bid for. *Pause.*

**J. SURFACE:** Charles!

**C. SURFACE:** Joseph!

**J. SURFACE:** 'Tis now complete!

**C. SURFACE:** Very.

**SIR OLIVER:** Sir Peter, my friend—and Rowley too—look on the elder nephew of mine. You know what he has already received from my bounty, and you know also how gladly I would have regarded half my fortune as held in trust for him. Judge then my disappointment in discovering him to be destitute of truth, charity and gratitude.

**SIR PETER:** Sir Oliver, I should be more surprised at this declaration if I had not myself found him selfish, treacherous and hypocritical.

**LADY TEAZLE:** And if the gentleman pleads not guilty to these, pray let him call *me* to his character.

**SIR PETER:** Then I believe we need add no more. If he knows himself, he will consider it as the most perfect punishment that he is known by the world.

**C. SURFACE:** *Aside.* If they talk this way to honesty, what will they say to *me* by and by!

**SIR OLIVER:** As for that prodigal, his brother there—

**C. SURFACE:** *Aside.* Ay, now comes my turn. The damned family pictures will ruin me.

**J. SURFACE:** Sir Oliver! Uncle! Will you honor me with a hearing?

**C. SURFACE:** *Aside.* Now, if Joseph would make one of his long speeches, I might recollect myself a little.

**SIR OLIVER:** I suppose you would undertake to justify yourself entirely.

**J. SURFACE:** I trust I could.

**SIR OLIVER:** Pshaw! *To Charles.* Well, sir, and *you* could *justify* yourself too, I suppose!

**C. SURFACE:** Not that I know of, Sir Oliver.

**SIR OLIVER:** What, little Premium has been let too much into the secret, I presume.

**C. SURFACE:** True, sir. But they were family secrets and should never be mentioned again, you know.

**ROWLEY:** Come, Sir Oliver, I know you cannot speak of Charles's follies with anger.

**SIR OLIVER:** Od's heart, no more I can; nor with gravity either.—Sir Peter, do you know the rogue bargained with me for all his ancestors, sold me judges and generals by the foot and maiden aunts as cheap as broken china!

**C. SURFACE:** To be sure, Sir Oliver, I did make a little free with the family canvas; that's the truth on it. My ancestors may certainly rise in evidence against me; there's no denying it. But believe me sincere when I tell you—and upon my soul I would not say it if I was not—that if I do not appear mortified at the exposure of my follies, it is because I feel at this moment the warmest satisfaction in seeing you, my *liberal* benefactor.

**SIR OLIVER:** Charles, I believe you. Give me your hand again. The ill-looking little fellow over the settee has made your peace, sirrah!

**C. SURFACE:** Then, sir, my gratitude to the original is still increased.

**LADY TEAZLE:** *Pointing to Maria.* Yet I believe, Sir Oliver, here is one whom Charles is still more anxious to be reconciled to.

**SIR OLIVER:** O, I have heard of his attachment there; and, with the young lady's pardon, if I construe right that blush—

**SIR PETER:** Well, child, speak your sentiments.

**MARIA:** Sir, I have little to say, but that I shall rejoice to hear that he is happy. For me, whatever claim I had to his affection, I willingly resign it to one who has a better title.

**C. SURFACE:** How, Maria!

**SIR PETER:** Hey-dey, what's the mystery now? While he appeared an incorrigible rake, you would give your hand to no one else; and now that he's likely to reform, I warrant you won't have him!

**MARIA:** His own heart—and Lady Sneerwell—know the cause.

**C. SURFACE:** Lady Sneerwell!

**J. SURFACE:** Brother, it is with great concern I am obliged to speak on this point; by my regard to justice compels me, and Lady Sneerwell's injuries can no longer be concealed. *Enter Lady Sneerwell.*

**SIR PETER:** So! Another French milliner, egad! He has one in every room in the house, I suppose.

**L. SNEERWELL:** Ungrateful Charles! Well may you be surprised and feel for the indelicate situation which your perfidy has forced me into.

**C. SURFACE:** Pray, uncle, is this another plot of yours? For, as I have life, I don't understand it.

**J. SURFACE:** I believe, sir, there is but the evidence of one person more necessary to make it extremely clear.

**SIR PETER:** And that person, I imagine, is Mr. Snake.—Rowley, you were perfectly right to bring him with us, and pray let him appear.

**ROWLEY:** Walk in, Mr. Snake. *Enter Snake.* I thought his testimony might be wanted. However, it happens unluckily that he comes to confront Lady Sneerwell and not to support her.

**L. SNEERWELL:** *Aside.* Villain! Treacherous to me at last!—*To Snake.* Speak, fellow, have you too conspired against me?

**SNAKE:** I beg your ladyship ten thousand pardons. You paid me extremely liberally for the lie in question; but I have unfortunately been offered double to speak the truth.

**SIR PETER:** Plot and counterplot, egad. I wish your ladyship joy of the success of your negotiation.

**L. SNEERWELL:** The torments of shame and disappointment on you all!

**LADY TEAZLE:** Hold, Lady Sneerwell. Before you go, let me thank you for the trouble you and that gentleman have taken in writing letters to me from Charles and answering them yourself. And let me also request you to make respects to the scandalous college of which you are president, and inform them that Lady Teazle, licentiate, begs leave to return the diploma they granted her, as she leaves off practice and kills characters no longer.

**L. SNEERWELL:** You too, madam? Provoking! Insolent! May your husband live these fifty years! *Exit Lady Sneerwell.*

**SIR PETER:** Oons, what a fury!

**LADY TEAZLE:** What a malicious creature it is!

**SIR PETER:** Hey, not for her last wish?

**LADY TEAZLE:** O, no.

**SIR OLIVER:** Well, sir, and what have you to say now?

**J. SURFACE:** Sir, I am so confounded to find that Lady Sneerwell could be guilty of suborning Mr. Snake in this manner to impose on us all that I know not what to say. However, lest her revengeful spirit should prompt her to injure my brother, I had certainly better follow her directly. *Exit Joseph.*

**SIR PETER:** Moral to the last drop!

**SIR OLIVER:** Ay, and marry her, Joseph, if you can. Oil and vinegar, egad! You'll do very well together.

**ROWLEY:** I believe we have no more occasion for Mr. Snake at present.

**SNAKE:** Before I go, I beg pardon once for all for whatever uneasiness I have been the humble instrument of causing to the parties present.

**SIR PETER:** Well, well, you have made atonement by a good deed at last.

**SNAKE:** But I must request of the company that it shall never be known.

**SIR PETER:** Hey! What the plague! Are you ashamed of having done a right thing once in your life?

**SNAKE:** Ah, sir, consider I live by the badness of my character! I have nothing but my infamy to depend on! And if it were once known that I had been betrayed into an honest action, I should lose every friend I have in the world.

**SIR OLIVER:** Well, well, we'll not harm your reputation by saying anything in your praise. Never fear. *Exit Snake.*

**SIR PETER:** There's a precious rogue. Yet that fellow is a writer and a critic! *Charles and Maria talk apart.*

**LADY TEAZLE:** See, Sir Oliver; there needs no persuasion now to reconcile your nephew and Maria.

**SIR OLIVER:** Ay, ay, that's as it should be, and, egad, we'll have the wedding tomorrow morning.

**C. SURFACE:** Thank you, my dear uncle.

**SIR PETER:** What, you rogue, don't you ask the girl's consent first?

**C. SURFACE:** O, I have done that a long time—above a minute—ago, and she has looked yes.

**MARIA:** For shame, Charles.—I protest, Sir Peter, there has not been a word!

**SIR OLIVER:** Well, then, the fewer the better. May your love for each other never know abatement.

**SIR PETER:** And may you live as happily together as Lady Teazle and I—intend to do.

**C. SURFACE:** Rowley, my old friend, I am sure you congratulate me, and I suspect that I owe you much.

**SIR OLIVER:** You do indeed, Charles.

**ROWLEY:** If my efforts to serve you had not succeeded, you would have been in my debt for the attempt; but deserve to be happy, and you overpay me.

**SIR PETER:** Ay, honest Rowley always said you would reform.

**C. SURFACE:** Why, as to reforming, Sir Peter, I'll make no promises. And that I take to be a proof that I intend to set about it. But here shall be my monitor, my gentle guide. Ah, can I leave the virtuous path those eyes illumine?  
Though thou, dear maid, shouldst waive thy beauty's sway,  
Thou still must rule, because I will obey.  
An humbled fugitive from folly view,  
No sanctuary near, but love and *you.*  
*To audience.* You can indeed each anxious fear remove,  
For even scandal dies if you approve. *All exit.*

Epilogue

*Written by G. Colman, Esq. and spoken by the character of Lady Teazle.*

I, who was late so volatile and gay,  
Like a trade-wind, must now blow all one way,  
Bend all my cares, my studies, and my vows,  
To one old rusty weathercock, my spouse.

Farewell! All quality of high renown,  
Pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious town,  
Farewell! Your revels I partake no more,  
And Lady Teazle's occupation's o'er!  
All this I told our playwright who said 'twas clear  
I ought to play deep tragedy next year.

Meanwhile he drew wise morals from his play,  
And in these solemn periods stalked away.  
'Blessed are the fair, like me her faults who stopped,  
And closed her follies when the curtain dropped!  
No more in vice or error to engage,  
Or play the fool at large on life's great stage.