**The Passion of Boudicca**

**By Jared McDaris**

**1.1**

[*A Funeral Procession for the dead King Prasutagus*]

[*Enter the Princesses Maeve and Brigid, with Lord Catus the Roman and his captains, Tacit and Cassio Dion*]

***Catus***

Could one woman so invest her heart into

Exsanguinated earth?

***Maeve***

Our royal father

Was pittant in his love, but approved in

Respect and charity. The Queen our Mother

Must honor this a thousand times in state.

***Dion***

What State is this, a hobble in the mire

Where pigs rut openly and vie for feed?

***Brigid***

Our Kingdom’s vastier than thy counting house,

Thou feed post.

***Maeve***

Do not shame the honorless,

Good *Brigid*, lest their humors stick to thee.

***Dion***

Dost face me, girl?

***Tacit***

Stay thyself, *Cassio*.

***Dion***

Art thou a farmer, *Tacit*, champion

To willful dirt?

***Maeve***

My mother is the Queen

Of *Suffolk*.

***Catus***

Nay, she was the King’s wife. Now

The King is dead, we’ll see what she becomes.

She is possessed of pride, as though her rule

Extended farther than a county’s call.

A man might conquer a mound of dirt, and call

Himself a king, but sooner I would be

The meanest mountain than the proudest hill.

[*Enter the Queen*]

***Queen***

Starfall, the Heavens steal my tears, lament

With such a keening note that I should blush

Before these Meteors their dirge. My King,

*Prasutagus*, we yield thy pity up

Unto the skies, who split and eulogize

Thy worth beyond our mortal crudity.

***Catus***

*Rome* honors Lord *Prasutagus*, who alone

Among you Britons sought th’Empire’s blessing,

And shielded you from *Nero’s* tow’ring wrath.

*Prasutagus*, who fear’d our gods, who wove

A peace from out the bandied Wantonness

And beastly impulse of the Celts.

***Queen***

He was

A King, but we are mortal. Now his Queen

Commands you stay your Exaltations. What

Extremity would drive you, Lord, into

The bounds of *Suffolk*? What employment shepherds

Lord *Catus* here? I’faith, I would not have

The baser chords of contract salt the earth

Where lyric harmonies do lie, but *Rome*

Must have an answer, as a willful Husband,

To which I was no stranger, dear my gods.

***Catus***

My Lady, *Rome* would dispensate the Will

*Prasutagus* your Lord did fix with *Nero*.

***Queen***

The Lord of *Suffolk* made no will with *Nero*.

***Catus***

I have it, good my Lady, trebled down,

And we would read it to you if you wish.

***Queen***

Aye, read’t.

***Catus***

[*Reading the will*]

*The King Prasutagus, his Majesty o’er th’Iceni tribe*==

***Queen***

There has’t, Lord, there is no Will with him.

***Catus***

My Lady?

***Queen***

Ladies suffer fools, but I

Am Queen of *Suffolk*, and mine Husband was

Divin’d a King, and recogniz*e*d in

The Empir’s pledge. No Lord of *Suffolk*

Hath died today, but rather King. Is’t Just,

Think’st thou, to lay thy shames upon the dead

When they are pow’rless now to stake their Rights?

***Catus***

‘tis just to do obeisance to the laws.

And when a King relinquishes his spirit

And leaves his corpse for flies to fat upon,

The pageants of Divinity must yield

To history’s base consequence: Succession.

***Queen***

Hath *Nero* known no wife? nor any Roman

A mother? Th’Sun may never set on Rome,

But daughters are then shut away? Hast thou

A daughter sir? or wife? or known a woman?

***Catus***

I have.

***Queen***

A wife?

***Catus***

I do.

***Queen***

And so she doth.

If thou, Lord *Catus*, should here die, then what?

Who lays her hand upon thy property?

***Catus***

My sons.

***Queen***

And if no sons?

***Catus***

My daughter’s husbands.

***Queen***

And if no Husbands? Then?

***Catus***

The Will makes plain.

[*Reading the Will*]

*Prasutagus proclaims his heirs and here bequests his crown and property jointly to his daughters, Maeve and Brigid, and the Emperor great Nero, as claimants to his crown*.

***Queen***

There has it. Claimants, come you forth.

***Maeve***

I, *Maeve*,

Do humbly yield my Legacy before

My mother, *Boudicca*, *Iceni’s* Queen.

***Brigid***

I, *Brigid*, second born, would not so churlish

Behave as to deflect my elder’s wisdom.

I too relent my Legacy to *Boudicca*.

***Queen***

Then by their Primogeniture, two thirds

Of *Suffolk* falls to me. Will any other

Claimant appear to take his right? Not any?

***Catus***

The Emperor is occupied, my Lady.

***Queen***

The lady is not yours, nor is it *Rome*

That’s occupied. My Majesty is mine,

And we would have thee acquiesce, my Lord.

***Catus***

Who must declare *I am a king*, is not.

***Queen***

Then must I pluck a man to do’t for me?

Who must declare *I am an Emperor*,

Must first needs beg his servants speak for him.

If *Nero* must depend on his dependents

Then he is baser than this Woman’s girls,

Who read’ly yield their Legacies to me.

***Catus***

Will you defy the state of *Rome*?

***Queen***

We will

Defy an absent hand, that clutches here,

Anemic, flaccid, and infirm, that rests

On ancient Laurels like the plaguy cat

Will sit upon a nest of’s mother’s kills.

If *Nero* claims my Land, then *Nero* takes it,

No reachy hireling; and if thou step’st

Into our Seat without respect unto

Our holy covenant, our natural Crown,

Then we’ll excise thy foul, blaspheming tongue,

Thou voiceless hand of *Rome*, that *Nero* learns

What ‘tis to expatiate his Vastity.

***Catus***

Your Grace, I humbly pray your clemency.

***Brigid***

Display your Wrath, your Majesty. Strike.

***Maeve***

Nay Sovereign, hear my plea. If senseless fingers

Extend into a flame, indifferent

To harm and render’d feeble by the cold,

Should not a sacred fire forgive, and scorn

To scourge that simple hand? Forgive, my Liege.

***Queen***

The fire forgives humility, but Pride

It burns away.

***Catus***

Your Majesty, we beg

Your solemn Lenity: forgive *Rome’s* Pride,

That overwhelm’d this absentminded servant.

***Queen***

The Great alone are capable of Mercy.

***Catus***

Thou art Great, good Queen. Absolve me, I pray.

***Queen***

Then Justice yields to Pity’s claim. Thou liv’st.

***Catus***

I thank your Highness, Queen of *Suffolk*, and

Will tender your demands unto the Empire.

[*Exit Catus with his Romans*]

***Maeve***

My Lady, will the Romans endure this boast?

***Queen***

Is’t boasting to say I am a Queen?

***Brigid***

Dear Lady,

If *Nero* envies thee, then *Suffolk* falls.

***Queen***

If *Rome* will strike, we shall repel. Until

The Eagle shows its talons, such are sheep

That hide ‘neath regal feathers, nothing fearful.

[*The Queen exits*]

***Brigid***

When War walks uncontested, it will trample

As Giants, heedless of the wretches below.

If you do doubt Lord *Catus’* penitence,

Then why delay the razor on his weezand?

***Maeve***

I fear *Rome’s* vengeance.

***Brigid***

They’ll clout us for

Their Face as soon as for their Blood. Foul envy

Finds highest justice even in the Mud.

[*Exeunt*]

**1.2**

[*Enter Catus with a letter, his Captains following*]

***Dion***

My Lord, you cannot open up this Shame

To our Commander. Th’ Spear that cannot awe

Its enemies is hafted off, my Lord.

***Tacit***

*Paulinus*, sir, must learn the woman’s Treason.

***Catus***

Nay, all will suffer for my Cowardice,

If *Catus* quail beneath a widow’s huff,

Then all of *Suffolk* will be lost. The Lord

*Paulinus* is in *Wales*, there purging out

The Insurrection of those *Celts*. We must

Set *Boudicca* beneath our heel before

He should return.

***Dion***

Then prithee call thy men,

Lord *Catus*. Animals will rage until

They’re tether’d: let us tether those domestics,

And docilize their Contumely. Should Lord

*Paulinus* come to find thee groveling

Beneath his weight for aid, he’ll think thee less

Than womankind, below a beast, my Lord.

***Tacit***

‘tis human nature to hate those you have injured.

***Catus***

The master disciplines his pupils without

The leave of Governors. Then we shall chasten

Our hounds, lest they should rabid one another.

Presently assemble all our Hosts, and

I’ll shove their heads into the dirt, command

Them lick their wounds for my amusement. Go.

[*Exit Catus*]

***Tacit***

This is not *Nero’s* discipline.

***Dion***

The weak

Are disciplin’d, the Mighty will their Practice

Onto the cull’d.

***Tacit***

Thou speakest like a beast.

***Dion***

And *Catus* heeds this Monster’s counsel. Suit

Your fine Integrity to Power, fashion

Your Scruples to the manners of the Time,

And each by inch your manners will prevail.

***Tacit***

How could Integrity succeed, when cloak’d

And suffocated ‘neath the mantle of evil?

We’ll make this land a desert ‘nd call it Peace.

I fear the angel that’s upheld by the Devil.

[*Exeunt*]

**1.3**

[*Enter Scyllia and other Britons*]

***Scyllia***

The Romans’r coming. Rise up, you clods!

***1st Briton***

Nay we are safe within these woods.

***Scyllia***

You fools! The *Rome* is in our lands and we must counter them.

***2nd Briton***

Th’Empire’s been here centuries, what grief if more centuries creep in?

***Scyllia***

Would’st thou comingle *Roman* blood with ours? Would’st have them at our fires? Would’st have them eat our meats or mount our women?

***1st Briton***

No Roman would mount thee, *Scyllia*.

***Scyllia***

Just so; I’d smite him first. Rise up you queasy Celts, for *Scyllia* craves an army to repel those boot-slippers. Hoa!

***2nd Briton***

The gods have heard your plea; one comes.

[*Enter a Roman knight*]

***Roman***

Good *Britons*, pardon;

***Scyllia***

Yet gods and goats!

[*Scyllia withdraws*]

***Roman***

I have been carv*e*d from

My Century, I scarlet to admit.

Who here might weather me toward *th’Iceni*?

***1st Briton***

What mean you in *Suffolk*?

***Roman***

My Lord *Catus* hath sent us there, to what I wot not. Our Law is to obey.

***2nd Briton***

Are not arm’d, m’Lord?

***Roman***

I’m neither arm’d nor Lord. I’soothe I overslept my watch, but my good friend *Tacit* budged on the march. I might’ve been slain for dereliction, but now I’m lost within this *Lethe* wood. I mean no harm.

[*Scyllia emerges*]

***Scyllia***

Thou foreign fulminate! Take thou this and that.

***Roman***

Off, woman, off.

***Scyllia***

Nay never Roman settle in my lands so long as *Scyllia* draw breath! Off off!

[*The Roman retreats*]

***1st Briton***

You’ve beat him toward the stream.

***Scyllia***

And may he drown in it. You see *Scyllia’s* courage. An empire will I form of this base Wood. As I have vanquished that knight, I dub myself Dame *Scyllia* of *Suffolk* Wood. Who’ll squire me? None? Then I will quest my ascent. Meet me here upon the morrow; then shall I marshal all your strength and return the Woods to greatness. Off!

[*Scyllia exits*]

***1st Briton***

We must find another seat within this blasted Wood.

***2nd Briton***

And sooner, lest she make her promise good.

[*Exeunt*]

**1.4**

[*Enter Catus, his army following, the Iceni subdued*]

***Catus***

Bring out your slattern Queen, you caitiff curs,

Who cannot hold this Hovel ‘gainst the fist

Of *Rome*. If she will cower as a dog

Then we will cuff and curtail all her pack

Until her Shame compels her show herself.

[*The Queen enters, armed, with her children, followed by Dion and Tacit*]

***Queen***

Vainglorious thrall, that bellows with a voice

He pilfers out the throat of greater serpents,

Who cowers b’fore a Woman’s cry, then braves

Himself a King beneath the leather skirts

Of Empiry. Thou knelt, dissolv’d, before

My jaws, now stand to fall before my teeth.

***Catus***

Hold her!

[*The Romans disarm and subdue the Queen*]

***Catus***

Secure the Mud Queen’s children, take them off.

***Queen***

Give them Swords, you recreant shirker.

If men will cower then let the women War.

***Dion***

They shall be sworded, mann’d, and worn, my Lord.

[*Cassio takes the daughters off with soldiers*]

***Queen***

O Gods! release me, give me space to fight.

***Catus***

Art thou an Amazon?

***Queen***

Before such scant

And marrowless Mice, a babe is *Hercules*.

***Catus***

Then break thy chains, thou Giantess, Queen.

Out-roam *Rome*, thou o’re-painted Harridan,

And chasten with a manly weapon, not words.

***Queen***

By great *Andraste*, let me loose.

***Catus***

Break free.

***Queen***

By *Breeyid*, *Babd*, *Manannan*, let me free.

***Catus***

Call *Jupiter* or *Juno*; better still,

Cry *Nero*, pray for life, and he shall grant’t.

***Queen***

A dog begs.

***Catus***

Beg, then, *Bowdicca*, repent

Thy Heathen Pride, or we shall humble even

Thy wanton daughters for thy foul repletion.

***Queen***

Fight, *Iceni*! Death before submission.

***Catus***

The man who moves, yea even the woman who

Will give a baleful glare, is murderer,

For on that slight will Lady *Suffolk* die.

***Tacit***

My Lord, this murder will be answer*e*d.

***Queen***

From Hell, foul *Pluto* will upbraid you for

Disgracing your own race.

***Tacit***

My Lord, what will?

***Catus***

Ho, *Dion*! have your fill of plagu*e*d meats!

For the Empress of Dirt. We cannot bleed

The willful vitals from her cut, then scourge

Her yesty spirits. *Tacit*, bear the whip.

***Tacit***

My Lord, I cannot.

***Catus***

Art a *Roman*? Obey.

***Tacit***

My Lord.

[*The Queen is scourged*]

***Catus***

Cry out your gods. Name *Babbit* or *Victoria*,

Cry *Jupiter* withal. ‘tis *Nero’s* name

Alone will save you from those fingers, drab.

Cry *Nero’s* mercy.

***Queen***

I cry *Nero’s* death.

***Catus***

Then Death is granted thee.

***Tacit***

My Lord.

***Catus***

Thy Pride,

Thou Clay Queen, suffocates therein the dirt.

Thy worn and humble knees here eulogize

Thine Husband’s reeky corpse. The Lord of *Suffolk*

Bore *Rome* its proper cost, and he died well,

But thou, thou mungrel bitch, shall crawl before

Thy caitiff subjects as a collar’d dog.

Thy queendom dies beneath thy heated brow.

*Dion*, parade the Daughters’ subjugation.

[*Dion and the soldiers bring out Maeve and Brigid, rudely born*]

***Dion***

Here are the strumpet’s strumpets, Lord.

***Catus***

Nay, Ladies,

We sorrow for the piteous state your Mother

Hath visited on you. Great *Nero* weeps

For her low blasphemy. Your suffering

May end, on the whisper ‘f *Nero’s* name. What say’st?

***Queen***

Withhold your spirits, princely children. Stay.

***Tacit***

My Lord?

***Catus***

What shame will Celts endure? Then scourge

The Mud Queen more, until her spirit gives

Into the air, or they do offer theirs.

***Brigid***

Great *Nero*, please! No more.

***Queen***

You insubstantial patch.

***Catus***

Great *Rome*, Imperial, and unassailed,

Grants *Suffolk* mercy. Loose the girl, and let

Her stumble ‘midst her gawking subjects. Crown

Her with the dust of *Suffolk’s* boundaries.

Humility’s too much to bear for her,

Then let her Shame make paeans there for her.

A Queen who crawls is less than dirt. Come, away.

[*Catus exits, with the Romans*]

***Brigid***

Good mother==

***Queen***

No. No daughter mine, to sell

My Reputation for a drop of Blood?

Is *Boudicca* so drossy in your eye

That you surrender her for pity’s sake?

***Maeve***

My Queen, hast thou not eyes? Then smother them

Their fires, and let the Mermaid’s blood expurge

Itself for this.

***Brigid***

I prithee thy forgiveness.

***Queen***

No.

The daughters of Queen *Boudicca* beg not.

The daughters of Queen *Boudicca* pray not.

Forgiveness is not begg’d nor barter’d, it

Must be commanded. Stand.

***Brigid***

Oh play the Roman, strike me down. My form

Is hollow’d out, a threadbare cloak bereaved

Of sanctity. This Temple has been torn

Open, and pillaged of its Diadem,

Each sacred space hath been defiled, and only

The Miscretes out of Hell find comfort there.

Oh burn it down, pray purge unholy trespass

From out that Shrine, that was so late untrammeled,

But now serves as an idol to the Devil.

***Maeve***

For shame, forebear.

***Queen***

We’ll not forebear. Nor *Brigid*, *Maeve*, nor thou.

Should we here obfuscate ourselves before

Our families, before our friends and subjects,

We who suffer’d for them, who sacrificed

Our dignities that they might live? Forebear.

We are not sham*e*d, *Maeve*, poor *Brigid*, we

Are blesst today with a glorious Mission. Men

May crawl upon the Dust from morn to night,

In search of meaning for their toils, but we

Are granted from above the righteous End

Of blood, of beautiful Revenge.

I thank you gods, that in your merciless tastes  
And bloodless gall have murder'd me today;  
That I might raise again, a Revenant,  
And visit your own hate 'pon your own Children.  
I swear to you, swoln idols, pocky frauds,  
I swear by ev'ry particle of blood  
That floods this high incendiary frame,  
That I shall raven up each Roman corpse  
And strew their offal in Italian seas  
Ere I shall suff'r a mote of shame. And if  
I falter this, call me no Queen, no Celt,  
Proclaim me bastard; worse, a Roman Fool,  
Who smiling here prostrates to vicious Rule.

[*Exeunt*]

**2.1**

[*Enter Lord Suetonius Paulinus with a letter, and Cassio Dion*]

***Paulinus***

I’ve seen a lawful child, granted but a stick,

Turn heathen Tyrant, march about his mates

And strike ‘n’ whip a fearful ‘beisance out

From those he lately call’d his family.

What little Power, small accord it takes

To twist a common man to villainy.

There be such men upon this wand’ring Star

Will turn to savage Animals upon

Th’ merest instance, that we might think them practic’d:

And such a one is *Catus*, bruis*e*d ey’d

And envious of taller virtue, he

Would bellow to a flea for sucking blood

And tear its limbs asunder, ‘fore he crusht’t.

***Dion***

This flea remains, my Lord, and proves a Fury.

***Paulinus***

Ay, Britons ‘r furious, but discipline

Defeats the wilderbeast. This *Catus* lacks,

Or likely lackt: methinks your *Boudicca*

Will have him gutted ‘fore we enter *Suffolk*.

***Dion***

Th’Icini look’d to mince our forces well

Before I left to offer you this missive.

***Paulinus***

Then *Mercury* hath bless’d thee *Dion*, this once

The Messenger survives his bitter news.

***Dion***

My Lord, how shall we answer this?

***Paulinus***

We shan’t.

Lord *Catus* struck his hand into the fire,

And flames instruct as no Commander can.

Our forces will assemble as we have

In *Wales*, to render *Suffolk* safe. ‘til then,

Let sailors suffer th’ Storms that they have brav’d,

And take the Evils they so read’ly gave.

[*Exit Paulinus*]

***Dion***

Our Cunning is what makes us Men. The Gods

Have Pride, and power to defend it, but

We mortals live on rotten Ice, our power

As shaky and unstable as the foal

That stumbles ere it learns to walk. No Boast,

No Honor, nor Prestige may serve a man,

But Opportunity and Observation

Will lift th’industrious above bare sands,

Prove finer minions to our mortal station,

And humbly serve like Gods, our bold demands.

**2.2**

[*Enter divers Britons, severally*]

***1st Briton***

Is’t true, that *Boudicca* is slain?

***2nd Briton***

Nay, she was disgraced by the Romans.

***1st Briton***

The Queen of *Suffolke*? What could quell her haughtiness?

***2nd Briton***

Hold, here comes *Modred*.

[*Enter the Clown*]

***Clown***

A meteor will presage doom, and comets

Declare the Monsters, summon dragons up

To here devour and burn our homes to soot,

Or so the learn*e*d men of Briton say,

That ev’ry fracture in the Nighttime’s sky

Will force you out like ants and beetles, drive

Into a moony toil th’ sturdy thinkers,

Into a dreamy fiction th’Poets, and

To drink most ev’ry other ambulant

Who calls himself the chief of Heaven’s creatures.

What latest grand Apocalypse here drives

The sheep from out their folds? Go home and work,

Or else be idle; learn*e*d, foul or fair,

Be anything but here, a rowdy mob.

***1st Briton***

What folly driveth thee without, good *Modred*?

***Clown***

Thine.

***2nd Briton***

And where hast spent thy days this month?

***Clown***

Away.

***2nd Briton***

A way? Upon some pig path? Thou reekest of it.

***Clown***

Oh mighty *Morrigan*, here slay my mind,

For there’s no greater curse than Wisdom, blight

So vicious as to be a shepherd beset

By willful sheep. Dry up my brains and kill

My thoughts, that I might snicker at naught a thing

And think it clever when the gods crack winds,

Or clap a delver’s back for puppeting

A skull. To think imagination

Could render men to men, when nothing is

More beastly on this beauteous *Eden*. *Briton’s*

A Palace ‘f Pearls for Swine to dine upon,

A Tapestry for Moths, a land for Men.

***1st Briton***

I prithee, leave thy mad and mottled tongues, thou babbler. What’s the news from *Suffolke*?

***Clown***

We birth, we eat, we kill, we die, and some

Brave souls birth more, and they’re the fools. And yet

A tiny few, a baleful fool amongst

The baleful fools will try to scrape some news

Within this ancient wheel that turns, and turns,

That every crack and flaw returneth o’er

To damn our artless selves with our own features.

This is News eternal, though better folk

Than I’ve reported it ‘til now. But you

Enquire of *Boudicca*, I wager.

***2nd Briton***

Aye,

Deliver news worth telling, patch. The Seas

Are green, the sky cerulean, but we

Mere mortals cannot cadge a living from

Thy bloated wisdom, Puck. Speak truth, but purpose.

***Clown***

The path to *Boudicca* shall ne’er be found

By such as you, though she appeareth present.

***1st Briton***

And what’s that path that we shall never find?

***Clown***

Patience.

***1st Briton***

Ay, patience is at her end,

Now where is *Boudicca*, thou frowning goblin?

***Clown***

Patience.

[*Queen enters with her daughters*]

***Queen***

Will no more come?

***Maeve***

My Queen, I prithee use the gossips here.

If thou’lt unite the tribes, then here are those

From ev’ry neighbor. Speak to Commoners.

***Queen***

Who haileth from the *Trinovants*?

***1st Briton***

I, madam.

***Queen***

Return, and seek my cousins out.

***1st Briton***

Wherefore?

***Queen***

Because the Queen of *Suffolk* orders it.

***1st Briton***

I’m not of *Suffolke*.

***Queen***

Yet art in my land.

***Maeve***

My Lady knowest well, a *Briton* serves

Not shallow Degree, but worthiness divin’d

From action and purpose. Prithee, show the worth

Of *Boudicca* in argument, not Force,

Divulge the rightness of thy bold Intent.

***Queen***

Is’t come to this, that I who brav’d the whip

And dared command the gods take up my cause

Must bandy now with swain and swineherd simples?

***Maeve***

If thou would’st have their loyalty, then yes.

***Queen***

You men of *Briton*, suffer me to speak.

***2nd Briton***

Ay, suffer is the word, when *Boudicca* wails.

***Queen***

I will not mow, nor will I beg entreaties.

I come to you as neither Queen nor beggar

But fellow *Briton*. Though we of *Suffolk* lately

Have felt the harshest of gross *Nero’s* boot,

Yet all have sens’d the neatness of *Rome’s* shame,

To call us bridled cattle at the best

Of times, and cull our merest glance at worst.

Today sharp *Rome* hath fallen onto *Suffolk*,

Yet growing still within thy memory

Good *Trinovant*, lord *Justus’* grand display

Upon your sons and grandsires, even to

Th’extremes of *Cambridgeshire*. Your druids, learned,

And greater in discourse than any narrow

Academe out of *Nero’s* school, were felled

As hoary timber. *Norfolk*, yesterday

It seems when your good princess was defiled

As mine own were today. I tell you, *Norfolk*,

I do not boast to say if *Suffolk* had

Been made to suffer ‘s *Norfolk* were, then she’d

Command the fires of *Hell* to her Revenge

If gods and men were deaf, and here you hear

That she make good upon that pledge. Low *Essex*,

What shame is left to you when ev’ry grain,

Yeh ev’ry scintilla of harvesting

Is gather’d up by your Lord *Caius* for

His fattening. If he would fat himself

Alike a bullock, then constellations say

We sacrifice that boweless calf. The sin’f

Gross Pride is thrown into my teeth, always

As though to shame me. Chuff me not, for shame’s

For those that have no Pride, not those that are

Born up by it. I seek not to subvert

Your sovereignty as *Rome* attempts, nor to

Convert you to mine iron gripe. I sue

With worth to here command you all, with neither

The ego of the fool nor slaveborn pang,

But with the Right of Cause. Our lady Justice

Commands you heed. Our wailing children cry

That you obey my suit. And if your brains

Are mov*e*d not by sense, then let your Faith

Hold sway, for I will conjure any that

Will hear my call for veng*e*ance. The Gods

Rebuk’d my cries when my great Princesses

Were made to bleat as animals beneath

The *Roman* seat of shame, and there refused

T’defend their chast minds nor honor’d thews.

If men will prove as senseless as the Gods,

Then I will plead my cause unto the Devils

Who love Revenge beyond a mortal scope.

Then if you worry for my Soul, or ache

To keep our *Briton* free of cruel corruption,

(For my Heart informs me you would never welcome

The Enemy of all into our borders)

Stand here, and carry my command to all:

Purge *Rome*, our physic cleanses them from out

Of *Suffolk*, *Norfolk*, all of *Briton*. Stand!

***Britons***

Stand!

***Queen***

Stand!

***All***

Stand!

***Queen***

Fly out, and bring your vengeful spirits back to me.

***All***

Fly out! Fly out!

[*Divers Britons fly out*]

***Queen***

Come, daughters, we will take up swords and slay

The Vermin that believ’d a hound’s slaver

Could e’er translate a swan into a daw,

And if we cannot cut them down ourselves,

We’ll mince their corses in celebration.

***Brigid***

I prithee, mother, combat likes me not.

***Queen***

But you will like of it, and cleave unto

The battlefield as lice unto the rinds

Of those debas*e*d panderers. Thou art

No mouse, thou art a Princess, shalt display

The majesty of thine anointed blood

By spilling theirs, or else art none of mine.

We march to *Colchester*; whatever end.

[*The Queen exits*]

***Maeve***

We needs but stand, and let the soldiers work.

***Brigid***

O let me not seek out that poison that I

Now live to fly from. War without and war

Within will surely crack my skull, and I’ll

Be made, a sty in the aspect of our

Great Majesty. I hunger for my Death

As ev’ning’s respite from a laborous day,

But t’die in Infamy, I cannot bear.

***Maeve***

No more of Death. No more. I cannot spy

Into your mind, nor harmonize how sharp

Your suffering might echo mine. I daren’t

Decry my aches as foul as yours, though I

A likewise evil did endure. Your pains

Are yours alone; I cannot harvest them,

Nor weigh their value ‘gainst another’s worth.

But, Sister, suffer thou another day,

And ev’ry breath thou draw’st is surety

With me, that to your Honor I’ll prove champion.

‘tis fashion with some Celts and Picts to paint

Themselves for war, and make a monster of

Their mortal grace. This Art will our purpose serve.

*Th’Iceni* are embolden’d by our Queen,

And many women make defiance. I’ll find

Some Changeling in our ranks of thine own stature,

And paint her face with mine, and she’ll defiance

Proclaimeth in thy stead. I prithee fly

Into the woods and find the knotted elm

Where we so oft had played, and keep thee there

Until the battle’s won.

***Brigid***

And if it’s lost?

[*Enter Clown*]

***Clown***

Is *Saul* among the Prophets, for I rant

Amidst a throng of fools ecstatical,

Nay knaves mercurial, what madness, Love.

What other mania will clown a man?

What low derangement else will kill a man?

Will any fair delirium so poison

That we, like that insipid *Socrates*

Will reach out for the cup and say ‘tis good?

I once beheld a woodcock, drawn by nightshade

That had been dowsed with sweet perfumes, ensared

By a spring that broke and caught its legs. There fallen,

Dying, that bird did limp, defying death,

To reach that cloying smelling poison. Love!

And here come its most present victims. Look!

[*Enter Ester and Helio, two shepherds*]

***Ester***

Desist, poor *Helio*, thou cynic fry,

Thou dog’st with all devotion to a master

That longeth but to spurn thee further. Go.

***Helio***

The Sun is made a football by the Heavens,

That Angels will bombard him cross the sky,

And so will *Helio* beg to be bombarded

By thee, o *Ester*, prithee be no stranger to

My love, let us not live estrang*e*d, *Ester*.

My friend would not condemn me so, o *Ester*.

***Ester***

Thy friendship is an airy apparatus;

A spider that hangs upon a thread call’d Love,

And if that thread is sever’d by the Fly

Th’Spider falls and wails the Fly’s own cruelty.

I have no love of Spiders, so farewell.

***Helio***

I prithee let me prove thy champion.

A *Roman* have I slain within these woods,

A fierce combatant, mighty arm’d, and great

As twenty men. I prithee stay, and I’ll

Present his armor unto you, a token

Of passionate zealotry, my worship of you.

[*Exit Helio*]

***Clown***

His boasting’s higher than the Queen’s; I found

This Roman whom he speaks, and he

Was wounded by a Boar, lying naked by

A stream, his life there trickling out into

The waters as he moaned.

***Maeve***

Did’st kill the fiend?

***Clown***

Nay I did comfort to that wailing *Roman*.

He mewled *I die o Fool*; and I did comfort

To him, saying *A blessing, the sooner you’ll*

*Be free of wretched pain*. He sobb’d *I thirst*,

*O Fool*, and I did comfort him, *A blessing,*

*For thirst allays the pangs of hunger*. But

He whimpered more *I hurt o Fool*, and I

Did comfort that: *A Blessing,* I declared,

*For pain assures us we are living still*,

*I’sooth, there seems no separation between*

*One’s pain and life; it is as much to say*

I hurt *as say* I live*, so when thou moan’st*

I hurt*, as well thou moan’st* I live*, and if*

*Thou fearest death, then must rejoice at pain*.

And there he gasp’d, *I suffer fool*, and I

Did therein comfort most of all, *It is*

*Our lot*, I preached, *to suffer fools, but this*

*As well shall pass, and soon thy suffering,*

*Thine hunger and thy pain shall all away,*

*And dying too shall pass*. And thus he died,

And thus was he reprieved of suffering,

And thus a Clown gave comfort to a Fool.

[*Helio reenters, carrying armor*]

***Helio***

I pray you throw regard upon this trophy.

***Ester***

Dishonest taler, boasting both of love

And valor, sanguiny is far from you.

This man was done in by a pig, thou perjure.

***Helio***

Nay love, I smote him on the hillock side.

***Ester***

I’ll say it twice and done: ‘twas bacon-slain.

***Helio***

I swear by all the pools and bogs, by all

The hillocks, ev’ry log, and ev’ry sheep e’er o’er

I held command, I slew the man who wore

These arms, and all for thee.

***Ester***

Then thou wilt lie

Wi’the very sheep thou swearest by, thou false

Foreswearing fraud. Thou liar, lie with sheep.

***Helio***

I prithee take this armor as my token.

***Ester***

I’ll have it, sure, to leave thee naked here

And open to my scornful strikes. Begone.

***Helio***

O *Ester*!

[*Exit Helio*]

***Clown***

O Shepherd, tender to your sheep.

Fear not, good shepherdess, I’ll comfort him.

[*Exit Clown*]

***Ester***

Fair princess, take this low grotesquery

Away, it frightens me as though it were

Still occupied.

***Maeve***

Just so: dear *Brigid*, don

This armor, it shall shield thee from attack.

If *Boudicca* should fall, then pass thyself

As squire to that same fallen Roman, who sleeps

Nearby in some now redden’d stream. The shepherds

O’th’ Forest shall fear thee, and soldiers shall

Respect thy case.

***Brigid***

Then should I hunt that boar

Who slew the lately bearer of this armor,

And bear his fearsome visage on my shield?

Would that deformity defend me too?

Should we all wear our villains on our breasts?

***Maeve***

Queen *Boudicca* will not be lost. If I arrive,

Or other messenger should seek thee out,

Or if grand *Hell* itself erupts, by signs

As these shalt thou report our Victory.

[*Maeve exits*]

***Ester***

What man is true? They cower in a stream,

They gore a flying fool, or else they mock

A fallen man, or worst they boast and lie

And call it love. Be’t pig or clown or cautil,

Or worst a shepherd, they are monst*e*rous.

***Brigid***

Then I will don a monster’s mask, and dance

In their unholy sacraments, and shake

The friends who lately welcomed me. With this

I will repel all forays, all incursions

Will slide like rainfall from my curious

Disguise. I prithee *Ester* keep my secret.

***Ester***

I prithee prithee not, I weary o’ prithee.

***Brigid***

Then I command thee, hold thy peace, and mine.

[*Exeunt*]

**2.3**

[*Enter Catus with a letter, Tacit following*]

***Catus***

*Paulinus* here denies our plea for men?

***Tacit***

‘tis Time denies the plea, my Lord. The Britons

Are even at our thresholds, howling, blue

I’th’ face and longing to incarnadize

Their fearsome visages with noble Blood.

***Catus***

Is this the whimper of a cow*e*d dog?

***Tacit***

If you’d but heard my counsel, Lord

***Catus***

Art thou

Old Father *Time*, who here instructeth me

Of his designs and passages, and now

Wilt whine at me with *should’st* or *would’st* *have done*?

***Tacit***

Shalt call assembly now, my Lord?

***Catus***

Oh shalt?

Thou’lt level me upon the past or wheedle

Upon the future: what of here and now?

Thou dread lord *Time*, know nothing of the present?

***Tacit***

My Lord, I’ll call assembly.

***Catus***

Nay first arrange my flight to *Gaul*.

***Tacit***

My Lord?

***Catus***

I mean t’depart at once; make ready first.

***Tacit***

My Lord, your soldiers==

***Catus***

They are paid to die,

I but to rule. Be rul’d by me and go.

But first tell *Mutius*: bid the women bury

Our treasures beneath the earth, for th’ British hordes

Will burn our Worth to please their devil gods.

***Tacit***

I’ll do it presently.

[*Tacit exits*]

***Catus***

Ay, *Tacit*, go.

A thousand cats may bear a lion down,

Beneath such seas of filth will *Catus* drown.

[*Catus flies*]

[*The armies march*.]

[*Enter the Briton Army, Maeve and Beatrice among them, painted*]

***Maeve***

Good *Beatrice*, I name thee sisterly,

And’s no mean thing to call a Princess sister.

But keep thee silent, fight the fight, and thou

Shalt chiefly be renown*e*d in our songs.

***Beatrice***

Mine exercise will sing my praises, Lady,

Though all my sinews keep their counsel close.

[*Enter the Queen*]

***Queen***

I’ve spoken all, no need for vanity.

Ride out, expel from *Colchester* that Plague.

[*Alarums*]

[*Enter Catus and soldiers, beset by Maeve and Beatrice*]

***Maeve***

Where is thy rapacious *Dion*, craven?

Bring unto me that wouldbe conqueror,

That I might show Oppression’s consequence.

***Catus***

He’s with *Paulinus*, marching even now.

Best to retreat before their armies reach us.

***Maeve***

Then where’s thy whipping tapster, *Tacit*, coward?

***Catus***

Seek him in *Hell*, equivocating fiend,

For’s tepid, milk-warm counseling hath wrought

My doom. I never served but th’ Dignity of *Rome*.

***Maeve***

Ay, that’s my target, Sir, and we’ll reduce

Your Dignity to rubble, smear the waste

Of human folly on your self-anointed

Divinity. Now play the man, if you

Cannot become one, face your death headstrong.

***Catus***

Mine head is strong enough to take mine heels.

[*Catus retreats*]

***Maeve***

A recreant cur. Pursue, good *Beatrice*,

And I’ll seek out my mother. Go!

***Beatrice***

Ay, Lady.

***Maeve***

Reserves! fall in behind! and bolster up

Our failing left. The flanks must hold. Rally!

[*Alarums. Enter Tacit, pursued by the Queen*]

***Tacit***

I never meant such harsh indignity.

I prithee thy forgiveness, noble Queen.

***Queen***

I forgive only the Dead.

[*They fight*]

***Tacit***

Forever this, the Fate of the unsure.

[*Tacit dies*]

***Queen***

A poor repast, this only whets my stomach,

An appetite that but for noble blood

Could here be quenched. Call *Catus*! Come and die!

[*Maeve enters*]

***Maeve***

Your Highness, come, I’ll take you to the man.

***Queen***

I’ll elevate you holily for this.

[*Alarums. Catus and Beatrice enter in combat*]

***Beatrice***

About, you cautil.

***Catus***

Avaunt, I must to *Gaul*.

***Beatrice***

A meager epitaph, my Lord, but well.

***Catus***

Nay it was *Dion*, I but gave the order.

***Beatrice***

And I but follow orders. Fare thee well.

[*They fight, and Catus is slain*]

[*The Queen enters, followed by Maeve*]

***Queen***

Brave *Brigid*, slake thyself upon this meat,

And know that queenly blood persuades thy greatness.

***Beatrice***

You are kind, Highness.

***Maeve***

Lady, call the banners.

***Queen***

Nay first partake this sacrament, that in

This land *Rome* doth belong to us. *Brigid*,

Are you not Royal? Art not my daughter? Taste,

And feel the mighty Glory in our Blood.

***Beatrice***

Good mother, I thank thee for this holy gift.

***Queen***

Hoa! *Victoria Grand*! *Andraste* highest

Smiles down on us at last. Behold the body

That thought to hold the Britons underneath

His foot. This foot, now sullied with the dirt

Of a deserter’s tread. This fist, now mortiz’d

With deathly rigor, thought to mold me to

His paltry will. This head, so swollen with

His misbegot prodigity, now swells

With vapors, grave grown and preventative.

Now call the Britons gods: we hew our Justice

From out the warp’d nativity of Nature,

And where Degree might say *this must be so*,

We shape the Earth to our own symmetry.

From hence to *London*, *Norfolk*, ev’ry way,

Until that sickness hath been purg*e*d out.

Now march we on: *Paulinus’* forces ride,

We’ll overbear him as the volumous tide,

And prove what Nature’s worthier of Pride.

[*Exeunt*]

**3.1**

[*Enter Scyllia, rudely armed, with Brigid in the Roman’s armor*]

***Scyllia***

Thus, good *Phobus*, my brother in exile,

We find our ancient customs are abused

In this dank cove. Wherefore should courtly grace

Be shunted off like winter cloaks upon

A summer sunrise? A willow excuses not

Such trumpery. Th’ bog makes no apology

For curses, nor fee-scaping, nor petty duels:

Damn’d stuff. I’d raise a mob to batter such.

***Brigid***

My lady, is that not a treachery?

***Scyllia***

Make that good.

***Brigid***

To beat a batterer, or curse a curser, to cheat a cheater; by this our Evils will contaminate us. Vengeance is a poison. To slay a dragon, we must not a dragon become.

***Scyllia***

And what do cowards know of it? Good *Phobus*, dear *Phobus*, fool *Phobus*, thou flew from battle and was’t near bested by a pig. How can’st thou, a dirty Roman below all, preach to good Dame *Scyllia* of virtue? Pah!

***Brigid***

Thou sayest, Dame.

***Scyllia***

I do. I’soothe, both *Boudicca* and Lord *Paulinus* sue to me and seek my council. And I answer them *Make peace good nobles*, but they ignore my grace. Pah! I’ll batter them, and thence they’ll make a peace. The one so like the other, I could not bite one’s rind without tasting the other’s salt. Warmongers, pah! I’ll batter them true.

***Brigid***

Good Dame, let us rest here by the stream where once I lied.

***Scyllia***

Thou liest still, fearful *Phobus*. Rest is for you *Romans*, you doubtless clowns. Dame *Scyllia* is a laborer, pure in focus and work, Pah! We must an army raise, the greatest army, ‘neath my greatest guardianship. We’ll march upon those lowborn fools and tutor them to peace. Come!

***Brigid***

My Lady, Queen *Boudicca* has raised a force already from this wood, there are not fighter’s left, save deserters such as I.

***Scyllia***

Peace, Cherub, this is lying still. Yet still I love thee, simple *Phobus*. Come boy, we’ll sound our forces out. Hoa! Come all, hoa! Come, you tree-sprites, river nymphs, and stone goblins. Hoa! Come and answer your liege-lady. Hoa!

[*Enter Ester and Helio*]

***Helio***

Dear *Phobus*, pray forgive me that I slew you your lord.

***Ester***

Thou art not e’en a pig, thou prayerful prattler. Do not usurp a porcine office.

***Scyllia***

Where are the rest? Where are the sprites, the wild warriors and all the lusty men who call this forest home?

***Ester***

The *Leafy* Wood is empty, Dame, the Queen of *Suffolk’s* marched them off to war.

***Scyllia***

That fool; she means to eat the bodies of the *Romans*. *Romans* turn to bread upon the eating, this is holy law.

***Brigid***

I think it not so.

***Scyllia***

Flatter thyself not with Thought, fool *Phobus*. My thinking-bone is prodigious and has no equal in this haunted grove, nor pretender nor usurper. Where is the Clown? Where’s *Modred*?

***Ester***

We have not seen him, *Scyllia*.

***Scyllia***

I desire him not. Speak not to me of *Modred*, Pah!

***Brigid***

What would’st, Dame *Scyllia*?

***Scyllia***

I tell you we must keep the *Romans* out.

***Brigid***

My Lady, they have been here all our lives.

***Scyllia***

Nay fool, we must prevent them. We will wall them out. We must, my army, erect a wall of stones. We’ll shame lame *Hadrian’s* Wall.

***Ester***

What is that *Hadrian*?

***Scyllia***

Nay think him not, speak him not. *Scyllia’s* Wall shall overpeak’t, and centuries will break against its vastity. Bear stones, ye all, and tear out tree trunks by the stump, pile them load by load, and show my resplendent majesty to all. Alongs!

[*Exit Scyllia*]

***Brigid***

We play at warfare while another fights

And mayhap dies in mine own place. These Woods

Are like the *Lethe*: she erases woe,

And with it joy, and anger, pleasure, pain,

And any cognizant effect of life.

***Helio***

Fair *Ester*, what may I do to gender fondness in thine eyn?

***Ester***

Mine eyn. Mine eyn is fixed on another constellation.

***Helio***

What who? What love could dare compare with mine?

***Ester***

Great *Phobus*, lusty youth and fair contrite,

Who lets the winds of hist’ry guide his thoughts.

This soldier contemplates his fortunes more

Than ne’er relenting harping. *Helio*,

A doting girl might once have sigh*e*d for

Thine keen unbroken, but thy pitiful

Low lamentations turned me away,

And now I turn for *Phobus* altogether.

***Helio***

A *Roman* and a coward?

***Brigid***

I know naught.

***Helio***

I’ll warrant. *Phobus*, recreant, I stand

Lamenting for dear *Ester’s* love, and you

Have cuckold made of this good Shepherd. So,

I cast my gauntlet and proclaim you villain,

Villain, shapeless, soliciting scape-grate,

I challenge you, you vaunt, you fraud, you worm

That bores into the apple of mine eyn.

What say you: fight with me? Or fly again.

***Ester***

Ay spy the luster in his *Roman* eye,

He shakes but he will act the man for thee.

Good *Helio*, this valor stirs my blood

For thee. I prithee, labor for Dame *Scyllia*.

***Helio***

Hah?

***Ester***

Thou art so bold, so flesh’d, so tall and mighty

Thou should’st at once besmite this *Roman* on

The ground. I prithee, *Helio*, exhaust

Thy muscle with erecting th’Wall of *Scyllia*,

That meager *Phobus* prove an equal match.

***Helio***

I shall. And if I then prevail, thou *Phobus*,

Never again wilt thou accost dear *Ester*.

***Brigid***

Ay. So. And if misfortune lights on thee,

Then nevermore accostest thou dear Ester.

***Helio***

‘tis done! My love I will exhaust myself,

Expend my standing for the thought of you.

Of my Love I’ll build a Castle in the stream,

And I will shine down on it, my gentle fire

Caressing th’ roughy stones to teach them softness,

That Love will mose the rocks to water sprites

Who flit and sparkle in the Leafy River,

And glass their beauties up into the Sky,

Whose bashful blushes shame he is not thee.

Oh Ester!

[*Exit Helio*]

***Ester***

O blessed *Phobus*, fairer than the Sun,

I beg thy blessing, cant deep obsequies

For rescuing from that accursed son.

My smile, caress, my cheek, my kiss, these serve

As mute thanks for mighty supportment.

[*Exit Ester*]

***Brigid***

Hath she forgotten me? That begg’d her to

Seal up the secret of my Janusing?

Methought she meant t’repel poor *Helio*

By making love to *Phobus*, yet alone

She bears me more. What wonders are in store?

[*Exit Brigid*]

**3.2**

[*Enter Paulinus with his adjutant Cassio Dion and Mutius a Captain*]

***Mutius***

Then shall we fly again?

***Paulinus***

Nay; *London* town

Must be retained. Here I’ll make my stand,

This palace of the Moon shall stand for us.

***Mutius***

My Lord, the Briton’s runner comes, and flies

The white to treat with us.

***Paulinus***

Let him approach.

[*Maeve enters with Beatrice, the Clown holding the standard*]

***Maeve***

Our Queen, great *Boudicca*, *Rome’s* Bane, the Scourge

Of *Colchester*, the Wraith of *Watling Road*,

Will deign to speak with Lord *Paulinus*, if

He’ll welcome her with gentle deference.

***Dion***

My Lord, the mongrel army sends a brace

Of girls as herald here to chasten thee.

Cut off their heads and let that be thine answer.

***Paulinus***

The Lion cannot kneel before the Wolf,

But neither will he carnalize her servants.

Go, tell your Queen that I an unity

Compact with her until our treating ends.

[*Maeve exits*]

***Beatrice***

Diplomacy is not your man’s redoubt.

***Dion***

Great *Rome* need never couch its words to slaves.

***Beatrice***

Lord *Catus* spake as much; now he feeds the worms.

***Dion***

We all are wormfood but anon. Until

That morrow I will stand with any face

That circumstance allow. Alack, why do

I break comparisons with scullions,

And seek to match my wits with witless girls?

***Beatrice***

‘tis true, a fool’s one virtue is his silence,

Then here it must be publish*e*d: thou lackest

Even foolish virtue, to bandy words

As vacuous as thine own puft up pate.

***Dion***

Oh gentlewoman, would’st thou tilt at me?

I know thy worth, and have unhors*e*d thee

Before. Methought I’d broken thee, but now

Thou gins to whinny more. Doth seek another

Stern chastening?

***Beatrice***

My Lord *Paulinus*, is *Rome*

So ill bred, without discretion, that it

Will truss its strutting coxcombs in a Gentle’s

Attire? My mother’s Clown is fit to bear

Her standard, but he’ll not command our armies.

***Paulinus***

In *Rome*, a man may speak his mind, my Lady.

***Beatrice***

In *Briton*, a woman is free to answer it.

[*The Queen enters, followed by Maeve*]

***Queen***

*Paulinus*, see our strength cements but presently.

***Paulinus***

My Lady, *Rome* wishes not to barter threats

Nor gabble as gossips. Let us speak as heads

And counsel one another to the good

Of all our people. I confess at once,

I thought you but a wailing dam, who thrashes

And bellows at her husband’s loss. I fooled

Myself to see you Britons brutal, currish,

Without a sense to guide your bellicose

And sadly just contempt. And Centuries

Of Romans hath laid penance for mine Airs.

I was mistaken in your worth, and sorrow.

But Lady *Suffolke*, Queen of the *Iceni*,

You have repaid my foolishness so full

That e’en the heartless usurer would balk

The Bounty which you wager as amends.

Cannot we lay our hurts aside and barter

A Peace? Dig out some Dignity from our

Torn Hearts, that beat alike despite our griefs?

***Queen***

Thine usurer, that scrapey *Catus*, spoke

Refin*e*d words at me, but when the veneer

Of polity I fail’d to goggle at,

His paint*e*d veil he ripp’d asunder, sold

Himself a simple, ignominious beast.

What wilt thou do, when I refuse thy boasts?

***Paulinus***

I do not boast for Peace; I beg for it.

***Queen***

And when thy legions are made good, when *Rome*

Invests again our *British* quarters, when

*Paulinus* is strong again, wilt thou remain

As humble, peaceful, patient as thou art?

***Paulinus***

I wish for order, Lady, Justice.

***Queen***

Justice?

***Paulinus***

Ay Justice. It is given out that *Catus*

Is fled to *Gaul*. We hear the coward meant

T’abandon ‘s armies even as you rose

Before him on the day. But he is slain.

Your wronger has been punished.

***Queen***

Not by you.

***Dion***

Good Lady *Suffolk*==

***Queen***

Speak again and die.

That thing beside you, Lord *Paulinus*, ravish’d

My Princess daughters. Will you call it justice,

When th’ savage Centaur struts uncheck’d beneath

The Empire’s gasconade? Is that a Roman?

***Paulinus***

Do British soldiers not obey their Lords?

***Queen***

Addition that gross ghoul a Soldier? I say

That thing is but a stick within the mouth

Of a beaten cur. Relinquish me that stick,

*Paulinus*, Lord, and I will spare your *London*.

Your *Roman* citizens, and Britons that

Here bastardize themselves in *London’s* walls

Shall live. A stick shall vouchsafe countless lives.

***Paulinus***

I will not sell a man for his obedience.

***Queen***

But you will rape my Daughters for living?

They sinn’d by growing in my womb, and for

That crime that barb’rous Villain, there, that wretch

You suffer to there stand beside you, there,

That you will call your man, promotes the Law

By blistering the honor of a Princess?

Nay two! That Villain, there, beside you, it did

There multiply the gender’d odium.

Where men would fly from judgment, it, o it

Did duplicate the boundless degradation

Of its godless, fearless, blasphemous disgust,

And you will call this order? Call this law?

Is this the Apex of the Civilized?

Then I will proudly live a beast, but you

Will not, not live. Upon the sunrise I

Will wash upon your *London* town.

No man, no woman, child, no *Roman* born,

Nor any *Briton* dares to shake your hands

Shall live. Your walls we’ll breach, your statues break

As that deform*e*d *Claudius* was cracked,

We’ll tear your bodies, limb from limb, and break

Our march-enforc*e*d fast upon your sinews.

None are safe. Fly or die. Fare you well.

[*Exit the Queen and Britons*]

***Dion***

What else but airy blood from bloody heirs?

Methinks the moon-time hovers o’er our moon-town.

***Paulinus***

What is *London*, that I must die for it?

Is’t Honor conjures me to throw my life

Away for huts and stones? Is’t Dignity

That kills me here for dross? Or vanity?

***Dion***

The town is lost already, Lord. I prithee

Retreat and let the Barbarians ravage it:

Mayhap they’ll spend their spleeny tempers here.

***Paulinus***

May *Jove* forgive; I do not know. We fly.

*London* is lost. Strike up our banners, march

Throughout the night. And tell the peasantry.

***Dion***

My Lord?

***Paulinus***

The general must decide if they

Abandon their homes or face th’uncertainty

Of British mercy, ‘f she that made avowal

T’ cannibalize the flesh of all of *London*.

***Dion***

My Lord, we cannot hope to feed so many.

***Paulinus***

Tell them, *Dion*, then strike our camps. We march.

[*Exit Paulinus*]

***Mutius***

Shall we unto the Peasants, Lord?

***Dion***

No.  
The Savages of ancientry did spill

The blood of virgins t’satisfy their wild

And moody gods. And if you face a spirit

So splenative, so bent to vandalize,

That like the thundercloud or rabid dog

She’ll lash at anything, then any thing

Will serve to stand as bulwark ‘tween

Yourself and she. So *London* town will fall

That *Rome* might live. They say the world is savage,

But we more civilized may navigate

The evils Nature doth administer,

And turn those obstacles against pursuers.

My charity here proves my soul’s been bought

By Jove, for I will counsel all for naught.

[*Exit Dion*]

**3.3**

[*Enter the Clown with standard*]

***Clown***

*Awake, ye poor sinners, awaken*. ‘tis time

To prove ourselves *Rome’s* betters ‘n’ outgorge their lean

And ghastly appetites. Will they defame

Our royalty? Then let us deracinate

Their villagers, who surely prayed for them

If narry other sins can be put on’m.

Awake! Awake, ‘tis time to damn ourselves.

See how the rennish Sun salutes our fall

And grants us sulf’rous Light into our eyes,

The better to regard our inner monsters.

[*Beatrice enters*]

***Beatrice***

Quell thy querulous canting, *Modred*, lest I should quaff it in a horse trough.

***Clown***

I’d sooner swallow swill in sooth than eat the meal that’s laid out for thee, girl.

***Beatrice***

Wilt brave a Princess so?

***Clown***

It is the history of my kind to brave nobility, but thou art but a baseling like I. Thy stoop, thy unsure shoulders, thou standest like a mutt; I’d know.

***Beatrice***

Know well, but know silent. I stand in *Brigid’s* stead, for she could not endure the battle.

***Clown***

Is warfare by the carte? Or only for our betters.

***Beatrice***

I chose my way.

***Clown***

But not thy birth.

[*Enter Maeve*]

***Maeve***

Good – Good *Brigid*, why bandy with that Clown?

***Beatrice***

He was acockerelling, my Lady, my sister, and I did mean to silence him.

***Clown***

Thou hast prevailed. I prithee take this honored standard from my grubby grip; I see there are no standards here. If a princess will rut in filth, then I’ll return to mine own trough.

[*Exit Clown*]

***Maeve***

What simplitude, to bring a fool to War.

***Beatrice***

Ay many unnatural things are found in war.

My Lady, th’ Queen intends to march on *London*

Despite the scouts who tell us it is open.

What doth she mean from them who thresh and sow

And never held a sword?

***Maeve***

She will subdue ‘em.

***Beatrice***

How?

***Maeve***

As she finds best: come.

[*Exit Maeve*]

**Beatrice**

Swords do not speak, but batter ‘til they’re broken.

[*Exit Beatrice*]

**3.4**

[*Alarums within, with Londoners falling*]

[*Enter the Queen triumphant, with Maeve and Beatrice*]

***Queen***

Bring out the prisoners. Parade their shame.

[*The armies bring out prisoners*]

***Maeve***

Your Highness, prithee might we ransom those

The victims of our reverent acrimony?

The Empire casts away its Centuries,

But break apart their coffers, let angels fall

And then will *Nero* harken to a dog.

***Queen***

Speak not that name. The cry of *Nero* cost

Us dearly when thy cowardly sister bayed

For me. She laid an obloquy upon

Me only *Catus’* death could sancturize.

Speak *Brigid*, tutor *Maeve* to balk profanity.

***Beatrice***

You say, your Highness, I do not profane.

***Queen***

Wilt thou not sanctify each Roman death?

Or are they but the flies that die upon

The lashing of the horse’s tail?

***Beatrice***

Ay, Highness.

***Queen***

My brutalist confederate, whose ease

In warfare dwarfs thy gory sister, does

Me such a swellful service, why recoil

From praise?

***Beatrice***

Your Grace, I live to serve, not t’ vaunt

My greatness, nor to jubilate myself.

***Maeve***

Your Highness, may we ransom the prisoners?

***Queen***

You Londoners, blaspheming Romans, vile

Equivocators, that wear comparisons

Of Island and of Empiry, who’d call

Yourselves both *Rome* and *Briton*, cravenly

You shrugg’d beneath the Aegis of both nations,

And now you’ll reap a double penitence,

That both the reeving of the Romans and

The cruel debaucheries of *Briton* shall

Be visited upon your empty bones.

Where is the Lord *Paulinus*? Bring him here.

His blood alone will buy you all forgiveness.

Show me his toad, that villain Adjutant,

For ev’ry loveless torture I inflict

On him will spare you each another life.

***Maeve***

My Lady knowest the *Roman* army’s fled.

***Queen***

Pity. Then sever off the legs of men,

Tear off the women their breasts and feed them

Into their treach’rous mouths, sow up their fields

With lye, that never life may gender in

This gross morass of perfidy. Geld the men,

Unsex the women, gut the children, a Pyre

There erect and burn them living, so that

The stink of irreligious corruption

May waft so high and far that th’Emperor

Himself might choke on it.

***Maeve***

Your Majesty.

***Queen***

Peace, Maeve, no longer will I bear thy simpers.

***Maeve***

They are but peasants, Liege. They do not fight

For *Rome* nor *Briton*, but to till their fields.

***Queen***

They chose poor fields.

***Beatrice***

Your Highness, I obey.

***Maeve***

Good lady, cease this butchery. Art thou

A Cannibal, or artless Revenant

To banquet on the misery of lambs?

What have they done? that you would use them so?

***Queen***

They live on *Rome*. Good *Brigid*, savage them.

***Maeve***

Mother! Harken, and look upon your world.

*Brigid* is gone. ‘tis *Beatrice*, a troop

That I did surrogate i’ my sister’s place,

For she could not withstand the merciless

Great clangor ‘f war. These wo*e*d aspects on

Our faces, let your venomous eye inveigh

Upon and see the guileless brows beneath.

These common features, prevalent in their

Dispense, the haughty *Boudicca* paid no

Regard. A killer is she glad to title

Her daughter, regardless of the bonds that draw

Mine aching eyelets westward, home, that pull,

Like hooks, my ev’ry breath again to home.

***Queen***

Thou spawl, thou wincing winglet that would beard

Me here before the subjects of my power?

***Maeve***

Thou beardless brute, wilt agonize on station

When I report thy daughter is disprised?

***Queen***

I have no daughters: only generals:

The loyal and the faithless, the religious

And th’ diabolical. Thou imp, impious,

Capricious, false betrayer. Thou wilt teach

Thy mother==

***Maeve***

What mother has no daughters?

***Queen***

The mother and commander of the Britons,

Who overthrows the armies of the Devil

And even Death she topples and destroys,

And thou, a petty trickster, lecture me?

***Maeve***

You are a Corpse arisen, without Heart

Nor liver, any feeling left in you.

If you can look upon these lives and let

Consanguinous scents that others would persuade

To mercy, drive you to enlargement, arouse

You to such villainies that boiling goblins

Would quail to look upon, thou art indeed

No mother, not to me nor *Briton*. Furies

Without their cause are airy blood, are base

And purposeless in evil as the quake,

As senseless cruel as *Rome’s* Volcanos, and

Vainglorious as the tidal floods of *Neptune*.

***Queen***

Do not persuade me from my senses, girl,

Lest I forget my blood and put thee down.

***Maeve***

Then put me down for speaking, murder these

For birthing in the bounds of *London*. Thou

Art but a bloodless, fleshless carcass if

You build this idol you propose, this icon

T’ carnality, this fetish to the Wolf,

This cataclysm to the human race.

It will not, cannot serve for any justice,

And I’ll outhowl the Wolf, outscream the Wind

Itself, if that alone will hesitate

Your unguious talons.

***Queen***

I am thy mother.

***Maeve***

Prove it.

Show Motherhood to these who suffer for it.

Show care to she who begs for it, or spare

A mother’s thought to thine own daughter, pining

In a hole in wretchedness. These hearts are ours,

Can no more choose their birth than I, who fell

For thee. I beg thee, *Boudicca*, do not tear

Their Hearts asunder, ravish the sanctity

O’th’ Churches of their bodies, nor the Shrines

Of their precarious minds. Do not, my Lady.

To violate the body, dominate

Th’authority united in singledom,

To take the flesh that we might pledge to others,

To rend the Heart that we might offer lovers,

T’invade that lone dominion that all persons

Gods grant the sanctity to keep and say

*This Sanctuary, stronghold of my thought,*

*This Farmhouse to my tender sentiments,*

*This brave Commissioner to mine intents,*

*This Guestright I might ope to whom I choose,*

*This Treasury uncopied, without peer,*

*This artful mimic to divinity*

*That stands alone, sans parallel, is mine,*

*No other’s*. None may challenge this and call

Themselves mortal. Art thou a woman, Queen?

Or art a barbarous beast, invasive worm

That will infect her innocent betters’ forms?

***Queen***

You, *Maeve*, I here dismiss. Go comfort that

Betraying sister you have lionized.

If you return into my sight, you die.

***Maeve***

I thank thee, kindly Mother, for shielding me

From evil. I could not endure the sights

From which you rescue me. Farewell, your Highness.

[*Maeve exits*]

***Queen***

*Beatrice*.

***Beatrice***

Ay, Highness?

***Queen***

I’ll sack the town. You see to the tearing of the citizens.

***Beatrice***

Your Highness. I obey.

***Queen***

Let Lord *Paulinus* die upon your lips,

For him you suffer without pause today.

For ev’ry Roman thought you did not curse,

You’ll feel the sting of agony. Fling up

Your cries and howls, that *Rome* itself may hear,

And ev’ry breath to scream will feel as dear.

[*Exeunt*]

**4.1**

[*Enter Helio, solus*]

***Helio***

My pleasures turn to pains beneath this hard

Unyielding legendry. Why must a Briton

Here imitate gross *Hercules* his labors?

Fair *Ester’s* crueler than the bootless Seas

To force these shackles on mine husbandry,

Yet prouder will I prove upon the beating

O’that coward, that *Phobus*. He flew from battle,

Yet *Ester* flieth to him? Nay I will fly

Upon that unmann’d cur, I swear it now.

I sweat’t now, iwis I’m made to toil.

[*Enter Scyllia with Brigid in her Roman garb*]

***Scyllia***

I’sooth, there is no shame in seizing ‘pon his secret parts. Any vantage to be got is vantage, and dishonor is forgotten long before the scandal of defeat.

***Brigid***

Your pragmatism’s epicurean in scope.

***Scyllia***

I would I’d say *You flatter me*, for you are kind to say’t, yet ‘tis true and thus no flattery, and so I blanch to say you see my greatness right and so are wise.

***Helio***

*Scyllia*, wilt thou be second to this pewling coward when I have built thy wall for thee?

***Scyllia***

Vaunt, braggart! You’ve built not half a mile, and scarce above my knees. What purpose is encased in such a mealy wall, as mealy as yourself, forgotten varlet.

***Helio***

Oh gods, will all despise me?

***Scyllia***

Yes.

[*Enter Ester*]

***Ester***

Good *Helio*, art ready for the duel?

***Helio***

I’m worn to guts.

***Ester***

Then so thy victory is the braver.

***Helio***,

Ay, so. Where are the swords?

***Brigid***

Queen *Boudicca* has taken all the iron to the front.

***Scyllia***

Here be two boughs that I have cut for you; scarce switches in my mighty grasp, but sure good for the two of you.

***Helio***

Nay thou did’st not cut these. I did shear them for the leveraging of the wall. Hast thou pulled them from it?

***Scyllia***

Nay I cut them myself.

***Helio***

I made these marks upon the base. ‘twas I.

***Scyllia***

Nay I cut them, now take you both your weapons and go to’t. But first must hear the rules of fine engagement.

***Helio***

I hear a rumbling. Hath my wall collapsed? Oh wall!

[*Helio exits*]

***Scyllia***

‘tis my Wall, scrapey scum! Mine I say!

[*Scyllia exits*]

***Ester***

Mean’st thou to see this brawl completed, Sir?

***Brigid***

I fear I have no love for e’en this,

The pageantry and artifice of war.

***Ester***

Nay *Phobus* I have just the thing. Discase,

Give o’er to me thine armor; quickly, come.

***Brigid***

I have no love of it, and so obey.

***Ester***

Fair *Phobus*, thou art baiting unto sin.

***Brigid***

What mean you, bait?

***Ester***

When I espy thy form,

Like a sylvan woodnymph, dancing in the glade

Beneath the gentle pressure of the Sun,

Mine eyes are mov’d, and they make motion to

Mine heart, and heart affects the arms, and arms

Would fane caress that elfin elegance,

That presently makes gentle testimony

To nature’s soft divinity.

***Brigid***

*Ester*,

Your eyes, your heart, your arms, and all appliance

Of lusty appetite are yours. I do

Not bait nor beckon, go your ways. Would you,

Who strong rebuttal made of *Helio’s*

Unsought for arguments, now play the Sheep herd

Upon your friend?

***Ester***

Fair *Phobus*, answer me==

***Brigid***

I do. An unwished answer’s answer still,

And if you seek reply, then there it is.

If will not heed it, then you seek no answer,

And any who will steal what is refused

Is promise-breaker, a thief and savage coward,

Religious only in her falsity.

***Ester***

Forgive me *Phobus*, my deceit, for I

Did pull the wool o’er mine own eyes, so ready

Was I to be made fool. I am sorry, friend.

***Brigid***

We are all fools, and fools forgive. Now come,

What’s your device?

[*Enter Scyllia and Helio, still armed*]

***Helio***

Oh sweet and lovely Wall, mine hours are all in vain.

***Scyllia***

A clod, a simple mote of dirt, my steady hands alone are proper carpenter.

***Helio***

Thou did’st pull the boughs, thou baited bear.

***Scyllia***

Enough thy driveltry.

***Helio***

Whither *Ester*?

***Ester***

She feared the sight of blood and so fled to the stream. Come, give me my weapon.

***Scyllia***

*Phobus*, boy, thou stand’st renewed in my gaze. Hath thy lip ever such a curl in it?

***Brigid***

‘tis time to do it.

***Scyllia***

And who art thou to order *Scyllia*?

***Brigid***

I am *Brigid*, Princess of *Suffolk*. I

Will stand in judgment of this duel. Now turn,

And face you each the other.

***Scyllia***

Majesty.

***Brigid***

Stave off, you pustule.

***Scyllia***

Thou thankless tat. I have Queen *Boudicca’s* ear, and Lord *Paulinus* too. They’ll discipline thy vaunting pride. Thou art no princess, Pah! Thou art some pretender.

***Ester***

She is *Brigid*. I saw her with her sister *Maeve*.

***Scyllia***

And what do *Romans* know of it, Pah! Th’art as lying as thou art flying, *Phobus*. Pah!

***Helio***

When do we fight?

***Ester***

Thou worsted-waisted wart.

[*She beats him*]

***Helio***

Beaten by a *Roman* coward.

***Ester***

I am nor coward nor *Roman*, thou pate-scrape. Thou art beaten by a shepherdess.

***Helio***

*Ester*?

***Ester***

She.

***Helio***

Where then is *Phobus*?

***Ester***

In the river or dead or nowhere.

***Helio***

Then who hath claimed thy love?

***Ester***

I have claimed my love. I love myself so fully there is no room for any other. Thou’st heard mine answer so oft it must reverberate within thy volumed skull like church bells. No, no, no. I am not thine, nor never would be, nor have no wish to be. And if thou wilt not listen to a maiden’s wish, I’ll don this helm again and batter thy snotted brain unstuck.

***Helio***

It is unstuck already. I am sorry, *Ester*.

***Scyllia***

Is *Scyllia* alone honest? Is *Scyllia* alone certain? Is *Scyllia* alone complete? What lonely certitude, perfection is. Then must I, like the lamented hermits, walk alone and unannalled, awash in a sorrowful sea of purblind fools. I thought to save you all, but your own clownery hath here rebuffed me. I have wasted all this time on lowly wretches, alas. You shall never see me more. I go, and no pleading nor praying nor begging may summon *Scyllia* back. I now depart, the gods will weep upon the fortune lost to you, what I might have done for you. I retire, and list the very trees bewail my parting. I remove, and the ground doth shudder to feel me go. I exit, and all the winds will flap and clap, applauding what I tried to do, what might have done, what greatness might have been. Farewell.

[*Exit Scyllia*]

***Brigid***

Come, let us to the *Lethe* stream, and wash

This wasted labor from our bones. The gross

And empty fantasy of romance now

Is done, tomorrow’s work is left to us.

Yet gentle sleep, as loving as a caress,

A babbling brook, as soft as whisper’d paeans,

The shaded Sun, as warm as any smile,

Will serve in place of our illusions wild.

The Earth herself has love enough for all.

[*Exeunt*]

**4.2**

[*Enter Paulinus and Cassio Dion with a letter*]

***Paulinus***

That *Boudicca’s* a savage Cannibal.

How could she dare t’impugn the honor *Rome*

Possess? Would even you, rapacious fiend,

Make sport of mincing Roman carcasses?

I tell you true, o *Cassio*, I sold

Myself a fool, to sacrifice poor *London*

That you might live, but now I re*a*lize

You are the worthier.

***Dion***

You flatter me,

But hear me: *Nero* contemplates a greater

Commission, means to send more Centuries

To bolster up your cause.

***Paulinus***

I like this news.

***Dion***

If thou art made to suffer underneath

The skirt of *Nero’s* greatness, Lord, or scoffed

A girl behind th’protection ‘f other Worthies,

Thy governance is ended. Our power lives

In show, foul *Boudicca* displays. Thou must

Of thine own action forge a Badge of Greatness,

And strength must be unfolded, unyielding, and

Impervious to question. If she will raven

In indiscriminate appetite, then thou

Must answer like in cruelty or in might.

I prithee meet her in the field again.

To flee to better ground might be proclaimed

A firmer strategy, but t’fly to others

Is t’pay with false-forg’d coin, to don a gown

Of dignity upon a form of shame.

‘tis better t’die than t’bear th’dishonor of

Submitting to another’s bold ostenses.

***Paulinus***

We shall regroup near *Birmingham*. There are

Good Hills and Dales i’th’ Western Midlands. There

We’ll turn position to preferment. Although

Still overwhelm’d by hording overgrowth,

Mayhap the vanity engendered by

Her victories will counsel her to press

A poor advantage. Pride hath been condemned

In any ‘neath the Gods. Let us then pray

Those heavenly hosts conspire to punish that

Presuming Fury ‘nd cleanse her of her sin,

Or that she doth not prove divine herself,

That godhood be not earn’d by unearthly din.

[*Exeunt*]

**4.3**

[*Enter the Queen with Beatrice, her armies following*]

***Queen***

Good *Beatrice*.

***Beatrice***

My Queen.

***Queen***

There dig the pits.

***Beatrice***

Your Highness, I am but a changeling, schooled

In all obedience, and practice gifts

Adroit proficiency in slaughter, yet

In open warfare am I still a child.

But Highness, is it wise to meet our foe

Hereat a hillfoot? Higher ground would serve

Us better, yes?

***Queen***

With discipline and place

They have claimed betterment. We have rebuffed

Their vaunted claims at each embattlement.

***Beatrice***

But why refuse so open an advantage?

***Queen***

The Empiry’s a cankerous infection,

That each our stabs discharges slimy worms

Upon our land. Our ev’ry victory invites

A greater complaint upon the once unsullied

Integument of *Briton*, chaste as snow,

But now defiled the more with each our lancing.

Defeat will not dissuade, then we must stun,

Disturb and mortify those windbag braggarts, irk

The Emperor beyond all pale of show

That he will needs admit *I have been bloodied*

*By girls*, lest he should say, *I have been beaten*

*By girls*. We’ve made a mewler of this Lord

*Paulinus*, but his pride persuades him still.

Upon that hill he shall be shamed so full

And without sign of clearment, he’ll withdraw

And beg abandonment from *Rome*.

***Beatrice***

Ay, lady.

[*Horns. Enter Paulinus and his adjutant*]

***Paulinus***

My Lady *Boudicca*.

***Queen***

Lord Quintain, hoa.

***Paulinus***

My Lady, I would speak as proper commanders.

***Queen***

Become one, then, thou King of ravishers.

***Paulinus***

I do not dare to name myself a king.

***Queen***

A King is chosen by the Gods, that here

He might administer their Justice on Earth;

‘tis well, then, that you are no King, my Lord,

For you, *Paulinus*, birth no justice here.

***Paulinus***

Nor would you bring forth opportunity.

My Lady, law demands that you present

Your grievance ‘fore your Governor for judgment.

Upon the instant that I learned of that

Disgracement foisted on your people, I

Withdrew from *Wales*, so fortunately won,

And with a windtorn speed to shake a ship’s,

I flew to *Suffolk’s* borders. There, I found

All government destroyed, all Law thrown down.

Was this the Justice you had sought? to make

A monument to glutt’nous Wrath? an idol

To your hot Vanity in place of cool

And reasoned Judgment? Nay, I cannot call

This justice, only lowest savagery.

***Beatrice***

Who lays with dogs and whines of fleas is a fool.

Thou bayer, Reason’s mountebank, thou ape

Of Law. Thou art no murderer, thou suest,

Only friend to murderers; art no Thief,

But only champion of thieves. Thou art

No slav’ring ravisher, but art their shield:

The might by which they justify their evil.

A champion of slaves will die for them,

So thou shalt die a Champion of panders.

***Paulinus***

My Lady, let us speak more privily.

I invite you to my tent in safe protection,

Where we might prove a compact, end this strife.

***Queen***

Your *Catus* forc’d my child to beg, yet when

She begg’d he there forebore. I’ll Roman prove

And let you beg in safety in your tent.

[*Exeunt Queen and Paulinus*]

***Beatrice***

The Greeks would wage war for a noble wink. We Britons are debased indeed, that we will engage for men’s harlotry alone.

***Dion***

Haught not at me, thou regal strumpet; I have brought thee low.

***Beatrice***

Forever have I been low, thou degenerate louse, thou equivocating parasite who’ll preach whatever feeds him. You look upon my face and do not know me.

***Dion***

Thou wert, indeed, one as much the same. Thy shape thinks me the elder, but thy petulance breeds o’th’ younger. Which art?

***Beatrice***

Neither, brock. Look on the face of *Beatrice*, a foundling that (for all her commonality) lives chaste of you. And if thou think’st to salivate upon my humble name, I will reverse thine hopes and an impiercement make in thee.

***Dion***

What fortune, girl, hath the Mud Queen offered thee?

***Beatrice***

Hatred, against the wealth of Empiry. Against the might of Empiry. Against the presumption of Empiry.

***Dion***

What hath we done on thee, thou spirited lass, to earn thine enmity?

***Beatrice***

That is mine. Thou hast no right to it.

***Dion***

I speak, and therefore claim the right.

***Beatrice***

That is why thou deserve’st to die.

***Dion***

Are we to rhyme the hours then, lass?

***Beatrice***

Nay, we are killers forged by fortune. Take you your breath, whiles y’have it still. The nobles talk today; the soldiers die tomorrow.

[*Exeunt*]

**4.4**

[*Enter Paulinus, the Queen following*]

***Paulinus***

Your Daughter is a fiery Apostle.

***Queen***

She is my general, no child.

***Paulinus***

My Lady,

Might I proclaim the Sky above without

You wheedle on its fine degree?

***Queen***

Hath th’ sky

Ravished my daughters? Then speak it how you will.

***Paulinus***

Where are your daughters, Lady?

***Queen***

No more Queen?

When first you heard my name, ‘twas *Suffolk’s* widow,

But then I humbled you and it was Queen.

And now I chasten you again, ‘tis Lady,

What addition will I earn tomorrow, Sir?

***Paulinus***

Death.

***Queen***

Aye, Death they’ll call me certain, Sir.

***Paulinus***

You have, my Lady, humbled me, and *Rome*

Itself is made to stoop, but from that low

Advantage I have learned posit*i*on.

You set your armies at the bottom of

A Hill. Those wagons that surround your scattered

And unsupplied armies hold no trebuchets

Nor even armaments. I see children,

Grandsires and ancients, nursing mothers, babes,

There sitting in full view of archers ‘nd phalanx.

***Queen***

I’ve made great show of trouncing you; so much

That all the Britons wished to see the sporting.

***Paulinus***

You’ve spat on me and stamped me with the rude

Signage of rape. Think’st thou that I will blanch

From mowing down thy families, that gabble

And mow my soldiers?

***Queen***

Justice is so fragile,

It collapses with thy petty certainties.

You play the patient father in the earshot

Of your pet panderer, but where your words

Are recorded by Gods alone, your Patience

Is torn apart by callow testiness.

***Paulinus***

I have endeavor’d to speak thee fair, my Lady.

***Queen***

Are you return’d, o *Father Justice*? Come

To blandish girls from their unruliness?

Your Law is a façade that covers savages,

Asylum for debauchers, world for men.

Behind you I see a thousand men, epochs

Of foul oppressive Ogres, their clubs adorned

With olive branches, there engrav’d with doves.

We have made love to th’olive branches, knelt

And sworn obeisance to those insubstantial

Presentiments, unknowing, urg’d abuse

For centuries, and thanked the beaters for’t.

I am no god, but nor are you, nor *Rome*,

And I have cleared the olives from mine eyes.

If you love Peace, then fly. If Justice, die.

If neither, stay, and I will Vengeance serve you.

***Paulinus***

What Justice can I here supply, your Highness,

When your wronger ‘s dead. He hath been slaughter’d, Lady.

***Queen***

But not by you.

***Paulinus***

I was too late.

***Queen***

And men have died for less.

And women, too. O women too, my Lord.

***Paulinus***

Is there nothing, nothing that you will take

In recompense?

***Queen***

I’ll take your life, My Lord.

***Paulinus***

You are firm, my Lady?

***Queen***

I have always been.

***Paulinus***

I sorrow circumstance divides us; I

Have never met another of thine ilk.

The name *Paulinus* bore me up in youth,

And th’blessings of Industry and Calculation

Set me upon a pedestal of fortune

But early in my trials. And there I’ve been

Condemned to look upon a brood of low

And unwise clouts, unpracticed in thought

Or discourse. Few have challeng*e*d mine armies

Before now, but none have so engaged my high

And ancient faculties. In this, before thee,

I’ve been alone in all regards. I grieve

Alone that circumstance hath set our two

Great minds at odds against the other.

Would I had quelled the Welsh an instant sooner,

Or thou had’st been more patient in thy Wrath,

What Unity we might have here erected?

Instead we stand apart, inagnated.

Had I but mind to see or eyes to think,

Or thou a Moment’s hesitat*i*on,

We might have stood together in this Law,

Laughing at this Alone we now withstand.

***Queen***

And soon thou diest alone.

***Paulinus***

So shall we all.

Farewell, Queen *Boudicca*.

***Queen***

*Paulinus*, farewell.

[*Queen exits*]

***Paulinus***

What is this Law, that proves me Champion

To those I’d sooner grind beneath my feet,

And purpos’d adversary t’she who equals

Mine own Devotion? What’s civility,

When it makes Statesmen into butcherers

And ravishers to Captains, Queens to beasts?

Where is the virtue in devotion to

The lowest Evil? I can see no Right,

Then I’ll obey my Law, and to it Plight

My life and love, my senses and my Sight,

And call it glorious Day, though it be deepest Night.

[*Exit Paulinus]*

**4.5**

[*Alarums*]

[*Enter Dion in the fighting*]

***Dion***

Turn on the mothers and grandsires! Cut down the children! A feral dog is gutted without mercy or remorse, so slay the British curs!

[*Alarums*]

[*Enter Beatrice in the fighting*]

***Beatrice***

Remove! Remove the wagons; save our children! And every spoil falls to he who culls the Lord *Paulinus*! And twenty-thousand spoils to the hero that brings me the Adjutant!

[*Enter Dion with soldiers Gaius and Mutius*]

***Dion***

That is her lieutenant.

***Gaius***

A girl?

***Dion***

You are a mighty arm, *Gaius*; gall us not with your trim tongue.

***Beatrice***

Plight me your life, *Dion*, and I will spare your men.

***Dion***

Your wit’s deserted you, but mine shall not.

***Beatrice***

Have our wits been bandied out?

***Dion***

There is nothing more to say.

***Beatrice***

Then let the ravisher dare name himself a murderer as well. Come on!

[*They attack her, wounding her mortally*]

***Dion***

Permit me ease thy passing with a kiss.

***Beatrice***

Death’s kiss is more welcome, thou vildest trash,

More clever than a stump, and braver than

The flinching sheep. Would’st ease my death? Then go.

***Dion***

And never was a gift more ruefully giv’n. Alongs.

[*The Romans retreat*]

***Beatrice***

*Andraste*, foul deceiver, what a wicked world

You’ve foisted here upon me. How can Devils

So prosper on your own seat of power? Must I

Now pray for guilt that I might then confess?

Or will you blunted Gods now play the Roman,

Here stamp in petty petulance and call

Your tantrums Justice? Justice; how I hate

The word. It is a clod of clay, that we

Might mold to any use, yet in the heat

It turns as shapeless as a coward’s legs

And proves as meaningless as Honor; Justice.

[*Enter the Queen*]

***Queen***

My child! Arise and speak to me! My child!

***Beatrice***

Ah *Boudicca*, my Queen, my *Breeyid*; Spirit

Of Fire that fill’d my sinews with a liquor

That might have drawn me to the world’s end,

I’ve follow*e*d thy Passion to the Gates

Of Everafter without all Regret.

Thy Fury is a heady drink, and I

Did relish it, and so reprove thee not.

But I am not thy child. I am a foundling,

A bastard-born, a nameless thing, and form’d

To keen and eat and kill and die. Thy daughters

Are gone from thee; thy Pride hath chased them off.

Th’art right, so Right in thy Revenge, but all

The Truth and Pure Right in this world cannot

Replace a sister’s smile, cannot give milk

To stand a mother’s caress, nor it cannot

Make any zealot Daughter. *Brigid* lives,

And *Maeve*, my Lady, lives. If ever thou

Did’st honor to my leal zeal; if ever

My pure devotion drew a tender thought

From thy so rightly rigid bosom, reward

My duty then, with love unto thy Daughters.

I never knew a Mother’s love, and if

My piety should disabuse them both

Of that which I could never call mine own,

Then mine own angry spirit would pursue

Myself through all of ancientry, until

The final Starfall were snuff’d out. Good liege,

I beg thy love not for myself, but for

Thy so lamented Daughters. Find them, still.

[*Alarums*]

***Queen***

Retreat! We are undone; fly! Fly!

[*Retreats*]

**5.1**

[*Enter Brigid and Clown*]

***Brigid***

We soon may be expelled out this Wood,

The wayward armies of our fallen Queen

So press and swell into our Leafy home.

Where should we flee this maligned providence?

***Clown***

You’ve only dallied in a mungrel’s life.

We, ev’ry day will drift as leaves within

A tempest stream, and when we find a bank

To rest, the bores and weasels scrape upon’s,

There root up in our brief retirement,

And shunt us back into the blasty waters.

You’re soft to recognize our folly, Lady,

But soon your royal blood returns, and you

May root upon the fields and trees again.

***Brigid***

I sorrow for misfortune, ‘tis no folly.

***Clown***

Nay, ‘f we were wise, we’d have been born to wealth.

What fool elects his parentage to poverty,

And prays for humble birth? And yet we must,

For here we are, and all religious men

Well know, that we receive what we deserve.

***Brigid***

I do not like this Roman piety.

***Clown***

I drape my scoring in the robes of *Italy*,

But this religion walks in every stripe,

It knoweth ev’ry master, sits on all

Men’s tongues, and even I, should fortune smile

Upon mine abject shoulders, would recant

And sing the clarion of Fortune’s Justice.

I have seen fools do it. Ev’ry slave will seek

T’outhumble th’other, and ev’ry King as well,

And each will seek to vaunt the other’s virtues,

That all would have themselves be gender’d out

Tumultuous storms as but a speck of sand,

And from that sand created themselves an Isle

Of endless Majesty, alone. I’ve seen’t,

I’ve heard’t, the selfsame tale, rolls endless on.

It is a lie that’s enterain’d by all,

So all will entertain our own. A Lie,

That makes us what we are: all several.

[*Maeve enters with various Britons*]

***Maeve***

Lamented, loved Sister, wilt thou take

This long’d embrace?

We are reversed

So heavily, it weighs as a crown of lead

Upon our Sovereign’s brow. As all the Stars

Wink out beneath the canopy above

But to be smothered out by Night’s encroachment,

So hope and dignity despoil in us.

Men sell their souls for wealth, and stamp about

This earth, painting their thievery as conquest,

But we, o sister, we have sold our hearts

To deviltry and reap’d but nothing out’t.

***Brigid***

Our Mother knows this?

***Maeve***

Ay, she is the foul

Progenitor, the scoring beast, ay she.

***Brigid***

Then we must comfort her.

***Maeve***

Nay *Brigid* she==

***Brigid***

She’s most in need of blessing. Romans tell

Us Gods are greatest by their birth, that each

Degree remov*e*d from the first must bring

Some imperfection to its mold,

And so in Nature: th’ child’s imperfect copy

O’th’ Father. So a child is. But we

Are grown, and we have wit to see. We might

Become the standard bearers of our Mother’s

Courage, her wisdom, strength, yeh e’en her pride,

But not her hatred nor her condemnation.

Let not our vengeance fly and call it justice.

If thou hate hatred, conquer it with Love.

***Maeve***

Thou art stronger, then, than I.

[*Enter Boudicca*]

***Boudicca***

Give room, good Britons.

***Brigid***

Mother.

***Boudicca***

I say give room. There will be time.

[*Exeunt, manet Boudicca*]

***Boudicca***

*Prasutagus*, thou uncut gold beneath

The earth, equivocation was thy creed,

And whilst thou liv’d it held as prison gates

Against our persecutors, there holding out

Their fierce incursions, yet mewing us within.

But maugre my chafing to’t I did not

Undo your will, you warden of my heart.

They did.

They scribed the rules and forc’d obedience,

And we did nod as though we smiled to slave,

And even this, e’en ev’ry tolerance

Quench’d not their slav’ring lust. You gave, they took,

Again, again, and ev’ry particle

Look’d small when you did offer it, but each

Was a mountain ‘gainst what we were left. Yet still

We sighed and let them atomize our worth.

But when they sought your Name, apportion’d your

Warm corpse with Lord, with dead, with nothing, I

Could not withhold. What doth a pauper hold,

Except her Name, that she hath nourish’d all

Her life, in wealth and dearth? When happy cheat

Or des’prate straight doth rear its head, our Name

Commands integrity, that meager bodies

Obey the airy graces of our thoughts,

And draw our actions out the mire of greed,

There setting us upon a heavenly seat

That we ourselves have built with our good Name.

What other could I do? to them that rubb’d

Their salivatious rot into our Face?

What other could I do? to them that tore

The honor from our future’s guarantors?

What other could I do? to them that smile

And shrugg’d their shoulders at our Name’s despoil?

I’ve sold my soul to Evil and from it grew

A lichyard from my family’s house. Yet I

Would prove a Devil a thousand time before

I sold my Name to they that thought to steal

My Worth. In this, at least, I’ve no regrets.

[*Enter her Daughters*]

***Maeve***

By your leave, Grace.

***Boudicca***

Would mercy have quelled them, *Maeve*?

Would kindness turn *Behemoth* away?

***Maeve***

I do not know. I am not, Mother, wise,

Nor kind, as even now my anger bids

Me cast your Failure in your throat. ‘tis done.

You are my Mother. I have loved you in

Your high resplendence, set upon a throne

Of carv*e*d wood and stone, commanding state,

Commanding men, commanding e’en our enemies.

Y’ were made to rule, my Mother, not to love.

But I cannot begrudge what’s given me,

When many others’r given so much less.

***Boudicca***

I fought the *Roman* Empire for your love.

***Maeve***

For Pride. For Hate. But love cannot make Meat

Of men. Nor women. No. But I forgive;

My benediction, unasked, unearned, I offer

To thee, my Queen, but first my Mother.

***Boudicca***

My Daughter,

Go fetch me *Modred*, and have him bring his Wands.

***Maeve***

I go, Queen.

[*Exit Maeve*]

***Boudicca***

*Brigid*, the organs of sweet Husbandry

Rest not within these arms. For that I crave,

Forgiveness. Fire will burn away our Sins,

And truly my Spirit scalds and melts within.

*Paulinus* doth pursue us here, and you

Must scatter to the halos of our World.

To you and *Maeve*, to Mercy ‘n’ Wisdom will

I gift my Throne. Within the Leafy Wood

I’ll die or thrive as absent Gods desire.

For weal or woe, I was not made to run.

***Brigid***

Mother, I shy from violent butchery,

But never will I shy off tyranny,

And *Maeve* hath rival*e*d your warfare. Though we

Recoil at your debauch, we hunger more

To see the villainies of Empiry

Prevented or cast down. I never shall

Relent to butcher evil Thoughts nor to

Resist the Means of wickedness. This is

No end to your revenge: it is the birth of’t.

[*Maeve enters with the Clown and his Wands*]

***Clown***

I’ve wands enough for ev’ry lady, hoa!

Would’st have me mose them into snakes, t’infect

The *British* Isles withal? Or would’st attend

The Sheep as Welshmen with their staves and sticks?

Or dost desire I cast them on the Chance?

For ev’ry lady is there purpose, and

For ev’ry purpose is there wands, my lady.

***Boudicca***

Trick your sticks, Puck, play shepherd

To th’ way’rd ewes *Tomorrow*, *Then*, and *When*,

And bound them to my sight. Toss, ye fool.

***Clown***

Ay, you are right, my Lady, t’ bleat of ewes.

The roosy Elder flies, and tells me *Rome*

Is at our gates. The Beth’s more fool than I,

And sings rebirth, but see the Yew, alike

A grasping Lord upon the roadway, straddles

O’er all. A proper Lord, this Death, to spread

His girthity upon each speaker, plaster

His abs’lute Yew upon us all, good Lord.

He is a bum bailey and wool cad, Death,

Who slips the law and yet will eat upon’t.

And now he’ll dine on you, my *Boudicca*.

The Yew makes a ewe of you, Queen *Boudicca*.

Nay do not touch the Yew, ‘tis poison, lady.

***Boudicca***

Then I’ll have’t; the last of my commands

Is over Death himself; I will not bow.

***Clown***

No bowing to a bough. Y’are in good fooling.

***Boudicca***

Off, *Modred*, give my people Truth.

***Clown***

My Ladies.

[*Exit Clown*]

***Boudicca***

My daughters, split my Crown between you both,

That ev’ry Celt will heed my word through you.

They meant to sever me, but like the Hydra

My will is double born from out mine end.

Play shepherd to our disbound people, call

Them up together ‘n’ lead them on to safety.

***Brigid***

Where is safety?

***Boudicca***

That I know not.

***Maeve***

Mother.

***Boudicca***

Give to me thy woe’d aspect, and with

This handy art receive my benison.

Destroy, survive, or fly to ponder, take

My blessing for’t. I ever was myself

In spite of all. Do you the like. Now go.

[*Exit Daughters*]

***Boudicca***

As th’ Foundling did before me, I will guise

My Face, that none will take great *Boudicca’s* Name.

***Dion*** (*offstage*)

Cast you North, and we will West.

***Boudicca***

My final minutes shame me still with Masks.

Sweet Nature, thou wilt caution our endeavors,

This evil Yew thou bitter made, to warn

Us ‘f what I now embrace. The Sun is warm,

The Winter harsh; why did’st thou make Love cold

To me, who had most need to give ‘nd receive’t?

Love could not poison more than Vengeance did,

And ‘twas sweet Pride, more succulent than feasts,

Betrayed and better’d me to bitter Death.

My Gods, my King, my Daughters, I pray my Spirit

Will cast the Love I cannot speak on you.

In this I give what even t’ Death I deny.

[*Enter Dion, Gaius, and Mutius*]

***Mutius***

There’s one.

***Dion***

You’re wooded faced, but Beatrice is dead. Who are you?

***Boudicca***

I am a Briton. Face me alone, you cowed eel.

***Dion***

Take her.

[*They fight*]

***Boudicca***

You flee-bit curs, victorious in cowardice.

***Dion***

Victorious. Ah, Action. Let nobles carp of blood and name, for I’ll do what I will and want not justice for it.

***Gaius***

She falters, unstruck.

***Boudicca***

I am poisoned. The Leafy Wood will claim my life, not you.

***Dion***

Hah hah, a *Briton* plays the *Roman* clown. This doggit speaks nobly. There may be glory in her slaying. Lay on!

[*The all fight, with both being wounded*]

***Dion***

I am hurt!

***Gaius***

My Lord?

***Dion***

Nay run and tell *Paulinus*: the *Briton* flies West.

***Boudicca***

*Briton* is everywhere.

[*dies*]

***Mutius***

Are y’well, my Lord?

***Dion***

I am wounded, you catchpole. Where is *Paulinus*?

[*Enter Paulinus with Gaius*]

***Paulinus***

*Cassio*, what is’t?

***Dion***

The *Britons* head West.

***Paulinus***

Who is that?

***Dion***

Though she was noble spoken, she was but

Some nameless cur.

***Paulinus***

A prouder thing than we.

If they are fled, then we must still pursue.

Disdain the Law, Queen *Boudicca*, when Law

Disdaineth thee. And if we ever see

An equal Purpose in Civility,

Cry *Save the Queen*, and know that we name thee.

Strike all our forces West: uncivil though

Our enterprise remains, I’ll see it done.

Our story will be writ by our own Hand,

And Damn’d Forever, will seeming Virtue stand.

[*Exeunt*]

FINIS

The Passion of Boudicca

*Personae Dramatis*

Boudicca, *Queen of Suffolk*

Maeve, *her Daughter*

Brigid, *her Daughter*

Paulinus, *Roman Governor over the Britons*

Catus, *his Arbiter*

Tacit, *a Roman Captain*

Cassio Dion, *a Roman Captain*

Beatrice, *a Briton Foundling*

Scyllia, *a Braggart*

Helio, *a Shepherd*

Ester, *a Shepherdess*

*A Clown*

*Various Britons and Romans*

THE PASSION OF

Boudicca