

VIOLENT ATTACHMENTS

Frank J. Morlock

VIOLENT ATTACHMENTS

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VIOLENT ATTACHMENTS

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- CHARACTERS:

- ACT I

- Scene I. A roadway that gives on a park.

- ACT II

- Scene I. A few weeks later: Lady Easy's sitting room.
- Scene II. The same, some months later.

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VIOLENT ATTACHMENTS
or
A PEEP INTO THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

A Short Comedy
By
Frank J. Morlock
C 1984

Note:

This play was inspired by an anonymous 18th century novel.

Etext by Dagny

VIOLENT ATTACHMENTS

CHARACTERS:

Lady Easy
John, her footman
Lady Pam
Lord Fawn, a fortune-hunting Lord
Count of Monte Verde, a pretended Count

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ACT I

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Scene I. A roadway that gives on a park.

(Enter Lady Easy and her coachman, John. Lady Easy is very distraught.)

Lady Easy

Oh John, John, I shall expire!

John

Yes, your ladyship.

Lady Easy

Can the fool do nothing but repeat what I say? Well, this confirms me in the fatality of dreams. But, we must submit to fate. Well, don't just stand there like a bumpkin. See if you can rectify what's amiss, John.

John

The coach can be fixed, but it will be impossible to set things to right in less than three hours, m'am.

Lady Easy

Oh, but do try to hurry. I am on the most important journey of my life, John, and this horrible accident may prevent me from meeting my fate in Hertford, John. Think of that, John.

John

Very somber, your ladyship, very somber.

Lady Easy

But I must patiently submit to my fate. I am deservedly punished, for I might have avoided this ghastly accident by attending to what my dream predicted. (declaiming)

Heaven made us agents free to good or ill,
And forced it not, though He foresaw it all.
Freedom was first bestowed on human race,
And prescience only held the second place,
If He could make such agents wholly free,
I'll not dispute—

John

Hem, if it please your ladyship, I couldn't help it, 'pon honor, madam, I couldn't and as for disputing with your ladyship, I hope—

Lady Easy

You misapprehend me, John, it was not with you that I was disputing—

John (looking around in bewilderment)

As you please, my lady, but—

Lady Easy (irritated)

I was quoting Dryden.

John

Yes, your ladyship. (after a pregnant pause) I think, your ladyship, we are in luck—we cannot be far from Lady Pam's.

Lady Easy (back to her quoting)

I'll write whatever time shall bring to pass
With pens of adamant on plates of brass.

John

M'lady?

Lady Easy (noticing him)

Eh? What would you have, John?

John

We cannot be far from Lady Pam's.

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Lady Easy

But, we are totally unacquainted, John. Still, I have longed to meet her—I've been told we resemble each other very much. And she's a distant relation, or something, so, perhaps, it would not be too much of an imposition, if—Yet, I would not deviate one iota from the strict rules of polite fashion, despite my distress—so, I think it better—

(Enter Lord Fawn.)

Lord Fawn

Good afternoon, your ladyship. (bowing) Perhaps I may be of some assistance. I saw the condition of your coach. As mine is in good repair, may I offer to accompany you wherever you like.

Lady Easy

You are far too gracious. If you could give me a lift to Lady Pam's, which is not too far from here, I should be eternally grateful.

Lord Fawn

Lady Pam? Why, we are on the edge of her estate. Indeed, I was going thither myself, to pay her my respects, as I am an ardent admirer of hers, though she treats me despicably—If I am not mistaken, that is she approaching—

Lady Easy

What a stroke of luck.

Lord Fawn

Wonderful, madam. Here comes the dear creature now.

Lady Easy

Why, you must be Lord Fawn?

Lord Fawn

I confess it, madam. And, by your looks—your resemblance to Lady, Pam—you must be Lady Easy.

Lady Easy

You've hit it.

(Enter Lady Pam. She has a dog and a monkey with her.)

Pam Lord Fawn, your servant.

Lord Fawn (simpering)

Lady Pam, may I present someone most desirous of making your acquaintance—the adorable Lady Easy.

(Lady Pam and Lady Easy bow to each other and then hurl themselves into a furious embrace.)

Pam

My dear, I am superlatively happy in this favor. You'll pardon me, my lord, but Lady Easy's goodness in this visit is so immense, that I positively believe I shall not be able to speak a syllable for a month.

Lady Easy

Dear Lady Pam, this happiness is entirely on my side; such a celestial accident—if an accident of the same kind was always productive of such a felicity, I should entreat my stars to permit my coach to break down every day of my life.

Lord Fawn

But, ladies—

Lady Easy

Excuse me, my lord, I must entreat you to grant me permission to intrude so far on your lordship's patience as not to lay myself under the odium of impoliteness by a remissness in returning a suitable thanks to dear Lady Pam. But I am in such a flutter that I positively conceive that I labor under the same predicament as your ladyship, for I really do not believe I shall be able to utter a single sentence till the sun has made another revolution; but beg your ladyship's fertile imagination will form the finest turned sentence that ever fancy wore—and—oh, I am speechless—

Lord fawn But, ladies—

Pam

Scene I. A roadway that gives on a park.

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My lord, your pardon, I would wait upon your lordship immediately, but dear Lady Easy is so ravishingly kind; so immensely polite, so enchantingly condescending, so, so, so—Excuse me, my lord, I really have not the power of speech. (aside to Lord Fawn) I don't like her very much—

Lord Fawn

Dear ladies, if I might—

Pam

In good time, my lord, but politeness in excess is a debt which demands instantaneous payment, and I am very punctual in keeping up my credit in decorum, therefore, dear Lady Easy—bless me, how infertile my tongue is today—I have not a thought worthy of such excellence, nor an expression to convey my sense of your goodness. I'm stupid, absolutely dumb.

Lord Fawn (bowing)

Ladies, I humbly take my leave. I'll look to the coach. Come, John.

John

Yes, your lordship.

Lady Easy (curtly to Lord Fawn)

My lord, your most obedient—(effusively to Lady Pam) Dear Lady Pam, you've got a most enchanting monkey. (brusquely to Lord Fawn) I humbly thank your lordship for—(about to expire, to Lady Pam) What's your monkey's name, my dear? (to Lord Fawn) —all your lordship's unparalleled favors. (turning her back on him to look at Lady Pam)

Pam

His name's Jacko, my dear. (indifferently) Adieu, my lord. (to Lady Easy) He's a diverting creature. (to Lord Fawn) I hope your lordship will let me see you again very speedily. (to Lady Easy and the monkey) Poor Jacko, poor Jacky, Jacky.

Lord Fawn

I'll do myself the pleasure of waiting upon your ladyship very soon. In the meantime, ladies, I kiss your hands. (bowing and leaving) (aside) I've never been so insulted in my life.

(Exit Lord Fawn and John.)

Lady Easy

My lord. What a silly man. Indeed, your monkey is so ravishingly pretty, I could kiss him. But, pray, what's that lord?

Pam

A suitor of mine, my dear.

Lady Easy

You couldn't intend to marry a man so lacking in ton?

Pam

Heavens, no. I'd rather marry Jacko.

Lady Easy

Indeed, I prefer him myself. But, my dear, are you fond of poetry?

Pam

I'm fond of painting, my dear.

Lady Easy

It's all the same—they both delineate the affections of the soul. Celestial! So you love painting!

Pam

Oh, immensely!

Lady My dear Lady Pam, how happy we shall be in the congeniality of our ideas. Sir Francis once wrote to me that “I had no occasion to speak, for my eyes glanced my meaning.” He even said I could “speak a look.” But we were not destined for each other; I was cruel, extremely cruel; were you ever cruel, my dear?

Pam

My dear Lady Easy, can you entertain so mean a thought of my education as to think me capable of being

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otherwise? No, my dear, I delight in cruelty. It's the very food of my soul. Did you know I was very near losing my life once, attempting to mortify Miss Manly?

Lady Easy

How, my dear?

Pam

I'll tell you, my dear. Miss Manly was fond of hunting and had a white riding habit in which she was greatly admired. I had a much more elegant habit and was destined to eclipse her had not my horse thrown me. The wretch enjoyed my fall with the greatest satisfaction. But it was the vexation that nearly put an end to my life. But, thanks to youth and pride, I recovered and am, if possible, more cruel than ever.

(Enter John.)

John

We've set matters right at last, m'am.

Lady Easy

I'll tell you what I've been thinking, John. As the accident was poetical,—you for the future shall be called Phaeton.

John

Whatever your ladyship pleases.

Lady Easy

John, could you fancy the horses had fiery manes?

John,

Yes, if I saw them on fire.

Pam

Pshaw, the fellow's stupid.

Lady Easy (angrily)

Go to the coach and wait for orders.

John

Yes, m'am. (exit)

Lady Easy

I think, Lady Pam, I was not misinformed, we are really very much alike; indeed, you have a trifling advantage over me with respect to beauty. (she takes out a mirror and looks at herself with great satisfaction, arranging a patch and a curl)

Pam

Dear Lady Easy, do not sacrifice your merit to your politeness—nor give another that which is so justly your own due. (primping) I am tolerable. But it was given to you, my dear, to be irresistible.

Lady Easy

Excuse me, my dear, you have the power to make your lovers slide.

Pam

Slide! Slide! (offended) You mean they slip away?

Lady Easy

Oh, no.

Beauty like ice our footsteps does betray,
Who can tread sure on the smooth slippery way.

Pam (mollified)

Ha, ha, ha. Oh, in that sense.

Lady Easy

You've got a pretty dog there, my dear.

Pam

Scene I. A roadway that gives on a park.

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Yes, my dear. Beauties are universally allowed him. He's been more caressed and courted by my lovers than even a statesman's pimp.

Lady Easy

He's an engaging creature.

Pam

Oh, he really has some sentiment.

Lady Easy

Indeed!

Pam

I'll assure you, some of his notions are very delicate. Why, he quite stopped Lord Moral, who passes for a wit, but who in reality is no better than a fool, from arguing with his usual impertinence that one half of the paintings bought for originals are only vile copies. My dear Guido began to yelp and bark in such a manner that he absolutely stopped my gentleman's insolent volubility—which together with my contemptuous attitude obliged him to retire in confusion.

Lady Easy

Sensible creature! You surely have a great value for him.

Pam

Oh! My love for him is inconceivable. He's the dearest, sweetest, loveliest little puppy. (she squeezes him and the dog yelps)

Lady Easy

But, what is that strange ribbon?

Pam

Oh, my dear, Guido's a knight. It is but a short time since I had him installed with great pomp in our large hall—oh, you must see our large hall, you'll die—and let me tell you, he bore his investiture with becoming decency.

Lady Easy

Pray, of what order is he knight?

Pam

Oh, my dear, the order of the painted gallery. But, would you like to hear his ancestry?

Lady Easy

My dear, you will oblige me infinitely.

Pam

Guido is descended from a family as ancient and renowned as any the four-footed race can boast of. He is a direct descendant of Towzer, a large bull dog belonging to Cardinal Wolsey when he was only a butcher. You smile, my dear. Perhaps you think it impossible for a butcher to become a minister of state?

Lady Easy

Excuse me, Lady Pam. I had no such thought, I assure you. Indeed, I have observed some ministers of state have turned butchers of late years.

Pam

To proceed. Towzer fell passionately in love with Miss Sleek, a bitch belonging to Henry the Eighth.

Lady Easy

He had so many bitches.

Pam

Their nuptials—for they were regularly married—were productive of a fine puppy named Sly. From Sly a train of statesmen regularly succeeded until the days of Oliver Cromwell. One of Sly's successors named Scarem belonged to Cromwell himself, and barked so loudly in the cause of liberty that any person who dared even mutter a syllable in favor of prerogative in his presence was sure to lose a piece of his leg.

Lady Easy

Wonderful.

Pam

Scene I. A roadway that gives on a park.

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And more wonderful, Scarem begot Supple, who gave himself up to the intrigues of court, and it is from one of Supple's private amours that my dear Guido is descended. He's the sweetest and best-tempered puppy existing. (squeezing him) Yeowww!!! He bit me!

(Lady Pam faints.)

Lady Easy (thundering)

John! John! John! Oh, where is the fool?

(Enter John hurriedly.)

Lady Easy

Where have you been, John, all this time?

John

Nowhere, my lady.

Lady Easy

You must prepare a horse with all possible speed.

John (leaving)

Yes, your ladyship.

Lady Easy

Why, the fellow's stupid. Would you go without your message? You must be as expeditious as possible. Hurry!

John (leaving)

Yes, your ladyship.

Lady Easy

Wait! You see poor Lady Pam is almost expiring. Let me see, what was I going to say? Oh, yes, be as quick as possible.

John

Yes, your ladyship. I will go immediately.

Lady Easy

Where is the fool hurrying? Stay and take your message with you. I did not tell you what to go for, did I?

John

No, your ladyship.

Lady Easy

No? Then, where would the simpleton be running? You must saddle a horse, I tell you—and when that is done—mount it, do you hear me?

John

Yes, your ladyship.

Lady Easy

Then, don't stand kicking your legs about and biting the corner of your hat in that manner, but mind what I say to you; when you have mounted the horse—for you must make an expedition—for the lady is positively dying—and don't founder in the mud.

John

No, your ladyship. There is no danger of that. The roads are not muddy.

Lady Easy

Incorrigible animal, be silent! The roads are not muddy? What incorrigible and ridiculous ideas the fool has. The roads are always muddy. But mind, you must make all the haste you can to London, and do you mind me.

John (frustrated)

Yes, your ladyship.

Lady Easy

A fiddlestick cannot hold your tongue. Take notice of what I say. When you get to London, you must tell Clytemnestra—

John

I don't know any such gentleman, your ladyship.

Scene I. A roadway that gives on a park.

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Lady Easy

Egregious blockhead, be silent. "I don't know any such gentleman." Truly. Why, stupidity itself realized it's no gentleman, but my waiting maid, Molly, under her poetic name. You must tell her to look in Cyclops's eyes and send me a small thumb vial which she'll find there—for nothing else will be efficacious toward the recovery of this lady.

John

Yes, m'am. Who is Cyclops?

Lady Easy

Who is Cyclops? Fool! Cyclops is my dressing table.

John

To be sure, m'am.

(Exit John.)

Pam (groaning)

Ohh!

Lady Easy

Will you live, dear Lady Pam?

Pam (getting up with assistance)

Yes, I believe so. Yes, I will live.

Lady Easy (clapping her hands and jumping up and down)

How wonderful! How celestial! Lady Pam will live.

Pam (fanning herself)

I think I am myself, again. But, I am so impolite. I've totally forgotten to ask you the reason for your journey, and whither you are bent.

Lady Easy

You must know, my dear, that I'm a very odd creature, immensely whimsical. (confidentially) I love dearly to pry into futurity.

Pam

Aren't you scared?

Lady Easy

I'm absolutely frightened to death of almost everything I discover. Terrible!

Pam

Terrible.

Lady Easy

If I could make things happen according to my wish I should be the happiest creature existing; but when I want a thing to happen one way, I find a prediction informing me it shall happen another. Which you know, my dear, is enough to give one the spleen.

Pam

When I have a great inclination to do what I should not, I never once consult the stars, for fear they should forbid me.

Lady Easy

What a charming thing it would be if one could always enjoy one's wishes, and follow one's inclinations and yet never suffer for it.

Pam

My dear, it is totally impossible for a pretty woman to do wrong. A woman has only to fancy she is right in order to be so. All the men allow it, and they are held to be very wise.

Lady Easy

My dear, I shall adopt your maxims. They seem so replete with conveniences.

Since angels feel, whose strength was more than mine,

T'would show more grace, my frailty to confine—

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Well, to get back to my journey, one day I found a paper in Cyclops's eyes. Cyclops, my dear, is my name for my bureau.

Pam

Very poetic.

Lady Easy

I think so, too. We are so like-minded. Well, the paper must have got there miraculously, for I always keep it locked and my woman, to whom I have given the poetical name Clytemnestra—

Pam

Divine inspiration—

Lady Easy

—swore that she knew nothing of it.

Pam

What a mystery! What did it say?

Lady Easy

It said, “Celinda,” that's my poetical name, “will be unfortunate in her nuptials, unless she married Torrismond—the only man on earth destined to make her happy. He will be, tomorrow, in the bulwark of the head of a beast famed for swiftness between the two horns.”

Pam

This is immense.

Lady Easy

Now, my dear, this prophecy being to me totally unintelligible rendered me almost distracted. I read it backwards and forwards, and every way, but I could make nothing of it. Then, John told me he had a relation who was a fortune teller. My coachman is of gypsy stock. Had I not gone to see him, I should never have resolved the matter.

Pam

Then, he was able to explain it?

Lady Easy

Easily. The place signified in the prophecy is the castle of Hertford. The Saxon word from which Hertford derives its name means “hart” or hare, a beast famed for its swiftness. The bulwark of the head is the castle because the town is shaped like a capital Y. The name Torrismond is probably the adopted or poetical name of the person meant.

Pam

So easily explained. This fellow must be a prodigious fortune teller.

Lady Easy

Oh, my dear, he is the best I ever met. For, though he had told my fortune twenty times over, he never told me the same thing twice. Anyway, I immediately ordered my coach and was posting thither when I met this accident which has been the cause of procuring me your agreeable company.

Pam

And, if you should meet the person named in the prophecy, would you marry him, my dear?

Lady Easy

Oh, yes—we must submit to fate you know, Lady Pam. But as I shall be sure of him—for he can no more act against the will of his stars than myself, I shall use him immoderately ill. For I think it the most delightful amusement to use a lover that dotes upon one to distraction—like a dog. Believe me, dear Lady Pam, I've occasioned the death of four hopeful young men already.

Pam

How unfortunate I have been to have had only one lover die upon my account. Indeed, his death gave me a great deal of uneasiness, for he hanged himself. If he had been killed in a duel or shot himself through the head, I should not have cared. But to have a lover hang himself, like a common criminal, frets one because it's vulgar. He was not thinking of ME when he did that! But, how did yours die?

Lady Easy

Why, I played off two of them with so much spirit against each other that, mad with jealousy, they fought a duel and both died of their wounds. But not before the most tender expressions of love were sent me from their death

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beds. A third fairly fretted to death, and the other shot himself through the head after I vexed him by sleeping with his brother. (sighing) If I could but kill a dozen, I should be supremely happy.

Pam

My dear, you are already on the road to happiness. I envy your triumphs. Suppose, my dear, we profess a violent attachment to each other?

Lady Easy

That will render my life a continual scene of ecstasy, my dear. I'm fond to excess of violent attachments. Let us be eternal and unchangeable friends from this moment. One fate, one fame, one faith, shall both attend my life's companion, and my bosom friend.

(They embrace.)

Pam

We shall share everything.

Lady Easy

Tastes.

Pam

Clothes.

Lady Easy

Books.

Pam

Paintings.

Lady Easy

Lovers.

Pam

Ecstasy.

Lady Easy

Look, my dear, here comes that odious Lord Fawn.

Pam

Faugh, I can't stand him. Now, my dear Lady Easy, as you were pleased to doubt my disposition to cruelty—though I do dote upon his lordship—you shall see me treat him in as cavalier a manner as any woman in the British Dominions—nay, the entire continent—if you will just hide behind that bush and listen.

(Lady Easy smiles and steps behind a tree. Lord Fawn enters.)

Lord Fawn

Dear Lady Pam—

Pam

Dear Lord Fawn.

Lord Fawn

When I first saw you, madam, you are aware I did not court you after the vulgar mode of the uneducated by proposing marriage. No, I thought you handsome enough to be a mistress and offered you a genteel settlement to surrender upon honorable terms, for as I hope to be cuckolded by a Prince of the Blood, I did not imagine you were so well off. But, since I find you are not under necessity of playing a fair game, and treating upon honorable terms, I must edge in and hang out the matrimonial flag.

Pam

My lord, you are extremely well-bred, and I should certainly have accepted your charming offer, but I feared you would have tyrannized over me. But, you know, if we marry, it is your place to submit.

Lord Fawn

Doubtless. A woman's powers, like her charms, should be unbounded.

Pam

And yet, some men are such brutes that they use their mistresses like slaves and treat their wives in such an egregious manner that some silly people would be inclined to think it was the duty of a wife to be obedient.

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Lord Fawn

They must be silly people indeed who could think such a thing. However, you'll find me a ver obedient husband.

Pam

Well, my lord, you know certain wit said:

—horses and asses, we're allowed to try and sound suspected
vessels ere we buy, women a random choice, untried we take, we
dream in courtship, and in wedlock wake, then, not till then,
the veil's removed, and the woman glares in open day.

Thus, if all these sarcastical strokes are true, my lord, I hope we have the same right to try your sex beforehand.

Lord Fawn (leering and trying to kiss her)

By all means, dear madam.

Pam (breaking away)

Then, I'll exact proof of your obedience. Have you ever heard of Sebastiano Conco?

Lord Fawn

No, madam, I cannot say I have, or at least my memory betrays me.

Pam

Dear me, why he was born at Gaella in the year 1676, and died in 1764.

Lord Fawn

Very possible, madam, but I cannot say I recollect anything of the affair.

Pam

Well, that's amazing. He was a celebrated painter.

Lord Fawn

Indeed. I can't deny it, madam.

Pam

He studied under Luca Giordano. Now, you must know that a certain painter in the city of Rome has a certain painting of Sebastiano's. The subject is a silly boy killing a butterfly. Now, as I shall never be happy until I am possessed of that inimitable composition, I must insist that, ere Hymen unite us, you make a journey to Rome, discover the painter, and purchase the piece at whatever price is affixed to it.

Lord Fawn

Consider, dear Lady Pam, what cruelty it will be to banish me so long from your delightful presence. Let us first be joined in matrimony, and, then, we can go in search of this—masterpiece, together.

Pam

Clever fox. Nay, my lord. Stand to your promise, either drop the negotiation, or stand to the conditions prescribed. Besides, the journey will improve your taste infinitely, which, I assure you, will not be your least recommendation in my favor.

Lord Fawn

Damnation! I shall set off in the morning, Lady Pam.

Pam

You may kiss my hand before you go.

Lord Fawn

Infinite thanks, dear lady. (kissing her hand, he bows and leaves) Curses! Now, how shall I avoid this nuisance?

Pam

Well, how did you like that little farce, my dear?

Lady Easy

Infinitely. It will teach him how to be a devoted husband.

Pam

You are perfectly right, my dear. The creatures should be taught their duty.

Lady Easy

Certainly, my dear. We were born for prerogative and pleasure only—two principles the female sex obey, the

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love of pleasure and the love of sway. But, do you really love this male thing, my dear?

Pam

Oh, yes. I love him because all my friends have spoken against him, and done all in their power to prevent his visits. But, I'll do what I please, even if I suffer for it. Obstinacy is a delicious thing for a woman of spirit. The only way to make me do a thing is to persuade me not to do it.

Lady Easy

That, my dear, is a piece of finesse by which I was very near suffering. My uncle knew my disposition well, and artfully persuaded me not to marry a man I never intended to have. I was on the point of marrying the hideous creature when, by luck, I discovered my uncle's treachery and avoided the impending ruin.

Pam

What a dreadful escape.

Lady Easy (screaming)

Aiee!!!

Pam

What ails you, my dear?

Lady Easy

I shall miss my meeting with Torrismond. My life is ruined.

Pam

But, your coach is repaired, is it not?

Lady Easy

But when you fainted, I had John saddle a horse and ride to London to get you a cordial. He won't be back for hours. Oh, my unlucky stars!

Pam

But, you must use my coach, my dear.

Lady Easy

You are the most considerate creature.

Pam

Come, we'll see to it immediately.

(Pam and Lady Easy exit. A moment later, John enters furtively from the opposite direction.)

John

Saddle a horse and go to London, indeed! Tell Clytemnestra to look in Cyclops eye—my black arse! So, what must I tell her? I have it—the horse fell in the mud and refused to go further. She'll call me stupid and say she told me so. And that will be the end of that. The woman's a fool. Clytemnestra, or Molly, as she is known to the rest of mankind, has more sense than my lady, and she can't read or write.

'Tis strange that man will always quit
The very thing for which he's fit.
His Grace is in 'Change—alley great,
While barbers regulate the State.
And some are so extremely wise,
They'd rule the rulers of the skies,
Though mortals seize the immortal rod,
And criticize the works of God,
A certain self sufficient spark.
Parading o'er a rural park,
Viewed nature's charms with scornful eye,
And could in each a defect espy.
Puffed with importance, "Had," said he,
"The Universe been made by me,
Without a fault this world had rose,
No crimes, no murders, frauds, or woes,

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The sun had given continual light.
But, now all things confused are found,
The noble pumpkin on the ground,
Mean acorns on that lofty tree,
These blunders had been changed by me.
Pumpkins to oaks had owed their birth,
And acorns spread from humble earth,"
He said, and crept beneath the shade,
To slumber on the verdant glade.
The branches shook as winds arose,
An acorn fell and hit his nose.
Conceited fool! Had things been made
According to the schemes you've laid,
Then, had your stupid head been crushed,
Your whim's destroyed and nonsense hushed.

Well, if all goes well, my silly mistress is riding for a fall in Hertford. Torrismond, ha, ha, ha.

Lord Fawn (entering furtively)

Hsstt!

John (startled)

Who's that?

Lord Fawn

Honest John, it's me, Lord Fawn.

John

You quite frightened me, sir.

Lord Fawn

My apologies. I need your help, John.

John

If I can, your lordship.

Lord Fawn

My mistress, Lady Pam, has sent me on the most silly wild goose chase that ever fair lady appointed a faithful, gullible knight. And I am determined to be revenged on her.

John

Yes, your lordship.

Lord Fawn

And, moreover, I suspect your mistress instigated Lady Pam to do it.

John

Not altogether unlikely, my lord. My mistress is terribly malicious.

Lord Fawn

Lady Pam insists I am to go to Rome to find a picture by Sebastiano Conco and bring it to her. Now, is that not absurd?

John

Rome is a long way off, sir.

Lord Fawn

Quite. But you must help me.

John, But, how am I do to that, sir?

Lord Fawn

If I am not much mistaken in physiognomy, you, sir, are unmistakably an Italian?

John

Sir, I am a true born Englishman. By the Holy Virgin, I—

Lord Fawn

Scene I. A roadway that gives on a park.

VIOLENT ATTACHMENTS

By the Holy Virgin, I have you—no Englishman would swear so. You are no John, you are a Giovanni, or I lose my wager.

John, Please, sir, do not tell my mistress. She would turn me out, sure. She hates Italians.

Lord Fawn

Piano, piano, good Giovanni. I mean you no harm. Indeed, I will pay you well for assisting me.

John (excitedly)

Grazie, grazie. But, how am I to help you?

Lord Fawn

You must not think me such a fool as to contemplate going to Italy to find this silly painting. Now, I never knew an Italian, but he had some relative who could sing or paint. Have you such a relative, Giovanni?

John

Certo, certo. My brother Carlo.

Lord Fawn

Good, good. And could he paint a Sebastiano?

John (regaining his composure)

Certainly, my lord. He could paint a Michelangelo or a Da Vinci. He's a wonderful forger.

Lord Fawn

Friend of my youth—let us become better acquainted. Now, what I need is a Sebastiano—the subject: a boy killing a butterfly.

(They exit in deep conversation and the lights BLACKOUT.)

(When the lights go up, Lady Easy and Lady Pam enter, hugging each other.)

Lady Easy

Dear, Auristella, for that the poetical name I have, after mature deliberation fixed upon you, congratulate me, sing twenty Io paeans for me; I have seen the dear, predestinated, angelic man. Oh—he's all that painting can express, or youthful poets fancy when they love.

Pam

Is he so adorable, my dear? But, who is he?

Lady Easy

Upon my reputation, you'll never guess. I never saw him before, nor you neither, I believe. He's an Italian Count on his travels. His family owns half of Italy, I believe.

Pam

This is simply immense.

Lady Easy

My dear, I'm rapt, I'm in Elysium. I'm as happy as a seraph—but I may yet be happier—enchanting thought.

Pam

But, proceed regularly, and tell me the beginning, middle, and the end of things, in order.

Lady Easy

After I went off in your coach, I arrived at Hertford. And sure enough, the town is in the form of a capital Y. The castle is right in the middle. Upon enquiry, I found the castle turned into a boarding school. The master—

Pam

—is Torrismond?

Lady Easy

Heavens no, my dear. The master is an old gentleman who has the gout, very bad. The schoolmaster received me while he was teaching and paid an equal attention to me and his scholars. (imitating him)

Madam, your servant.

The regimen of verbs may be divided into three classes.

Pray, madam, be seated.

The first class is that of verbs personal.

What may have procured the honor of your visit, madam?

VIOLENT ATTACHMENTS

You blockhead, keep your tongue silent and mind me!

Pam

Ha, ha, ha.

Lady Easy

My Torrismond at this moment entered, and was called to by name by one of the boys. He bowed to me. (sighing) He makes a sweet bow—and has a more agreeable smile than any man in Europe. I shall be a happy creature, for I'm sure of him and, you know, the stars must be obeyed.

Pam

Oh, to be as lucky as you. How I envy you.

Lady Easy

He has in infinity of wit. My heart palpitated the whole time.

Pam

But, were you cruel?

Lady Easy

It will be time enough to be cruel after we're married. The inimitable creature has written poetry to me—and so soon. Ah, Italians are so wonderful. Suppose, my dear, upon Lord Fawn's return you marry him and we four will form a coterie of our own. I love coteries dearly. I wish there were a thousand in England. I'd do nothing but travel round the country and visit them all.

Pam

But, how on earth did an Italian Count find himself in Hertford Castle?

Lady Easy

It's the most immense story: Torrismond came to fulfill a vow and a prophecy.

Pam

Amazing. Immense. Come to the house, my dear, you must tell me all. Absolutely all.

(Lady Easy and Lady Pam leave, still deeply engaged in conversation. After a moment, enter John and the Count from another direction.)

Count

Well, brother Giovanni, the train has happily taken, and I am in a fair way to blow up the outworks, and hope soon to be in possession of the town.

John

Did I not tell you it would take, Carlo? This English woman is a complete fool. Pazzo!

Count

She really is a very agreeable woman in person, and would be every way charming if she could contrive to lose her affection. But, that's not necessary at present, or even desirable. It's not my business to fall in love.

John

Brother, if you should ever fall in love with that woman, I would cut your heart out.

Count

Hey, Giovanni, do you want her for yourself?

John (crossing himself)

Never! But ever since I joined her service, she has lorded it over me in such a way that I will never forgive her, and must be revenged upon her.

Count

If I am not mistaken, I shall have a considerable deal of trouble with this fantastical lady yet. But if I get her, matrimony will soothe all sores. It was a stroke of genius to insert that prophecy into her bureau.

John

Into Cyclops's eye.

Count

What?

John

She calls her bureau Cyclops because it has only one drawer.

Scene I. A roadway that gives on a park.

VIOLENT ATTACHMENTS

Count

The woman's as superstitious as a village witch.

John

It was my idea, brother.

Count

Agreed. You are the genius of this little comedy, Giovanni.

John

When she has married you, I can't wait to mortify her by telling her she has married the brother of a coachman.

Count

Even if you tell her, she'll never believe it.

John

Trust me, I'll make her believe it. But, tell me again how you met. I must hear all the details.

Count

Simple enough. I awaited my lady at Hertford Castle, which as you know is a boarding school run by our uncle. There I encountered an unexpected obstacle. The old dog pretended to have what the devil himself would never have suspected him of assuming, a conscience. He undertook to prove that I was going contrary to the strictest rules of propriety. But, I had that about me, Jack, that was too much for him. I clapped ten pounds into his hands and he sagaciously found that my conduct was exactly consonant to the rules of grammar and the syllogism of logic. Is not money wonderful, brother? I instructed the boys to call me Torrismond. After the lady had arrived, and been with the gentlemen ten minutes, I entered the school as if accidentally. One of the boys called out—Torrismond. It struck her. She was scarlet up to the neck. The pretty creature was ingenuously engaged in telling a hundred and fifty lies to get a sight of my sweet person.

John

Ha, ha. And this great lady calls me stupid.

Count

And as you will have a finger in the pie, pray to what saint you please, for the success of your brother, Torrismond, Count of Monte Verde.

John

As I hope to cuckold you with my mistress.

Count

But, I insist you wait until we are married.

John

But, of course.

Count

You were always after any wench I had run to ground, Jack.

John

You prefer the chase, I excel at the repast. At spitting the game, as it were.

Count

Oh, never mind! You may do with her as she will let you—once we are married and I have her portion nicely in my hands. Adultery will make a fine excuse for divorce. She is much more ridiculous than I could have conceived. I shall hate her abominably—but it doesn't matter. You know that to hate a wife is fashionable.

John

And, for the wife to take the footman privately to bed is—if not fashionable, at least common. Am I with you, brother?

Count

Damnation!

John

But come, I had forgotten, you must paint a picture for Lord Fawn.

Count

I no longer paint; I am a count now, and counts do not paint.

John

Scene I. A roadway that gives on a park.

VIOLENT ATTACHMENTS

Your share will be a hundred pounds.

Count

In the other hand, even a nobleman should not throw away money.

BLACKOUT

VIOLENT ATTACHMENTS

ACT II

VIOLENT ATTACHMENTS

Scene I. A few weeks later; Lady Easy's sitting room.

John and the Count are talking.

John

To be blasted in all our projects when they were about to take so fairly!

Count

Unquestionably, there is no justice in the universe. Who could have expected that she would fall a victim to the small pox, the very day before our wedding. Could she but have waited till we were married, I should not have cared. I was summoned last night. I had hopes she wanted to die a married woman. However, I was too sanguine in my expectations. She nearly killed me with scraps of execrable verse in praise of resignation. She told me she was going to express her gratitude for my continued attachment to her person. My heart beat an alarm of joy.

John

Perhaps she will leave you a legacy.

Count

I fancied that, too. I whined a bit to put her in the temper to improve upon her intentions. I put my handkerchief to my eye and "wiped away the tear I did not shed."

John

Did she do it, did she?

Count

I was horribly taken in. She made me executor and sole copyright holder of her execrable, nonsensical and happily unpublished poetic drivel.

John

Fool! Why didn't you—? She's growing worse and worse. If she doesn't recover, you must transfer your affection to Lady Pam. I fancy she had a mind to you.

Count

One will do as well as the other. They are both equally ridiculous.

John

If she lives, her face will be scarified.

Count

I'm glad on it. It will give me an opportunity to pretend my passion is more than skin deep.

John

I think I should be happy for you to change her for Lady Pam.

Count

The deuce take the small pox. I wish she were dead or well.

John

Lady Pam is with her now. If you wait here you may have a chance to speak with her. Lose no opportunity.

Count

Rely on me, brother.

John

I hear her. I will leave you to better opportunity.

(Exit John.)

Count (alone)

Florio, a coxcomb of distinguished note,
Proud of the glitter of a laced coat,
Thought all embellishments of mind were low,
And much beneath the notice of a beau.
Oh, at a ball, to bear the belle away,
To be the sovereign arbiter at tea (tay),
These were concerns of most prodigious weight,

VIOLENT ATTACHMENTS

Enough to sink a minister of state.
He'd tell a lady, like a useful friend,
How a boiled lapdog might complexions mend,
Or give the greatest brilliancy to sight,
What made hands the most delicate white.
Long Florio roved about from Miss to Miss,
But never tasted one substantial bliss.
No single woman had sufficient charms
To captivate him to her lovely arms.
He thought each hair upon his head a dart,
And that each hair deserved a woman's heart.
Soft! She comes.
(Enter Lady Pam.)

Pam

Musing, poor forlorn man? Is the disorder of my friend a great affliction to your lordship?

Count

So much that I cannot explain it. Everything must affect a lover which endangers the life of a beloved mistress.

Pam

I dare say, my lord, you will be inconsolable for the loss of her beauty.

Count

Indeed, madam, you wrong me in your opinion. I should never pay adoration to beauty alone. There are other charms much more attractive to me. Alas, if beauty was my sole consideration, there are some who could inspire a much stronger passion than Lady Easy.

Pam (smiling)

Indeed, my lord. Why, I always took Lady Easy to be the handsomest woman in the kingdom.

Count

Then, your ladyship never viewed yourself in a proper light.

Pam

My lord, you grow rude. A compliment to me is an affront to my sick friend. Besides, you are insincere. You don't really think I am so handsome as Lady Easy.

Count

Your glass must convince you that I speak according to my conscience in giving you preference.

Pam

I have been reflecting on your pretended disregard for beauty. I find it not only unnatural, but impossible. I am certain you dissemble in compliment to my sick friend.

Count

'Pon honor, m'am, I vow—

Pam

Stop! Do not vow. Lady Easy is shockingly scarified. The most advisable thing is to break off the whole affair.

Count

Madam! My honor—

Pam

No, don't protest. I know it is impossible for any man to fall in love with the mind unless he has a fancy to a beautiful face attached to it. Since I'm convinced you fell in love with my friend for her beauty, and that beauty is no more, it is a duty incumbent on the friendship I profess to her to prevent the match. For, if you had made her any promise, you high-minded man, your honor may prompt you to keep it. Yet, that coolness of behavior which necessarily follows distress, will make her forever miserable. Decidedly, she had better remain single, or at least, marry one who had never seen her during the meridian of her charms.

Count

Madam, I'm speechless, I—

Scene I. A few weeks later; Lady Easy's sitting room.

VIOLENT ATTACHMENTS

Pam

Oh, it's unnecessary to speak. I know your mind. If I deprive you of what you once thought was a blessing, it is only proper I should make you some recompense.

Count

I don't know what to say.

Pam

You hoped to marry a beautiful woman. Because of me, you lose her. Command me, then—to the extent of my power.

Count

The only recompense you could make me, for depriving me of your friend, would be—to bless me with yourself.

Pam

That would be impossible! Well, I can refuse you nothing, poor thing.

Count

Allow me to retire to procure the license.

(The Count kisses Lady Pam's hand and exits. Pam, alone, fidgets about, then sits at the writing table.)

Pam (writing)

Dear Celinda, As your loss of beauty would undoubtedly have occasioned the loss of your betrothed's affections—that is, my dear, if you had married the count—I, out of the violence of my affection for you, and in the extremity of my attachment—have married him myself. That your delicate nerves might not suffer a shock by the coldness in my lord's behavior which the want of your charms would necessarily cause. Therefore, I hope you will consider this sacrifice on my part in its proper light—and believe I am, with as violent an attachment as ever, Your sincere friend, Auristella.

(Lady Pam leaves the letter on the writing desk and exits. After a moment, John enters. He reads the letter.)

John

Money has the power above

The stars and fate to manage love.

Those arrows, learned poets hold,

That never fail—are tipped with gold.

Now I think that Lord Fawn will be best advised to marry Lady Easy. But first, I must extract the money for the Sebastiano.

BLACKOUT

VIOLENT ATTACHMENTS

Scene II. The same, some months later.

John and the Count. John is no longer dressed like a servant.

John

Well, I had much fancied myself to be Lady Easy's brother-in-law. But, as I am not related to Lord Fawn that is impossible.

Count

Lady Pam resents you as much as Lady Easy would have, I'm sure.

John

No, I think Lady Easy would not have born it so well.

Count

Well, we are well come off. I am rich enough, so that I can pay my creditors.

John

Have you seen your wife lately?

Count

She hasn't spoken to me since she learned you were my brother.

John

I believe she has renewed her attachment to Lady Easy, I mean Lady Fawn.

Count

Yes. I believe that lady has no great use for her husband either.

John

Lord Fawn treats her with great politeness.

Count

She knew he was marrying her for her money; she has no right to complain.

John

I've heard she sighs for you on occasion.

Count

Sometimes, I wish—but, let that pass.

(Enter Lord Fawn.)

Fawn

My dear Count. (bowing)

Count

My dear Lord Fawn. (bowing lower)

Fawn

Well, my lord, how do you like matrimony?

Count

Oh! Excellently well. When all other amusements grow stale and insipid, I can always find an inexhaustible fund of entertainment in tormenting my wife. But, how does your lordship pass your time?

Fawn

Oh, in much the same manner. Lady Fawn and myself, every day, enjoy the sublime satisfaction of mortifying each other to the utmost extent of our considerable abilities.

Count

Damn it—my wife should have belonged to you, and yours to me.

Fawn

I must confess I fancied Lady Pam to the very utmost of the ton. I believe I could actually have fallen in love with her, if I had been given to that failing.

Count

VIOLENT ATTACHMENTS

And, I confess I had a small weakness for Lady Easy, before her bout of small pox. Indeed, I don't care, but what—even though her beauty— Well, I say no more.

Fawn

Her beauty is much restored.

Count

Indeed?

Fawn

Unfortunately, her temper—

Count

That was never very good, yet—

Fawn

Since we have fallen out with our wives, they have fallen in again.

Count

Yes, they have renewed their violent attachment. (pause, musing) As we are in the zenith of fashion, my lord, suppose we strike a coup d'eclat.

Fawn

How, my lord?

Count

I'll tell you. We'll dice for 'em. Winner take both.

Fawn

In so doing, we shall play contrary to the practice of gamesters. For we shall both play with a desire to lose.

Count (producing dice)

Be that as it will, my lord. We shall be diverted. And, such a bet, you know, will be quite the thing. Will you throw, my lord?

Fawn

With the greatest pleasure. (throws)

Count

Ah—sixes. (throws) Snake eyes. Lady Pam is yours. (aside) How convenient are loaded dice.

Fawn

Dear, dear. I am so heartily sick of one wife, I fear two will be too much for me. Take your revenge, sir, please.

Count

But I will not dice for both.

Fawn

For mine only, then.

Count

Very well, but I had rather you keep 'em both. (throws)

Fawn

Sixes. (throws) Snake eyes. Lady Fawn is yours. (aside) Thank heavens I switched the dice.

John (clapping his hands)

Wonderful, my lords. This is in the very height of the ton.

Fawn

This is an affair of honor. The ladies must be informed immediately.

John

Allow me to have that privilege. I yearn to see Lady Fawn's face.

(Exit John. Enter Lady Fawn and Lady Pam.)

Pam

We overheard everything.

Lady Fawn

Scene II. The same, some months later.

VIOLENT ATTACHMENTS

Nothing could be more agreeable.

Pam

This affair is polite in the highest degree.

Lady Fawn

This will render us a coterie and afford us the opportunity of enjoying variety.

Pam

Oh, I am so glad we have renewed our violent attachment to each other.

Lady Fawn

We are ready to comply immediately with the decrees of fate.

(Lady Fawn grasps the Count. Lady Pam pinches Lord Fawn.)

Lord Fawn (aghast)

Would I were so ready!

Lady Pam Should you need assistance, we know where to procure the aid of a vigorous footman.

(Enter John.)

John

Did you call, my lady?

CURTAIN

John

The proverb holds:

That to be wise and love,

Is hardly granted to the gods above.

We ask your applause.