

**The Wayward Women
Or: Nothing to Do
By Jared McDaris
Sample**

1.2

[*Enter the Duchess Pentti Celia, her Magistress Dotara, the old knights Dame Anu and Dame Grendela, and the Attendants*]

Duchess

Peace! Peace! I will have Peace, be't as the Duchess
Over *Amosa's* gentle Knights, or as
The sexton of a land of Sepulchers:
Or dumb or dead, you will deliver Peace.

Anu

Before the Goddess I have been despoiled
Beyond the reach of Recompense.

Grendela

Despoil?
Nay distaff, wrack-and-pants can reach thee still.

Anu

Away thy sausages, thou gristly Bear.

Magistress

Good knight, be patient.

Grendela

Good night indeed: I'll knock thy noddles off.

Anu

Thou'lt nod off sooner, drunken bog-maid.

Grendela

Is Grendela a maid? Then thou'rt but a boy: I'll kiss thee 'til my knuckles bleed.

Magistress

I beg you spread yourselves.

Anu

Y'are flush with blood already; crawl into your cups, you spongy thing.

Grendela

Thing? Thing; is *Grendela* a thing? to thence

Be tugg'd and plac'd and prey'd upon for Spirits?
 Then tug me (mewler) place me (dowsing rod),
 And if a crooked Twig will call me sausage
 And never hear a telling for it, she shall
 Withstand my greasing in her Face.

Anu

My Duchess,
 You hear the villainy with which I am
 Accosted daily. All the Fifty Wrongs
 Have I endur'd from th' painted, poxy *Venus*,
 Yet always piety demanded Patience
 From she who's burn'd your enemies to soot
 With th' holy Heat of her distemp'rate Sword.
 The Fifty Causes have I born from this
 Distillery that ambleth as a Woman,
 And always have I nodded: but this Cause,
 It is the cause, my sole Inequity,
 For I cannot endure this final Wrong.
 I cast my gauge upon the floor before
 That salted Pork, and beg your Majesty
 Do honor to my leal service: take
 My gauntlet and my cause upon yourself
 And let that putrid pussel here dissolve
 Beneath the furnace of our rightful wrath.

Grendela

Engaged by a maypole? I'll answer her again,
 And double up her wrath with two of mine.

Magistress

My ladies, pray you, patience.

Anu

Will I be double done by such a dun
 And filthy froth? Then there's my other glove,
 And let mine honor stand in for my love.

Grendela

Shall I be called no better than this squealer?
 Then there behold my boots as well, they boot
 Me well to name thee honorless, and sallow,
 And more they name thee humorless to boot.

Anu

A petty wordplay from a petty port,

Then let my graved grieves make better still,
And show the cowardice you here fulfill.

Grendela

A coward! answer there my cap and cloak
And all accoutrements that shield my frame,
To answer you I only need my name.

Anu

I do the like, and shed as readily
My finery, my blood, my life.

Magistress

My word.

Anu

This front'ry must be redressed.

Duchess

You will redress,
Ladies, both, at once. What is my hall become,
When women of distinction will discard
Their signs of state, their very casings fall'n
For petty vengeance sake? You will becalm.
Long, too long, we battailed 'gainst the *Nolia*,
Those rebels who'd usurp our Crown for malice
And make our fair *Amosa* but a house
Of charnel desecrations. We've prevailed,
But any cost in victory's all too high,
To lose the lives of loves, e'en enemies,
The Price of Peace can seem itself too great.
And now my Knights, Dames *Grendela* and *Anu*,
Who did me worthy service in that conflict
Would seek to draw the mis'ry out once more
By splitting out again to factions our
Surviving heraldry. I will have peace.
My people, my blood, for it we've shed enough,
And no more will I suffer loss for Victory,
And no more will I suffer blows for Vanity.

[*A messenger enters*]

Messenger

Good Duchess, strangers're come unto your court.

Duchess

Are they unarmed?

Messenger

They have been made quite safe.

Duchess

Then bring them in.

[*Messenger exits*]

Magistress

What means this disturbance, Lady?

Anu

They're *Nolia* spies, intent on insurrection,
And we'll despoil them on a halberd's point.

Duchess

The *Nolia* are dead, unto my shame.
You are a Knight *Anu*, and *Grendela*,
Present yourselves as proper Ladies, set,
And pass'nate only in your stately vows.

[*Messenger reenters with Cordelius, and Julian as Joanne*]

Messenger

Good Duchess, 'tis a Lady from a Land
Call'd *Switzer*. Dame *Joanne* she is call'd,
And this her lovely Brother *Cordelius*,
Are come to beg the comfort of your court.

[*Messenger exits*]

Anu

Are Knights so poor in *Switzerland* that their
Habiliments are made of drapes and carpet?
What matter'f Heraldry is this, Dame *Joan*?

Julian

Forgive me Lords, the raggedness of my
Design, and more the coarseness of my Voice,
But we were trav'ling *Tunis* way when struck
By fearsome storms and cast o'erboard, our ships
And shipmates damn'd into the inky deep
Forevermore, alas. My brother now
And I here beg the charity of fair

Amosa and her Master, Mistress, Lord
And Lady, shield us from the Fates above
And aid us on our sojourning. My lady.

Grendela

Thy finery's refin'd enough, I cry,
In'struth I've look'd a fouler many a morn.

Duchess

You speak, Lady, to th' Duchess *Penti Celia*.
The Line of *Penta* hath kept our Island safe
For generations beyond our circumspect,
And if you make assurance of your own
T'abide by laws of gentleness, we'll guard
You 'nd your fair Brother from the world until
Y'are made prepar'd to leave our loved shores.

Magistress

Excuse me, Duchess, but what fates have drawn
These *Switzers* from their homes? What bus'ness did
Propend them off to distant *Tunis* way?

Cordelius

Nay we would sooner home.

Julian

Pay no attent
To poor *Cordelius*, as taken by
A melancholy as he is. His uncle,
(Our uncle) Lord of *Uri*, ruler since
The death of his good brother, banish'd him
For certain indiscretions with his love,
And we are made to *Tunis* to keep safe
Until the wrath o'th' Court hath been assuaged.

Anu

Could such a fair-faced Gentle prove so sluttish?

Grendela

Cordelius, mine heart will beat for thee,
Assuage with me and I'll assuage all wants.

Anu

Be off, pustule, and tempt this harlotan
No further than he's fall'n.

Magistress

My Ladies, please.
Wherefore hath this disdain arisen, newly
Born out your former love? Recall your recent
Kindnesses. *Anu*, did you not repair
Dame *Grendela*'s old Jerkin when 'twas split?

Anu

'twas I that split't, and more I sew'd it up
So tight that she was squeez'd and gaseous
For nearly all the week.

Grendela

Confess'd! We'll duel.

Magistress

Yet *Grendela*, did you not sharpen up
Dame *Anu*'s rapier when it was dull'd
Against the forces of the fallen *Nolia*?

Grendela

Nay I did blunt it when she challenged
Your daughter *Aquiline*, for naming her
Dame *Anu*, Knight of Brown.

Magistress

A mockery
Of Black Knight *Anu*. Nam'd you not her Black
For Piety and her melancholy mind?

Grendela

Nay *Anu* Black, for loud lip service and
Her melancholic Face, for she prostrates
In Public only, and well 'tis known her face.

Anu

Insults still, Green Knight.

Magistress

And *Anu*, did you not call her *Grendela* the Green for her fresh valor?

Anu

Nay, but for her sickliness and drunken pallor: sot.

Grendela

Sot? Dost sot me? Then I'll sock thee.

Duchess

Enough. *Amosa* is no Wilderness
For you to flaunt your fondity. Do not
Present my Queendom as a pageant for fools
Before the eyes of those kind visitors.

Anu

I will be satisfied.

Grendela

Would a day you were,
Thou would'st not flounder so. That is, if thou
Wert satisfied.

Anu

Thou vagabond.

Duchess

Silence.
Who is Duchess of this land?

Knights

You are, Majesty.

Duchess

Summon in the squires of my wastrel Knights.
We see you have no wisdom out of War,
And so we condescend to grant your suit.
You Knights are hereby banished from one
The other, shall not come into the sight
Of t'other 'til the Festival of Moontide
Is finish'd. Then, upon the morrow next,
You two shall meet upon the Field of Honor
And discharge your bawdy quarrel finally.
If any rancor 'r violence is made before,
Indeed if either should dare look upon
The other, she will forfeit of her life.
The judgment is complete. When you do leave
Our chambers, you avoid all sight of th'other.

[*Enter the squires Aquiline and Pinne*]

Grendela

I thank your kindness, Grace, and beg you further
To let me take this Dame *Joanne* to

My care. Allow me show her I'm no varlet;
She and her brother shall be well attended on.

Anu

That blast cannot be trusted with a pig,
Leave off a shamed man.

Magistress

Dame *Grendela*,
I must protest: though your intentions may
Be pure, the fruit of them hath disappointed.
My daughter *Aquiline* was granted you
To train up as a proper knight, but she
Is given more these days to harlotry,
To drunken bawdry and to games of Chance
Than Heraldry or combat or courtliness.

Aquiline

Goodly my Mother, can chance condemn me so,
That as I lose so many fortunes for
That gristly Knight, green *Grendela*, she now
Recalls from me my goodly Reputation?

Magistress

It is quite public, Girl, that you are far
From knighthood.

Anu

So, unless it be disposed
Within a tankard's dregs.

Aquiline

Avaunt, pisspole.

Duchess

Young *Aquiline*, you will recant your words.

Grendela

A Knight without the blood of youthful Passion
Is no woman, nor a soldier, Lady. She
Must learn the nature of her strengths and failings,
For she must learn what she can take, before
She learns what she can give, good Magistress.

Anu

We cannot risk the man despoil'd further.

I thank your Grace for th'indulgence of mine Honor,
 Yet further, I beg you let me take the boy
Cordelius with me and look him after.
 Upon the boundless honor of my Name,
 'tis sure that *Anu's* charge shall never fall.

Grendela

And there's the source of all your melancholy
 That *Anu's* discharge hath never fall'n.

Anu

Your Grace.

Duchess

We here adjudge that *Grendela* will house
 And care for Dame *Joanne* on her stay,
 And *Anu* guard what Chastity remaineth
 To young *Cordelius*. My Lady *Joan*,
Amosa is a land of fiercest strength,
 But little's known to us of shipwright or
 Astronomy. I fear you must remain
 Until the next Moon's marchant ship arrives
 To take you on to *Tunis* or to *Switzer*.
Cordelius, I mourn your virtue's death;
 Indeed when I first spied your Beauty, I
 Had thought myself to make an overture,
 Alas the shame that's fallen unto you
 Prevents the unity that might have come
 Of this unlook'd for fortune. *Grendela*,
 Be off with *Joan*. I pray this foreign Dame
 May better educate young *Aquiline*
 Of knightly manners. *Anu*, take you young
Cordelius. We pray your Piety
 May show him penitence for his missteps.
 Once more, do neither look upon the other
 For pain of shameful death, until such time
 As th' Moonfest is concluded. Then, upon
 The Field will each make answer to the other.

[*The Knights exit with Cordelius and Julian*]

Magistress

My Lady, will you bear the loss of she
 That falls in this forecasted contest? Though
 The *Nolia* are fallen, yet a Knight
 Is useful to her liege-lady, 'nd should not be

Cast off so without ceremony.

Duchess

Dotara,

This duel is artifice itself. Their Pride
 Alone is what will satisfy the other,
 And Vanity hath here been answered
 By proclamation. For the duel, it dies
 By inches in their addled minds: one by
 Her cups, the other by her preening pride,
 And when the Festival is gone, the duel
 Shall long have absented their thoughts, that each
 Again shall bear the other coldly, but
 Will bear the other still.

Magistress

Ay, Festivals

Have buried many rivalries, my Lady.

Duchess

How greater is the Likeness of a War
 Against the Act itself: though children march
 And strike the Drums of conflagration, parade
 And wave their bans of *Nike's* elegance,
 The wisdom of our Years alone reveal
 The ugly Entity beneath our cheering:
 There is no glory to be had in Death,
 And misery alone is War's high ransom.
 O give me masks and dances, give me Song,
 Yay even show me pageantry of Conflicts
 That long have pass'd from us. Or better give
 Us dragons to defeat, mighty monsters
 We might outwit and overbear with thought
 And cunning overweighing their brute Force.
 And song, O music, heartbeats of the Earth,
 Give this to me before all other shows,
 For it alone is closest to the Nature
 Of our highest Hopes, our dreams, reaching out
 Like th' daring Sapling out the lowly soil
 Of our baser atavism. Bless melody.
 Our battle shouts ring empty in the skies:
 By Song alone our Spirits will arise.

[*Exeunt*]