

WAIT FOR ME UNDER THE ELM

JEAN-FRANCOIS REGNARD

WAIT FOR ME UNDER THE ELM

Table of Contents

<u>WAIT FOR ME UNDER THE ELM</u>	1
<u>JEAN-FRANCOIS REGNARD</u>	2

WAIT FOR ME UNDER THE ELM

WAIT FOR ME UNDER THE ELM
JEAN-FRANCOIS REGNARD

This Etext is for private use only. No republication for profit in print or other media may be made without the express consent of the Copyright Holder. The Copyright Holder is especially concerned about performance rights in any media on stage, cinema, or television, or audio or any other media, including readings for which an entrance fee or the like is charge. Permissions should be addressed to: Frank Morlock, 6006 Greenbelt Rd, #312, Greenbelt, MD 20770, USA or frankmorlock@msn.com. Other works by this author may be found at <http://www.cadytech.com/dumas/personnage.asp?key=130>

Etext by Dagny

Translated and adapted by Frank J. Morlock C 1986

CHARACTERS:

Lovelace
Polly
Jeremy
Lucy
Bellamy
Jacob
Lettice
Peter
Luke

Jeremy

Let me put it in the plainest terms: I advanced the money for our expenses from our garrison to this village. We've already lived for fifteen days off my pile. Please settle up, and let me take my leave.

Lovelace

Oh—damn it. You pick a fine time.

Jeremy

Hey, sir, what better time is there? You've just been discharged. Now you must discharge your followers.

Lovelace

Jeremy, to quit an officer's service is to jeer at Fortune.

Jeremy

Sir, I've been jeered at since the day I entered your service—but, thank you very much, I am above Fortune. I intend to retire from the world.

Lovelace

The stupid—stupid——

Jeremy

Yes, sire, I have made several little reflections on the vanity of worldly pleasures. I am tired of being beaten and malnourished. I am tired of spending my evenings at the door of a gambling den, and my days warning off whores. I am tired of whiling away the time at the buffet while you get drunk at the table. One must make an end, sir. I am going to marry a certain Lucy, who is the wittiest girl in this village. The prettiest girls in Wales consult her like an oracle because she understudied a coquette in London. It was in London that she became amorous of me.

Lovelace

Hey, why haven't I met this amiable Lucy? My star is running out of luck.

Jeremy

It's not your star, sir, it's my care in hiding Lucy from you. She's too pretty to make your acquaintance. But this

WAIT FOR ME UNDER THE ELM

digression is causing you to forget a little question of arithmetic between us. I've been in your service for eight years at twenty-five shillings per annum, sum total six hundred pounds; instead I have received two hundred blows with your cane and fifty kicks in the ass: there remains then, the six hundred pounds, which I beg you to give me instantly.

Lovelace (in a rage)

What! I've had the patience to put up with a rascal like you for eight years!

Jeremy

A little more, actually.

Lovelace

A thief.

Jeremy

Yes, sir.

Lovelace

Eight years—a valet worth hanging!

Jeremy

Ah!

Lovelace

Who should be destroyed, wiped out!

Jeremy

Something's wrong here. Up to the present moment, you've been very satisfied with my service. The moment I ask for my wages you change.

Lovelace (softening)

Jeremy, I am not to be duped by my own good nature today. Go, old boy, I have no intent of running you off.

Jeremy

Truly, sir, it's not you who is running me off. It's I who ask for my leave—and six hundred pounds.

Lovelace

No, dear heart, you cannot leave me. You know you are necessary to me. Rustic life does not agree with an intriguer, a trickster.

Jeremy

I know I have all the necessary talents to make my fortune in the city—but, I sacrifice my ambitions to Lucy—to whom I intend to give my six hundred pounds. Here, I'll give you a receipt. (pulls out a paper and gives it to Lovelace)

Lovelace

Plague on the cad! You have only your own business on your mind. Let's speak a little of mine. Tomorrow, I will marry Polly. I have managed things so well that her father is, at present, fonder of me than of his daughter. She has ten thousand pounds, Jeremy.

Jeremy

You've only got your own affairs in mind. Let's return a bit to mine.

Lovelace

Polly is waiting for me at her home at four o'clock. And before going to her, I have to arrange certain things with the solicitor.

Jeremy

Sir, there's only two words to my affair.

Lovelace

The notary is waiting for me, Jeremy.

Jeremy

My discharge and my wages.

Lovelace

Oh, if you absolutely insist on finishing our relationship together.

Jeremy

WAIT FOR ME UNDER THE ELM

If it were not for a pressing circumstance—

Lovelace

One must make an effort.

Jeremy

I don't want to importune you.

Lovelace

You don't know how this pains me.

Jeremy

Here's your receipt.

Lovelace (taking the receipt and hugging Jeremy)

Go, I give you your leave.

Jeremy

And my wages?

Lovelace

You'll have to wait, Jeremy. I don't have time to see you anymore.

(Exit Lovelace.)

Jeremy

The rogue! I owe him one! Lucy has asked me to help break his engagement to Polly. Well, we'll see what we can do.

(Enter Lucy.)

Jeremy

Ah, you here!

Lucy

I've been looking for you for over an hour. Have you come to terms with your master?

Jeremy

Hardly. There's a dispute between him and me over two articles. I asked for my leave and my wages. He split the difference—he gave me my leave and kept my wages.

Lucy

And your refuse to take off the kid gloves with him! Do you still have to be pulled by the ear to help me break his marriage, to help my poor brother Bellamy to whom Polly was originally promised. It's up to you to make the whole village happy. There were dances and feasts held in honor of Bellamy and Polly until this discharged officer came and stole the heart of the pretty farmer's daughter. And since then, all the gallants are in mourning.

Jeremy

I don't lack the will to do it, but I consider.

Lucy

And I, I consider nothing. I am very stupid to beg you when I have a right to command. Bellamy is my brother—and if he doesn't marry Polly as I wish, Lucy will not marry Jeremy.

Jeremy

Listen to that. You really put me in a predicament.

Lucy

Except that I am not like most women who create such dilemmas. I haven't given any deposit, and I will break it off if—

Jeremy

Easy. What has to be done for little brother Bellamy? Have you made any plans with him?

Lucy

Plans with Bellamy! He's a naïve young lover who is capable only of fidgeting. He comes, he goes, he can't sit still; he curses his unfaithful lover, and he always has some childish plan which he insists you listen to. Besides, he's a little obstinate—so, I've had to shut him up so he'll leave me in peace to manage his business. I believe that he's coming now.

WAIT FOR ME UNDER THE ELM

(Enter Bellamy.)

Lucy

What! Little imp, are you always under foot?

Bellamy

I crawled out of the window of the room you locked me up in, so as to come tell you that this plan of yours about a widow to expose Lovelace won't work.

Lucy

You'll be the death of me if you—

Jeremy

Let Bellamy speak. He seems like a weighty fellow to me.

Bellamy

Exactly. I discovered a secret that proves Polly loves me, and I began to think—

Lucy

So, go finish your thinking and leave me along to manage—

Bellamy

Oh—perhaps I could—

Lucy

It won't be you—

Bellamy

I tell you that—

Lucy

I tell you to quiet down—

Bellamy

Look, I'm the one who's in love. I want to talk—to speak—with all my soul.

Lucy

Oh—this little amorous troublemaker.

Bellamy

Hold on. If Jeremy tells me, I don't know better than you how to get Polly back—I'll return to my room.

Lucy

Let's listen, on that condition.

Bellamy

What I have here is a trick to get Polly in a corner while you both listen.

Jeremy

So far, so good.

Bellamy

And then, when she's there, I will say to her: "Since there's nobody who can hear us—Isn't it true, Polly, that you've told me a hundred times that you love me?" She'll say: "Yes, Bellamy, because it's true." I'll say: "Isn't it true that when you told me you loved me, I said that oaths were nice, but they don't mean anything. They don't prove you won't marry somebody else, besides me?" Polly will say: "Yes, Bellamy." Then I will say, "Isn't it true that on a certain day, when your collar pin broke, I repaired it sweetly, very sweetly?"

Lucy

Oh! Hurry up. I like despatch.

Jeremy

This story is very promising. And we will be hidden to hear all this?

Bellamy

Right. I'm not going to hem and haw with her—for she's engaged to me and that covers everything—and if not, I'm quite easy that everyone knows who brought the earth to harvest. Anyway, then—I say to her: "Isn't it true that while opening your collar, I found a paper against your breast, and that on this paper you had written your name with mine to show that we would become one?" And she will say: "Yes, Bellamy." Oh, she may have gone to sleep by then, but I know she's only pretending, for I woke her once when—

WAIT FOR ME UNDER THE ELM

Lucy

All right, now, after she's said all that?

Bellamy

You will jump out of your hiding place and say to her: "Polly, you must not marry anyone except Bellamy or else we'll tell everybody that you love two men at the same time." She wouldn't put up with that.

Lucy

Oh, yes she would. Women love to glory in it.

Bellamy

To glory in loving someone else when one is already engaged! No,—no, there isn't a woman like that in the whole world.

Jeremy

Bellamy hasn't been around. Still, I believe Mr. Bellamy is better at thinking than we are; however, we're better at doing than Bellamy. So—he is condemned to return to his chamber until we have need of him.

Bellamy

Oh, he cannot mean what he said, Lucy, because—hey!

Lucy (pushing him out)

Come on, go—or I'm not going to bother myself with your affairs.

Bellamy (exiting)

I'm going, but I'm furious.

Lucy

Oh, at last we are rid of him. Now all we have to do is cure Polly of her infatuation with your master.

Jeremy

Huh! When love gets into a heart as simple as Polly's, it's difficult to drive out. It's more firmly placed there than in the heart of a changeable coquette.

Lucy

I admit your master's grand airs have taken her imagination, but in the depths of her heart, she's still for Bellamy. Let's finish this up. We must prevent Polly from leaving home, so she cannot thwart our plans. How do you feel about it?

Jeremy

Hum! Listen, we've accustomed her to London fashions. Suppose I told her my master wanted her to have presentable clothes. The hairdressing alone would keep an ordinary woman busy all day long.

Lucy

Here she comes. Think of a way to keep her here.

Polly (entering)

Jeremy, where's your master? I've been waiting for him for two hours.

Jeremy

You're mistaken, Madame, my master is very intent on your waiting for him.

Lucy (aside to Polly)

Didn't I tell you his zeal wouldn't last?

Polly

Oh, on the contrary, Lucy, Lovelace must be in love with me today to utter madness, for he promised me that each day his love would grow; and he's already loved me since yesterday.

Lucy

In one night, a man's heart may undergo a revolution.

Jeremy

Yes, at the end of this century, loves, like the seasons, are quite out of cycle; hot and cold come only by caprice.

Lucy

In this village, we have an absolute rule: it's that on the wedding day the thermometer of tenderness is in a very high degree; but the next day it drops a bit.

Polly

You both want to convince me that Lovelace will be inconstant—but, I'd have to be crazy to believe that he would

WAIT FOR ME UNDER THE ELM

change. What! When Bellamy told me quite simply that he would be faithful to me forever, I believed him—and you expect me not to believe Lovelace, who is a refined gentleman, and who takes the most horrible oaths that he will love me always?

Jeremy

In love, the oaths of a lover mean nothing; it's the language of the country.

Lucy

If you would listen to me one time in your life, I would make you see that Lovelace—

Polly

Let's talk about something else, shall we, Lucy—

Jeremy

She's right. (to Polly) Let's talk about the beautiful clothes my master is going to get for you.

Polly

Oh, Jeremy, I'm delighted!

Jeremy

By the way, my master would like you to dress today in London fashion.

Polly

I'd like nothing better myself, but I don't know which of my two clothes I should wear. Tell me, Jeremy, which does he like better, the ingenue or the seductress?

Jeremy

The harlot/seductress has always been to my master's taste.

Polly

London women must have great wit to invent such clever names.

Jeremy

The devil! Their imagination works overtime. They only invent fashions to hide sins. Furbelows for those who don't have hips; those who have hips, hid them. The long neck and wrinkled throat have given place to the steinker and so forth.

Polly

What puzzles me the most is the coiffure. I can never arrange so much machinery on my head. There's never room to put half of it.

Jeremy

Oh—when it's a question of arranging pieces of nonsense, the head of a woman has more understanding than one gives them credit for. But, you remind me that I have here an instruction book on the coiffure translated from the French and direct from London. It's entitled: "The elements of the toilet or the harmonious system of feminine coiffure."

Polly

Oh! How nice that book must be!

Jeremy (drawing the book from his pocket)

Here's the second volume. The first only contained an alphabetical list of the principal pieces used, like: La Duchess, le solitaire, Les Fontages, le chou, la tete a tete, la culbute, the somersault, Le Mousquetaire, le firmament, the tenth heaven, the palissade and the mouse.

Polly

Ah, Jeremy, find the place in the book which describes the Mouse. I have a knot of ribbon called "le souris."

Jeremy

Here's some of it; listen: "Coiffure to shorten the face."—That's not it. "Dashing little curls for straight faces and long noses." I'm not there yet. "Ingenious supplements which give relief to flat cheeks." Listen to that! "Flying headpieces to make the eyes stand out." Ah, here's what you ask: "The Mouse—a little ribbon of silk which is placed in the wood. Note: one calls 'wood' a little pack of bristling hairs which garnish the front of a wooden buckle." But, you can read this at your leisure. Go quickly, arrange your toilet. I will send my master to you as soon as he has finished some business he has.

Polly

He won't have to wait for me at least. Adieu, Lucy.

WAIT FOR ME UNDER THE ELM

Lucy

Adieu, Polly.
(Exit Polly.)

Lucy

It's apparent that in the end, in this world, each must be deceived through his weakness: men by women, women by their clothes.

Jeremy

He's with the notary. He'll have to pass this way to see Polly, and I will delay him while you go disguise yourself as the widow.

Lucy

Go over this disguise a little. You're certain your master has never seen this widow?

Jeremy

Assuredly. My boasting is based on her reputation in the county of being very rich; that she is in love with him. To revenge herself on him for his indifference, she's taken pleasure in appearing masked at two or three parties where he was—to inflame him—in a word, to mock him, always finding an excuse for not unmasking. She's a merry widow, who plays a thousand pranks like this to liven up her widowhood.

Lucy

Since it's that way, I'll counterfeit the widow better than she herself could.

Jeremy

So be it. One cannot know how to play the woman if you don't know how to play a married woman.—Is the dress ready?

Lucy

Yes.

Jeremy

Here comes my master.

Lucy

Amuse the gallows bird, so I can disguise myself—then go warn Polly, so that she may come and surprise us.—You will make her eavesdrop on our conversation. Let me proceed.

(Exit Lucy.)

Jeremy

Now, how shall I bring it off? But, one doesn't need much skill with my master. A man who believes himself loved by the ladies is easily duped.

(Enter Lovelace.)

Jeremy

Sir, sir!

Lovelace

Don't stop me. Polly is waiting for me.

Jeremy

There's more to my business than I expect to speak to you about at present.

Lovelace

I'm dying with impatience to see her. Love, Jeremy, love—Ah, when one's heart is taken.

Jeremy

I had never thought you to be the type of man to let love prevent him from making his fortune.

Lovelace

What do you mean by that?

Jeremy

That your love for Polly would make you lose this widow of fifty thousand pounds.

Lovelace

WAIT FOR ME UNDER THE ELM

Hey! Didn't you say this crazy woman has become invisible?

Jeremy

Apparently, she intends to test your fidelity. The happy moment is come. She is here.

Lovelace

Is it possible?

Jeremy

Nothing could be more true—and since you have left me—But let's not speak of it any more—your heart belongs to Polly.

Lovelace

Finish, Jeremy, finish.

Jeremy

In love, as you are, you wouldn't break off a marriage of inclination for a difference of twenty thousand pounds more or less.

Lovelace

One would have to employ violence. But, with twenty thousand pounds, one could buy a regiment; one is useful to the King—you know a man of honor ought to sacrifice himself to the interests of his country.

Jeremy

Between us, the country has no great need of you—it's already thanked you for your services.

Lovelace

Speak of the widow, Jeremy.

Jeremy

The widow came to town this morning to see your handsome face. And, after you left me, she offered me a hundred pounds if I would deliver your heart to her.

Lovelace

Jeremy, old friend, faithful servant, I'd be delighted to help you earn a hundred pounds. I love to pay my obligations, Jeremy.

Jeremy

By reducing my wages and paying them off with hers!

Lovelace

What does it take, dear heart?

Jeremy

It's agreed between us, that chance will bring the widow under this elm tree in a quarter of an hour.

Lovelace

Excellent.

Jeremy

I have promised her that the same chance will bring you there.

Lovelace

Dear Jeremy.

Jeremy

You must walk up and down without seeming to do anything. She's going to come without seeming to do anything. You will accost her without seeming to; she will listen to you without seeming to. That's how marriages are made in London.

Lovelace

My word, you're an adorable man.

Jeremy

There—prepare to accost the widow like a school master. Hide an eye with your hat, hand on your belt, elbow sticking out, body to the side, head the other way—and be careful not to walk a straight path. That's a good little bourgeois.

Lovelace

You rascal, you know almost as much as I do.

Jeremy

WAIT FOR ME UNDER THE ELM

Now's the time, sir, to profit by the talents you have acquired in the grand art of trickery! Ah, if you recall that glance you gave the other day at the theatre—a certain glance that caused a woman you had never spoken to in your life to lose her reputation.

Lovelace

You're a jokester.

(Enter Lucy, dressed as the widow.)

Jeremy (low to Lovelace)

Here's the widow, sir. Pretend to do nothing. (aloud to Lovelace, while signalling to Lucy) Is there nothing new in the catalogue? Have you received letters from London? The promenade is awfully deserted today. Which way's the wind blowing? My God—pretty day!

Lovelace (low to Jeremy)

Jeremy, the poor thing is sighing.

Jeremy (low to Lovelace)

Apparently, for the deceased.

Lovelace

We have to let her suffer a little more. She's sensitive to music. I'll use that to my advantage.

Jeremy

Right. Your style is full of merit, and you have even more wit. If she listens to your song, she'll be charmed, sir. Don't you remember some impromptu from the latest opera?

Lovelace

I am going to sing to keep from being bored—a little air that I composed for a charming widow. (singing)

Damn—love is stupid.

Yes, stupid.

Without regard for my birth

Love makes me sigh.

Love makes me tremble.

Just like a bourgeois.

Damn—love is stupid.

There's no prettier face in England.

Must I submit to this pretty flirt?

And in recompense

Be enchained

Like a galley slave?

Damn—love is stupid.

Jeremy (after Lovelace finishes his song)

You are love itself, sir.

Lovelace (low to Jeremy)

It's enough to make one expire. Heavens, what an adventure, Jeremy. I believe that now my amiable invisible is going to speak to me.

Jeremy

It's herself.

Lovelace (accosting her)

By what chance, Madame, do you find yourself in this village?

Lucy

I came to seek out solitude and cry if I want to.

Jeremy

Let us retire, sir; it is dangerous to interrupt the tears of a widow. The sight of a handsome man reopens the wound.

Lovelace

I have told you a hundred times, charming, spiritual Lady, I am the English Cavalier most specific for the

WAIT FOR ME UNDER THE ELM

consolation of ladies. I am the remedy.

Lucy

A knight like you cannot console one—without afflicting many others.

Lovelace

Let all the women in the world perish of jealousy, provided you desire—

Lucy

Ah! Don't finish, sir. I fear you're about to make proposals to me that I cannot listen to without horror. My husband has only been dead eight years.

Lovelace

Ah, Jeremy, I sense my flame re-igniting.

Jeremy

She is speaking of the deceased. Your affair is going well.

Lucy

My husband made me promise when he died, (lowering her voice) that I must never remarry.

Jeremy

Profit by the opportunity, sir. She's a woman and when she lowers her voice, it means she's weakening.

Lucy (stammering)

I w-will k-keep my p-promise—and y-yet—

Jeremy (low to Lovelace)

She's stammering. Time for me to retire.

Lovelace (low to Jeremy)

Go on, then.

(Exit Jeremy.)

Lovelace

You are alone, Madame. Do for me now, what you have always refused to do—raise your cruel veil.

Lucy

Sir, sorrow has so changed me.

Lovelace

Hey, I pray you—

Lucy (in an affected tone)

I never sleep. Fatigue causes wrinkles. The heat—the dust—I'm afraid you'll think I'm ugly.

Lovelace

I will find you charming. (aside) You'd have to be uglier than Medusa to frighten me off, child.

Lucy (raising her veil)

You mean it?

Lovelace

What do I see?

Lucy

I suppose it's necessary to admit that from the second time I saw you, I intended to make your fortune—but I had to test you. Ah! Cruel man—did you have to rebuff me so soon?

Lovelace

Hey—where have I seen you, Madame?

(Enter Jeremy, leading Polly to listen.)

Polly (aside to Jeremy)

Is it for this that you made me wait?

Jeremy (aside)

Listen.

(Exit Jeremy.)

WAIT FOR ME UNDER THE ELM

Lovelace

I admit frankly, that because of your refusal I lowered my sights to a farmer's daughter—because I found a pile of money to compensate for the great wealth I might have had from you.—But, honor bright, I never regarded her as anything but a child, a doll to play with, and since our charming conversation in London, you have never lost the empire you gained over my heart.

Polly (aside)

The traitor!

Lucy

Evidently, I believe you, for I still intend to marry you. But above all, you must first tell this Polly, in my presence, that you never loved her.

Lovelace

In her presence?

Lucy

What, do you hesitate?

Lovelace

Not at all. But, how can I say to a woman, face to face, that I don't love her? It would kill her. The blow is mortal, Madame, and I ought to have some care of a poor creature who—

Lucy

Who?

Lovelace

Who? To tell you a secret has a certain weakness for me—but, I am a gallant man.

Polly (aside, agitated)

How he lies!

Lovelace

But, Madame, I will give up all to follow you. I let myself be caught. I will marry you. Is more proof of my love necessary?

Lucy

At least, I order you to break the engagement you have with her father, immediately.

Lovelace

Oh, as to that, willingly.

Lucy

Go, promptly, and return in half an hour—and wait for me here—under the elm.

Lovelace

I will give you satisfaction.

Lucy

Under the elm—remember.

(Exit Lovelace.)

Polly (not daring to accost the widow)

I must know it from her. But, dare I meet her after what he just told her about me?

Lucy

My God! The pretty trollop. How lovely. Do you wish to speak to me?

Polly

No.

Lucy

I believe I've seen you somewhere. Aren't you the pretty Polly, the farmer's daughter?

Polly

I don't know.

Lucy

Don't be afraid, my little sweetheart. You stole my lover from me—but I've already avenged myself, because he has sacrificed you to me.

WAIT FOR ME UNDER THE ELM

Polly

The traitor.

Lucy

You're angry, aren't you, to lose such a handsome little man?

Polly

I'm angry that he told you lies about me. He said that I had a weakness for him. Ah, don't believe that, Madame, he's a bad man, and will say the same of you.

Lucy

Ha, ha.

Polly

You laugh? Is it because you believe what that liar told you?

Lucy

Lovelace doesn't know how to lie; he is a gentleman.

Polly

How unhappy I am! What! You believe him?

Lucy (unveiling)

Yes, I do.

Polly

It's Lucy.

Lucy

I believe him the way I've always believed him—and I believe that you are very wise and Lovelace is a rat. But, I am happy you listened. You see, it's not his fault that I am a phoney widow. Well, what does your heart say now?

Polly

I am betrayed. Does Bellamy still love me?

Lucy

He will always love you if you love him. And if you say one word to him he will devote his life to paying Lovelace back.

Polly

Ah! That's not bad: Lovelace told me he was no good.

Lucy

It's an act of vengeance that will serve to divert all our fashionable society. Lovelace will be bantered to such a degree that he will have his fill of it.

(Enter Bellamy.)

Bellamy (aside, without seeing Polly)

Jeremy just told me all that's happening to make me patient. But, although I may spoil everything, I cannot hold still. I'm too much in love.

Polly (angry to have been betrayed to Bellamy)

Ah, Bellamy, Bellamy.

Bellamy (seeing her)

At least I didn't say I was in love with you! It would be very silly for me to still love an ingrate.

Polly

That's true.

Bellamy

An infidel!

Polly

Yes, Bellamy.

Bellamy

A changeable woman.

Polly

Alas, I didn't want to change—it just happened—'cause I had never seen a man like Lovelace before.

WAIT FOR ME UNDER THE ELM

Bellamy

Oh, yes. You are a traitress.

Polly

Oh—as for being a traitor—I didn't avoid you when I fell in love with Lovelace.

Bellamy (stifling, from a lover's rage)

Ah—ouf! There's but one way I can return to my old self. Give me your hand.

Polly

Ah, Bellamy—how angry I am.

Bellamy

Ah, Polly—how good I feel.

Lucy

You will use up all your tenderness—keep it for after you get married—then you'll need it. Now, Lovelace is coming to wait for me under the elm. We've resolved to mock him—Peter, Jacob, and Luke are going to aid us. They are already near. Here they are, in fact.

(Enter Jacob and shepherds.)

Lucy

Who told you it was already time?

Jacob

We saw from a distance that she let Bellamy kiss her hand.

Bellamy

It's the sign of the return of a lost spirit.

Polly

How ashamed I am, Jacob, to have been deceived by such a man.

Jacob

Alas, which one of us doesn't arrive at that point? But, we are going to make this little Lothario, Lovelace, see that he doesn't know his job, if he lets a girl have time to think.

Lucy

Are you ready in your roles to mock him?

Jacob

Exactly. Luke and Peter will make an opera of it in two hours.

Lucy

Yes, I am going to give you your parts.

Jacob

Here's Lovelace. Hide! It's time for me to begin.

(They all leave hurriedly. Enter Lovelace, going under the elm.)

Lovelace

Here we are a little beforehand. I haven't seen the girl or her father. If this widow plays me a little trick, it's going to be easy to go back to Polly—because I haven't left. I hear the villagers singing—let's let them pass by.

(Enter Jacob and Lettice. Lettice sings to a peasant boy who flees.)

Jacob

My poor Lettice, you're wasting your time and your song. It's true I've loved you, but it's exactly because of that that I don't love you any more. Those are the rules.

Lettice (singing)

When you promised me

Under the fatal elm

That I would soon

Triumph over my rival

Ah! Why didn't I profit by it?

WAIT FOR ME UNDER THE ELM

It wouldn't be so painful.
Now, I can only reproach your infidelity.

Jacob (singing)

It's true that my frankness
Was surprised by your deceiving talk
And your charming manners.
I wanted to do something stupid.
You didn't take me at my word.
You were the stupid.
You were the fool.
You were the chump.

Lovelace

These villagers are naturally gallant. But the widow's a little late.
(Enter Jeremy.)

Jeremy

Ah, sir—we've had bad luck.

Lovelace

What is it?

Jeremy

The widow's gone, sir. One of her aunts came to drag her away. All the poor woman could do was to stick her hand out of the carriage window and make me a sign that she would always love you.

Lovelace

Is she mocking me?

Jeremy

Sir, I've saddled your horse. He's tied up at the door. If you wish to follow, the carriage cannot have got far.

Lovelace

Jeremy, we have to do something we can be certain of. I am going to find Polly and conclude things with her. Here she is right now when I want her.

(Enter Polly.)

Polly (aside)

I am indeed going to mock him. (aloud) Ah, here you are, sir. I suppose I have to look for you all day?

Lovelace

Ah, pardon, my charmer. I had a business transaction that I couldn't put off.

Polly

Rather—weren't you being unfaithful?

Lovelace

What do you say, cruel unjust, ingrate? May heaven witness—

Polly

Hey, don't swear. I know how much you love me.

Lovelace

But you—who speak of love—can love wait until tomorrow?

Polly

All right—Let's get married now!

Lovelace

Tell that to papa—to shorten the formalities, the articles, the contract.

Jeremy

A stupid custom for lovers who are in a hurry.

Polly

We will go in a moment to find my father—and if he makes us wait too long, we'll marry ourselves all by

WAIT FOR ME UNDER THE ELM

ourselves.

Chorus of farmers and shepherds from the depths of the theatre

If you wait for me under the elm

You may have to wait a while!

Lovelace

What's that I hear?

Polly

It's the wedding of a boy named Bellamy. Don't you know who he is?

Jeremy (leaping about)

A wedding! My word, I'm going to dance.

(Enter the shepherds.)

Lovelace

They're coming. Let's give them room.

Polly

Oh—I have to be of that party.

Lovelace

What—you can change in a minute?

Polly

As soon as the marriage is over, we can get married.

Chorus

Wait for me under the elm.

You may have to wait a while.

Lovelace

Jeremy, something funny's happening.

Jeremy

Pure chance, sir.

Lovelace

In that case, we must put a good face on it. (mingling with the villagers) Good, children. Long live the people of this village. Courage, Jeremy.

Chorus

Take the filly

At first chance

'Cause she's subject

To changes.

Often the most tender

When you make them wait

Mock you

At the rendez-vous.

Jeremy (mocking Lovelace)

We are betrayed. They are mocking us, sir.

Lovelace

This confounds me.

Lucy (singing)

You, who have for heritage

Only your good looks

Neither money, nor equipage

You lack nothing.

Despite your discharge

The widow will do it.

Wait under the elm

WAIT FOR ME UNDER THE ELM

—Perhaps, she'll come!

Polly (singing to Lovelace)

The village girl

Only gives to a soldier

A passing love.

It's the right of war.

But the formal contract

It's the peasant's lot.

Wait for me under the elm

Captain good for nothing.

Bellamy (singing)

One day

Our greedy cat

Caught a mouse.

But, because it was

Too delicate

Let it go

To catch a

RAT!

Jeremy (to Lovelace)

There are bad jokes, sir. Your horse is saddled.

(Lovelace starts to draw his sword.)

Peter

Gently, or we'll sound the tocsin on you.

Lovelace

I am going to sack this village with a regiment which I will purchase expressly for the purpose.

Lucy

From the widow's mite?

(Exit Lovelace in a fury. The villagers pursue Lovelace, singing.)

Chorus

Wait for me under the elm.

You may have to wait a long time!

CURTAIN.