

The Letter Writers

Henry Fielding

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The Letter Writers

Henry Fielding

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The Letter Writers

• SCENE the Last.

THE LETTER-WRITERS:

Or, a New Way to Keep A WIFE at HOME.

A FARCE, In THREE ACTS.

As it is Acted at the Theatre in the Hay-Market.

Dramatis Personæ.

MEN.

Rakel, Mr. Lacy.
Commons, Mr. Mullart. Mr.
Wisdom, Mr. Jones. Mr.
Softly, Mr. Hallam. Risque,
Mr. Reynhold. John,
Mr. Wathan, Sneaksby, Mr.
Davemport.

WOMEN.

Mrs. Wisdom, Mrs. Lacy. Mrs. Softly, Mrs. Mullart.
Betty, Mrs. Stokes.
Constable, Whores, Fidlers, Servants, &c.
SCENE, the Street.

ACT I. SCENE I.

SCENE, The Street.

Rakel, Risque.

Rakel [Reading a Letter.]

SIR,

'Your late Behaviour hath determined me never to see you more; if you get Entrance into this House for the future, it will n

Lucretia Softly.

So! the Letter was thrown out at the Window, was it?

Risq.

Ay, Sir, I am sure there is no good News in it, by the Face of that Jade Susan. I know by the Countenance of the Maid wh

Rak.

Well, may you meet with better Success in the next Expedition.
Here, carry this Letter to Mrs. Wisdom, I'll wait here till you
return with an Answer.

Risq.

But, Sir

Rak.

Well, Sir?

The Letter Writers

Risq.

This Affair, Sir, may end in a Blanketing, and that is a Danger I never love to run with an empty Stomach.

Rak.

Sirrah! if I were to be tossed my self I would wish to be as empty as possible; but thou art such an Epicure thou art continu

Risq.

The Reason of that is very plain, Sir; for I am continually hungry. Whilst I follow'd your Honour's Heels as a Soldier, I exp

Rak.

Bring me but an Answer to my Wish, and then

Risq.

Don't promise me, Sir for then I shall be sure of having nothing If you were but as like a great Man in your Riches, as you

Rak.

To your Business. It is happy for the Nation that this Fellow run away from his Master; for had he become an authorised A

SCENE II.

Rakel, Commons.

Com.

Captain *Rakel*, your Servant.

Rak.

Jack Commons! My dear Rake, welcome to Town: How do all our Friends at Quarters?

Com.

All in the old Way. I left your two Brother Officers with two Parsons and the Mayor of the Town, as drunk as your Drums.

Rak.

Mr. Mayor indeed is a thorough honest Fellow; and hath not, I believe, been sober since he was in the Chair: He encourag

Com.

Very fine, faith! and if the Mayor was a Glazier, I suppose he would encourage breaking Windows too.

Rak.

But prithee, what hath brought thee to Town?

Com.

My own Inclinations chiefly. I resolved to take one Swing in the charming Plains of Iniquity; so I am come to take my Lea

Rak.

Ha, ha, ha. And hast thou the Impudence to pretend to a Call?

Com.

Ay, Sir; the usual Call: I have the Promise of a good Living. Lookee, Captain, my Call of Piety is much the same as yours

Rak.

If thy Gown doth not rob thee of Sincerity, thou wilt have one Virtue under it at least.

Com.

Ay, ay, Sincerity is all that can be expected; that is the chief Difference among Men. All Men have Sins; but some hide the

Rak.

Thou art a fine promising Holderforth, faith, and do'st begin to preach in a most orthodox manner.

Com.

Pox of Preaching! will you go steal an Act or two of the new Tragedy?

Rak.

Not I I go to no Tragedy but the Tragedy of *Tom Thumb*.

Com.

The Tragedy of *Tom Thumb!* what the Devil is that?

The Letter Writers

Rak.

Why, Sir, it is a Tragedy that makes me laugh: and if your Sermons will do as much, I shall be glad to make one of your A

Com.

Will you to the Tavern?

Rak.

No, I am engaged.

Com.

Engaged; then it must be to a Bawdy-house, and I'll along with you.

Rak.

Indeed, you cannot, my young Levite; for mine is a private Bawdy-House, and you will not be admitted, even tho' you ha

Com.

If thy Engagement be not pressing, thou shalt go along with me: I will introduce thee to a charming fine Girl, a Relation o

Rak.

Do'st thou think me dull enough to undergo the Ceremonies of being introduced by a Relation to a modest Woman ? Hast

Com.

No, Sir, she is married already. There are a Brace of them, as fine Women as you have seen, and both married to old Husb

Rak.

Nay, then they are worth my Acquaintance, and some other time thou shalt introduce me to them.

Com.

Nay, thou shalt go drink Tea with one of them now It is but just by I dined there to day, and my Uncle is now gone abroad

Rak.

The first two Lamps!

Com.

Ay, no farther Her Husband's Name is *Wisdom*.

Rak.

By all that's unlucky, the very Woman I have sent *Risque* to!

[Aside.

Com.

Come, we'll go make her a Visit now, and To-morrow I'll carry thee to my Aunt *Softly*.

Rak.

Another Mistress of mine, by Lucifer.

[Aside.

Hast thou no more Female Relations in Town?

Com.

No more! Won't two serve your unreasonable Appetite.

Rak.

But thou seemest to be so free of them, I could wish thee, for the sake of the Publick, related to all the Beauties in *Christen*

Com.

Ha, ha, ha. Do not I tell thee they are young and handsome, and that their Husbands are old.

Rak.

And thou wilt not take it amiss if one were to dub an Uncle of thine a Cuckold.

Com.

Hearkee, *Tom*, if thou had'st read as much as I, thou would'st know that Cuckold is no such Term of Reproach as it is imag

Rak.

The Letter Writers

How!

Com.

Ay, Sir, When an old Man goes publickly to Church with a young Woman, he proclaims that Title loud enough: But come

Rak.

You must excuse me now.

Com.

When I make you such another Offer you shan't refuse it: I thought you would have postpon'd any Business for a Mistress

Rak.

But I am in Pursuit of another Mistress, one I am pre-engaged to Afterwards, Sir, I am at the Service of your whole Family

Com.

Success attend your Iniquity I'll enquire for you at the *Tilt-Yard*. So your Servant.

Rak.

Yours A very pretty Fellow this I find, if he should discover my Amours, he is not likely to be any Obstacle to them.

SCENE III.

Rakel, Risque.

Rak.

So, Sir.

Risq.

Sir, I have with great Dexterity deliver'd your Honour's Letter, and with equal Pleasure have brought you an Answer.

Rak. [Reads.]

Be here at the Time you mention, my Husband is luckily out of the way. I wish your Happiness be (as you say) entirely in the
Elizabeth Wisdom.

Ay, now thou hast performed well indeed, and I'll give thee all the Money I have in my Pocket for an Encouragement. Ods

Risq.

Very fine Encouragement truly! This it is to serve a poor, beggarly, lousy If half this Dexterity had been employ'd in the S

SCENE IV.

Mr. Wisdom, Mrs. Wisdom, Rakel.

Mrs. Wisd.

Sure never any thing was so lucky for us as this threatening Letter: While my Husband imagined I should go abroad, he was

Rak.

How shall I requite this Goodness which can make such a Confinement easy for my sake.

Mr. Wisd.

The Woman that thinks it worth her While to confine her self for her Gallant, thinks her self sufficiently requited by his C

Betty [Entring]

Oh! Madam, here's my Master come home: had he not quarrell'd with the Footman at the Door, he had certainly found you together.

Rak.

What shall I do?

Mrs. Wisd.

Step into this Closet quick, quick, what can have sent him home so soon?

SCENE V.

Mr. Wisdom, Mrs. Wisdom.

[Mrs. Wisd.]

Oh! my Dear! you are better than your Word now; this is kind indeed to return so much earlier than your Promise.

The Letter Writers

Mr. Wisd.

Mr. *Mortgageland* hath disappointed me: I'm afraid some body else hath taken him off my Hands; so let some of the Servants

Mrs. Wisd.

Was ever such Ill-luck they are both in my Closet. Lord, Child, why will you put on that odious Night-Gown; indeed, it doth

Mr. Wisd.

Pshaw! it doth not become a Wife to dislike her Husband in any Dress whatsoever.

Mrs. Wisd.

Well, my Dear, if you command, I will be always ready to obey. *Betty*, go fetch your Master's Night-Gown out of my Closet

Mr. Wisd.

Come, give me a Kiss; you look very pretty to Night, you little wanton Rogue. adod! I shall, I shall make thee amends for

Mrs. Wisd.

So, you won't put the Money where the Rogues order you, and you'll have your poor Wife murder'd to save twenty Guineas

Mr. Wisd.

If you stay at home, you will not be murder'd, and I shall save many a twenty Guineas.

Mrs. Wisd.

But then, I shall lose all my Acquaintance by not returning their Visits.

Mr. Wisd.

Then I shall lose all my Torments: and truly, if I owe this Loss to the Letter-Writer, I am very much obliged to him. I would

SCENE VI.

Mrs. Softly, Mr. Wisdom, Mrs. Wisdom.

Mr. Softly.

Mr. Wisdom, Your Servant. Madam, I am your humble Servant: A Friend of yours, *Mr. Wisdom*, expects you at *Tom's*.

Mr. Wisd.

Nay, if he be come, I must leave thee for one Hour, my Dear. So, take the Key of my Closet and fetch me that Bundle of Papers

Mrs. Wisd.

I will, my Dear.

[This is extremely lucky.]

SCENE VII.

Mr. Wisdom, Mr. Softly.

Mr. Softly.

Well: Doth the Plot succeed notably.

Mr. Wisd.

To my Wish. She hath not ventured to stir abroad since. This Demand you have drawn upon my Wife, for 20 *l.* will be of great

Mr. Soft.

I wish your threatening Letter to my Wife had met with the same Success: but, alack! it hath had a quite contrary Effect. She

Mr. Wisd.

But if it came to that Extremity I would lock up my Doors, and shut her in, on Pretence of shutting Rogues out.

Mr. Soft.

But I cannot shut her Companions out: I should have a Regiment of Women on my Back for ill-using my Wife, and have a Sentence of Cuckoldom pronounced against me at all the Assemblies and Visiting-Days in Town: If I could prevail by Stratagem; well: But I am too certain of the Enemy's Strength to attempt the subduing her by Force.

The Letter Writers

Mr. Wisd.

Thank my Stars, my Wife is of another Temper.

Mr. Soft.

You will not take it ill, Brother *Wisdom*: but your Wife is not a Woman of that Spirit as mine is.

Mr. Wisd.

No, Heaven be praised; for of all evil Spirits, that of a Woman surely is the worst.

Mr. Soft.

Truly, it is a Perfection that costs a Man as much as it is worth.

Mr. Wisd.

But what do you intend to do.

Mr. Soft.

I know not. Something I must; for my House at present is like a Garrison, I have continually Guards Mounting and Dismounting.

SCENE VIII.

Mr. Softly, Mr. Wisdom, Mrs. Wisdom.

Mrs. Wisd.

Here are the Parchments, my Dear.

Mr. Wisd.

You know the Necessity of my Engagement, and will excuse me.

Mr. Soft.

No Ceremony with me, Brother.

Mr. Wisd.

If you will stay with my Wife till my Return, she will be much obliged to you: You may entertain one another at Picquet; and I will be your Partner.

Mrs. Wisd.

I shall be too hard for him; for I fancy he is a Player much about your Pitch, and you know I always get the better of you.

Mr. Wisd.

Well, well, to it, to it. I leave you together.

SCENE IX.

Mr. Softly, Mrs. Wisdom.

Mr. Soft.

I am but a bad Player, Madam; but to divert you.

Mrs. Wisd.

How shall I get rid of him? I am not much inclined to Picquet at present, Mr. *Softly*.

Mr. Soft.

Hum! very likely! any other Game that you please if I can play at it.

Mrs. Wisd.

No, you can't play at it for to be plain, I am obliged to write a Letter into the Country. I hope you'll excuse me.

Mr. Soft.

Oh! dear Sister! I will divert the Time with one of these News-Papers: Ay, here's the *Grub-street* Journal An exceeding good one.

Mrs. Wisd.

But I am the worst Person in the World at writing: The least Noise disturbs me.

Mr. Soft.

I am as mute as a Fish.

Mrs. Wisd.

I know not how to express it, I am so ashamed of the Humour. but I cannot write whilst any one is in the Room.

Mr. Soft.

Hum! very probable! there is no accounting for some Humours. Well you may trust me in the Closet. This Closet and I have been acquainted since the first of the Year.

The Letter Writers

[Offers to go in.

Mrs. Wisd.

By no means, I have a thing in that Closet you must not see.

SCENE X.

Mr. Softly, Mrs. Wisdom, Commons.

Com.

What is not Uncle *Wisdom* returned yet?

Mrs. Wisd.

I am surprized you should return, Sir, unless you have learnt more Civility than you shewed at Dinner to day; your Behaviour

Com.

You may be as scurrilous as you please, Aunt: It hath been always my Resolution to see my Relations as seldom as I can, and when I do see them, never to mind what they say. I have been at your House too, Uncle *Softly*, and

Mr. Wisd.

For Heavens sake, dear Brother, do any thing to get him hence.

Mr. Soft.

Well, Nephew, as far as a Pint goes.

Com.

Ay, ay, a Pint is the best Introduction to a Bottle. Aunt, will you go with us.

Mrs. Wisd.

Faugh! Brute.

Com.

If you won't, you may let it alone.

Mrs. Soft.

Sister, your humble Servant.

Mrs. Wisd.

I'll take care to prevent all Danger of a Surprize *[Locks the Door]* there. Captain, Captain, you may come out, the Coast is

SCENE XI.

Mrs. Softly, Rakel.

Rak.

These Husbands make the most confounded long Visits.

Mrs. Wisd.

Husbands! Why, I have had half a dozen Visitants since he went away; I thought you had over-heard us.

Rak.

Not I truly, I have been entertaining my self with the *Whole Duty of Man*, at the other end of the Closet.

Mrs. Wisd.

You are very unconcerned in Danger, Captain

Rak.

Yes, Madam, Danger is my Profession, and these sort of Dangers are so common to me that they give me no Surprize. I ha

Mrs. Wisd.

Rather with the Wives I'm afraid.

Rak.

No, Madam, I always consider the Wife as the Town, and the Husband as the Enemy in Possession of it. I am not for burn

Fortress, I march in the most gentle peaceable manner imaginable. So, Madam, if you please, we will walk into the Closet

Mrs. Wisd.

What to read the *Whole Duty of Man*, Ha, ha, ha.

Rak.

Ay, my Angel! and you shall say, I practise what I read.

The Letter Writers

[Takes her in his Arms, Mrs. Wisdom knocks, she starts from them.]

Mr. Wisd. [without]

What, have you shut your selves in?

Rak.

Our selves! oh! the Devil, doth he know I am here.

Mr. Wisd.

No, no, no, to your Hole, quick, quick, quick.

Mr. Wisd.

Why, Child, *Mr. Softly*, don't you hear? what have you play'd your selves asleep.

Mrs. Wisd.

Oh! my Dear, are you there?

SCENE XII.

Mr. Wisdom, Mrs. Wisdom.

Mr. Wisd. [Entering.]

If we were not so nearly related, I should not like this locking up together. Hey-day! Where is my Brother *Softly*?

Mrs. Wisd.

Alas! my Dear, my ungracious Nephew hath been here and taken him away to the Tavern.

Mr. Wisd.

Why will you suffer that Fellow to come within my Doors, when you know it is against my Will.

Mrs. Wisd.

Alas, Child, I don't know how to shut your Doors against your own Relations.

Mr. Wisd.

And what were you doing, hey? that you were lock'd in so close by your self.

Mrs. Wisd.

I was only saying a few Prayers, my Dear; but indeed these Incendiaries run so in my Head I never think my self safe enough.

Mr. Wisd.

Heaven bless the Hour I first thought of putting them there.

[Aside.]

Mrs. Wisd.

Well, Child, this is very good in you to come home so soon.

Mr. Wisd.

I only call on you in my way to the City; for I must speak to Alderman *Longhorns* before I sleep. I am sorry you have lost Brother *Softly*; he might have diverted you a little.

Mrs. Wisd.

I can divert my self well enough in my Closet for that matter.

Mr. Wisd.

Ay, do so. Reading is an innocent and instructive Diversion. I will be back with the utmost Expedition: Is your Closet lock'd?

Mr. Wisd.

What shall I do? Lud, my Dear, I I have lost the Key, I think.

Mr. Wisd.

Then it must be broke open; for they are of the utmost Consequence. Nay, if you can't tell where you have laid it, I can't stay.

Mrs. Wisd.

Nay then, Confidence assist me Here, here it is, Child. I have nothing but Assurance to trust to; and I am resolv'd to exert

The Letter Writers

[Opens the Door, Rakel runs against him, throws him down; he looks on Mrs. Wisdom, she points to the other Door and he runs out.]

[Mrs. Wisdom shrieks.]

Mr. Wisd.

Oh! I am murder'd.

Mrs. Wisd.

The Incendiaries are come. My Dream is out, my Dream is out.

Mr. Wisd.

My Horns are out.

Mrs. Wisd.

Oh! my Dear, sure never any thing was so lucky as this Stay of yours. Heaven knows what he would have done to me had

Mr. Wisd.

Ay, ay, my Dear, I know what he would have done to you very well.

Mrs. Wisd.

I hope you will be advis'd, and put the Money where you are desir'd before any thing worse happens.

Mr. Wisd.

I shall put you out of Doors before any thing worse happens.

Mrs. Wisd.

My Dear?

Mr. Wisd.

My Devil! come, come, confess, it is done already, am I one or no.

Mrs. Wisd.

Are you what, my Love?

Mr. Wisd.

Am I a Beast? a Monster? a Husband.

Mrs. Wisd.

Defend me. Sure the Fright hath turn'd your Brain. Are you a Husband? yes, I hope so, or what am I?

Mr. Wisd.

Ah! Crocodile! I know very well what sort of Robber was here. Nay, perhaps, he was a Robber, and you may have conspired

Mrs. Wisd.

Oh! barbarous, cruel, inhuman Aspersion!

Mrs. Wisd.

Is he a Conjurer as well as a Thief, and could he go through the Key-hole? How came he into that Closet? How came he in?

Mrs. Wisd.

I swear by

Mr. Wisd.

Hold, hold. I don't question but you will swear through a thousand Doors to get off.

Enter John.

John.

Oh! Sir, this Moment, as I was walking in the Yard, I spied a Fellow offering to get in at my Lady's Closet Window.

Mr. Wisd.

How!

John.

Dear Sir, step but into the Closet, you will find the Window broke all to Pieces.

The Letter Writers

Mr. Wisd.

The Villains! *John*, take the Candle and go in before me.

Mrs. Wisd.

Miraculous Fortune! Now will I stand it out that *Rakel* got in the same Way. Sure it must have been the Devil that hath bro

Mr. Wisd.

John, Do you watch carefully in the Yard this Night. I protest a Man will shortly be safe no where.

Mrs. Wisd.

Not when Thieves get through Keyholes.

Mr. Wisd.

Come, I ask thy Pardon; I am sorry I suspected thee: I will make thee amends, I will I will stay at home this Week with th

Mrs. Wisd.

You know the way to mollify me.

Mr. Wisd.

Why, I was but in jest: I never thought you had any hand in the Letter.

Mrs. Wisd.

Did you not indeed.

Mr. Wisd.

No, indeed; may I be worse than robb'd if I did.

Mrs. Wisd.

Well, but don't jest so any more.

Mr. Wisd.

I promise you: but I must not lose a Moment before I go into the City

Mrs. Wisd.

And will you leave me again to Night.

Mr. Wisd.

You must excuse Necessity, my Dear.

Mrs. Wisd.

My Dear, I shall always obey your Commands without any farther Reason.

Mr. Wisd.

What a happy Man am I in a Wife! If all Women were but such Blessings to their Husbands as thou art, what a Heaven wo

The End of the First ACT.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

SCENE The Street.

Rakel, and afterwards Risque.

Rak.

Love and War I find still require the same Talents; to be unconcerned in Danger is absolutely necessary to both. I know no

Risq.

I have broke the Windows with a Vengeance, I have made room enough for your Honour to march in at the Head of a Cor

Rak.

No, Mr. *Inquisitive*, I have done it for the Lady's sake, to give her an Opportunity of saying I broke in there; for when I wa

Risq.

But if he should take you at at your Word, and prosecute you, who would bring your Honour off?

Rak.

The Letter Writers

No matter: It were better fifty such as I were hang'd, than one Woman should lose her Reputation. But as the Closet was full
Risq.

I fancy indeed it would be no Disgrace, to be thought to have stolen all you have in your Pocket.

Rak.

What's that you are muttering? Hearkee, Rascal, be sure not to go to bed, I shall not be at home till early in the Morning Now for my unkind Mistress, I may have better Success there than I found with my kind ones.

How bless'd is a Soldier while licens'd to range,

How pleasant this Whore for that to exchange. Risq.

Go thy Ways, young Satan; the old Gentleman himself cannot be much worse. Let me consider a little. My Master doth not come home till Morning, the Closet is full of things of Value, and I can very easily get into it. Agad, and I'll have a Trial. I am in no great danger of being caught in the Fact; so if I bring off a good handsome Booty My Master stands fair for being hang'd for it. Heyday! What the Devil have we here?

SCENE II.

Commons, with Whores and Musick, Risque.

Com. [Sings]

Tol, lol de rol lol Now am I *Alexander the Great*, and you my *Statira* and *Roxana*, you Sons of Whores, play me *Alexander's*

I Fid.

We don't know it an't please your Worship.

Com.

Don't you? Why then play me the *Black Joke*.

2 Wh.

Play the *White Joke*, that's my Favourite.

Com.

Ay, ay, Black or White, they are all alike to me.

[Musick plays.]

2 Wh.

We had better go to the Tavern, my Dear; the Justices of Peace are so severe against us, we shall be taken up and sent to *Bridewell*.

Com.

The Justices be hang'd, they dare not attack a Man of my Quality: The Moment they knew me to be a Lord, they would let me go.

I Wh.

Nay, my Dear, I ask your Pardon; I did not know you were a Lord.

Com.

Yes, my Dear, yes; my Lord *Kilfob*, that's my Title, of the Kingdom of *Ireland*.

Risq. [Advancing.]

My Lord *Kilfob*, I am glad to see your Honour in Town.

Com.

Ha! *Ned Risque*, give me thy Hand, Boy. Come, honest *Risque*, thou shalt go to the Tavern with me, and I'll treat thee with a Whore and a Bottle of Wine But hearkee.

[Whispers.]

The Letter Writers

1 Wh.

A Lord, and so familiar with this Fellow! This is some Clerk or Apprentice strutting about with his Master's Sword on.

2 Wh.

I fancy, *Suky*, this is a Sharper, and no Coming-down Cull.

1 Wh.

Ay, damn him, he'll make us pop our Unders for the Reckoning: We'll not go with him.

Com.

If thou can'st lend me half a Crown, do; the Devil take me if I don't pay thee again To-morrow.

Risq.

That I would with all my heart, but I have not one Souse I assure you I am on Business for my Master, and in a great Hurry.

Com.

Get thee gone for a Good-for-nothing Dog as thou art. Come, Sirrah, play on to the Tavern.

2 Wh.

I don't know what you mean, Sir, we are no Company for such as you.

Com.

I own you are not fit Company for a Lord; but no matter, several Lords keep such Company, and since I stoop to you.

1 Wh.

You stoop to us, Scrub.

2 Wh.

You a Lord, you are some Attorney's Clerk or Haberdasher's 'Prentice.

1 Wh.

Do you sit behind a Desk, or stand behind a Compter?

2 Wh.

We're not for such as you, we'd have you to know, Fellow.

Com.

But I am for such as you and that I'll make you know with a Vengeance Whores, Strumpets.

Whores.

Murder, Murder, Robbery, Murder.

Com.

I'll scour you with a Pox.

[Beats them off and returns.]

2 Fid.

I wish we were well rid of this Chap; I wish we get any thing by him.

1 Fid.

I wish we get off with a whole Skin and a whole Fiddle.

Com.

I have paid you off however.

1 Fid.

I wish your Honour would pay us off too, for we are oblig'd to play to some Country Dances.

Com.

Are not you impudent Dogs to ask any thing for such Musick? I'll not give you a Souse; you are a couple of wretched Scra

1 Fid.

Sir, You don't talk like a Gentleman.

Com.

The Letter Writers

Don't I, Sir? Why then I'll act like a Gentleman. *[Draws]* This is the Way a Man of Honour pays Debts, you Dogs; I'll let o

[Link-Boy crosses.]

Here, you, Son of a Whore, come here. Are you the Sun, or the Moon, or one of the Seven Stars.

Link.

Does your Honour want a Light, Sir!

Com.

Want a Light, Sir! Ay, Sir. Do you take me for a Dissenter, you Rascal; do you think I carry my Light within, Sirrah, I trav

A Soph, he is Immortal

And never can decay,

For how should he return to Dust

Who daily wets his Clay.

SCENE III.

Rakel and Mrs. Softly.

Mrs. Soft.

Forget that Letter, it was the Effect of a sudden short-liv'd Anger which arose from a lasting Love: Jealousy is surely the s

Rak.

It is a Proof I always wish to be without, if all my Mistresses were as forward to believe my Sincerity.

Mrs. Soft.

All your Mistresses Bravo.

Rak.

I speak of you, Madam, in the Plural Number, as we do of Kings, from my Reverence; for if I have another Mistress upon

Mrs. Soft.

Marry'd to her which would be Curse enough on both. But do not think, Captain, that should I once discover my Rival, it v

Rak.

By all the Transports we have felt together, by all the eager Raptures which this very Night hath witnessed to my Passion.

[Softly hems without.]

Mrs. Soft.

Oh! Heaven! My Husband is upon the Stairs.

Rak.

A Judgment fallen upon me before I had Forsworn my self Have you no Closet? no Chimney?

Mrs. Soft.

None, nor any Way but this out of the Room, he must see you Say nothing but Bowe, and observe me.

SCENE IV.

Mr. Softly, Mrs. Softly, Rakel.

Mr. Soft.

Sure, never Man was so put to it to get rid of a troublesome Companion.

[Hey-day what's here?]

Mrs. Soft.

Sir, I assure you, I am infinitely oblig'd to you, and so is my

The Letter Writers

Husband; I am sorry he is not at home to return you Thanks.

[She courtesies all this time to him who bows to her.]

Mr. Soft.

What's the matter, Child? what hath the Gentleman done for me?

Mrs. Soft.

Oh! my Dear, I am glad you are come the Gentleman hath done a great deal for me, he hath guarded me home from the P

Mr. Soft.

Ay, we are both infinitely oblig'd to him. Sir, I am your humble Servant; I give you a great many Thanks, Sir, for the Civility you have conferr'd on my Wife. I assure you, Sir, you never did a Favour to any who will acknowledge it more.

Rak.

The Devil take me, if ever I did: I have been as civil to several Wives; but thou art the first Husband that ever thank'd me f

Mr. Soft.

Sir, if you will partake of a small Collation we have within, we shall think our selves much honour'd in your Company.

Rak.

Sir, the Honour would be on my side; but I am unhappily engag'd to sup with the Duke of *Fleetstreet*.

Mr. Soft.

I hope, Sir, you will shortly give us some other Opportunity to thank you.

Mrs. Soft.

Pray, Sir, do not let it be long.

Mr. Soft.

Sir, my Doors will be always open to you.

Rak.

All these Acknowledgments for so small a Gallantry make me asham'd: I was only fortunate in the Occasion of doing wha

Mr. Soft.

Sir, Your most humble Servant.

SCENE V.

Mr. Softly, Mrs. Softly.

Mr. Softly.

I protest one of the civilest Gentlemen I ever saw.

Mrs. Soft.

Most infinitely well-bred.

Mr. Soft.

I have been making a Visit to my Neighbour *Wisdom*, where whom should I meet with but that unlucky Rogue, my Nephew

Mrs. Soft.

He was here just as you went out, and as rude as ever, but I gave him a sufficient Rebuff; I fancy he'll scarce venture here

Mr. Soft.

He will be settled in the Country soon, and so we shall be rid of him quite. But, my Dear, I have some News to tell you, my Brother *Wisdom* hath receiv'd just such another Letter as yours, threatening to murder her in her Chair the first time she goes abroad, unless she lays twenty Guineys under a Stone. Indeed she shews abundance of Prudence on this Occasion by keeping at home; she doth not go abroad and frighten her poor Husband as you do.

Mrs. Soft.

My Sister *Wisdom* receiv'd such a Letter, I am heartily glad you have told me of it, for I owe her a Visit, and on this Occas

The Letter Writers

Mr. Soft.

Why, you would not visit her at this time o'Night.

Mrs. Soft.

Oh! my Dear! it is time enough, it is not yet Ten. Oh! I would not for the World, when she will be sure too that I know it.

Mr. Soft.

Was ever so unfortunate a Wretch as I am! All my Contrivances to keep her at home, do but send her abroad the more. Bu

SCENE VI.

Mr. Wisdom's House.

Rakel, Mrs. Wisdom.

Rak.

To rally again the same Night after such a Rebuff, is, I think, Madam, a sign of uncommon Bravery.

Mrs. Wisd.

What is it in me to lead you to that Rally, Captain, when I must share the chief Part of the Danger too.

Rak.

Why indeed, Madam, to send me Word of this second Retreat of your Husband, was a Kindness I know but one way how

Betty [Entring.]

Oh! Madam! here's Mrs. *Softly* just coming up.

Rak.

Mrs. Softly!

Mrs. Wisd.

How came she to be let in, were not my Orders, Not at home?

Bet.

She said she knew you were at home, and would see her. She will be here this Instant.

Rak. [Offers to go into the Closet.]

The Door is lock'd.

Mrs. Wisd.

And my Husband hath the Key It signifies not much if she sees you.

Rak.

Oh! Madam, I am tenderer of your Reputation. This Table will hide me.

[Gets under it.]

SCENE VII.

Mrs. Wisdom, Mrs. Softly.

Mrs. Soft.

Oh! My Dear! I am exceedingly concern'd to hear of your Misfortune; I ran away the very Minute Mr. *Softly* brought me t

Mrs. Wisd.

I am very much obliged to you, my Dear.

Mrs. Soft.

But I hope you are not frighten'd, my Dear.

Mrs. Wisd.

It is impossible to avoid a little Surprize on such an Occasion.

Mrs. Soft.

Oh yes! a little Surprize at first; but when one hath sufficient Guards about one there can be no Danger. Have not you hear

Mrs. Wisd.

And venture abroad so late!

Mrs. Soft.

The Letter Writers

Ha, ha, ha! Have I not a vast deal of Courage?

Mrs. Wisd.

Indeed, I think so. I am sure I have not slept one Wink these three Nights.

Mr. Soft.

I have not slept much for I was up two of them at a Ball.

Mrs. Wisd.

Why you venture abroad as fearless as if no such thing had happen'd.

Mrs. Soft.

It is only the Expense of a Footman or two the more; no one would stay at home for that, you know: Sure you don't intend self any longer on this account. I would not stay at home three Days, if I had receiv'd as many Letters as go by the Post in

Mrs. Wisd.

You have more Courage than I: The Apprehension of the Danger with me would quite extinguish the Pleasure.

Mrs. Soft.

Oh! you cowardly Creature, there is no Pleasure without Danger; but I thank Heaven my Thoughts are always so full of th

SCENE VIII.

Mr. Wisdom, Mrs. Wisdom, Mrs. Softly, Constable, Servants.

John.

I'll take my Oath I saw him go in.

Mrs. Wisd.

Bless me, my Dear, what's the Matter?

Mr. Wisd.

Don't be frighten'd, Child; this Fellow hath seen the Rogue that was here to Day get into the House again. *Mr. Constable,*

John.

Ay, ay, let me alone; do you but lay Hands on him, and I'll knock his Brains out.

Mrs. Soft.

Lud, Sister, how you tremble? Take Example by me and don't be frighten'd. Here, *John, Thomas,* bring up your Blunderbu

Mrs. Wisd.

Support me, or I faint.

SCENE IX.

Risque [discover'd.]

Const.

You may as well submit, Sir, for we are too strong for you.

John.

Confess, Sirrah! confess. How many are there of you?

Mr. Wisd.

Search his Pockets, Mr. Constable.

Mrs. Wisd.

What do I see!

Aside.

Mrs. Soft.

Captain *Rakel's* Man!

Aside.

Mr. Wisd.

It is sufficient! the Goods are found upon him. Sirrah! confess your Accomplices this Moment, you have no other way to save your Life

The Letter Writers

than by becoming Evidence against your Gang.

John.

Learn to betray your Friends, Sirrah! if you would rob like a Gentleman and not be hang'd for it.

Mr. Wisd.

And so, Sir, I suppose it was you that writ the threat'ning Letter to my Wife. Why don't you speak? You may as well confes

Const.

Would it not be your wisest way to impeach your Companions; so you may not only save your Life, but get rewarded for y

Mr. Wisd.

Is the Rascal dumb? We'll find Ways to make him speak I warrant you.

SCENE X.

To them, Commons, drunk and singing.

Com.

Hey! Uncle! what a Pox do you keep open House at this time o'Night. Oons, I thought you used to sneak to Bed at soberer

Mr. Wisd.

How often must I forbid you my House?

Com.

Sir, you may forbid me as often as you please, when your Door is open I shall never be able to pass by.

Mr. Wisd.

You shall find a very warm Reception.

Com.

As warm as you please, for it is damn'd cold without: But come, where's your Liquor, you do not entertain all this Compan

Mr. Wisd.

Sir, if you do not go out of my Doors this Instant you shall be forc'd out.

Com.

Damn your Doors, Sir, and your Tables too, I'll turn your House out o'Doors, Sir.

[Over-turns the Table and discovers Rakel.]

SCENE XI.

Mr. Wisdom, Mrs. Wisdom, Mrs. Softly, Rakel, Risque, Constable, Servants.

John.

More Rogues! more Rogues!

Const.

I have him secure enough.

Mr. Wisd.

This second Visit, Sir, is exceeding kind. I suppose, Sir, this is the honest Gentleman that conveys away the Goods, we ha

Rak.

Damnation!

Aside.

Mrs. Wisd.

Ruin'd beyond Retrieval.

Aside.

The Letter Writers

Mr. Soft.

May I believe my Eyes.

Aside.

Mr. Wisd. [To Risque.]

You will have but a short time to consider on't, so it were good for you to resolve on being an Evidence, and save your own Neck at the Expence of his.

Risq.

Well, Sir, if I must peach I must, I think.

Mr. Wisd. [To Rakel.]

Do you know this Gentleman, Sir?

Rak.

Aside, Confusion! What shall I do?

Const.

How the Rogues stare at one another! What, did you never see one another before?

Risq.

Pox take him, I wish I had never seen him I'm sure; I am like to pay dear enough for his Acquaintance.

Mr. Wisd.

You have no other way to prevent it than by swearing against him.

Risq.

Ay, ay, Sir, I'll swear against him; he brought me to this Shame, so let him look to it: I never took these Courses till I became

Rak.

Ha!

Const.

And will you swear that this Fellow wrote the Letter to my Master, to threaten to murder my Lady whenever she went abroad?

Risq.

Ay, that I will I saw him write it with my own Eyes.

Mr. Wisd.

You saw him write it?

Risq.

Yes, an't please your Honour.

Mrs. Wisd.

I find this Fellow will do our Business without any other Evidence.

[Aside.]

Mrs. Soft.

Can this be possible?

[Aside.]

Mr. Wisd.

And so if my Wife had ventur'd abroad, you had put my Design in Execution.

Risq.

She would have been murder'd the very first time, an't please your Honour.

Mr. Wisd.

See there now Did I not advise you like a Friend. In short, I know not when it

The Letter Writers

will be safe for you to stir without your own Doors.

Mrs. Wisd.

And was I to have fallen by the Hands of this Gentleman?

Risq.

Yes, Madam; he was to have murder'd your Ladyship, and I was to have robb'd you.

Rak.

Dog! Villain!

Risq.

Don't give ill Language, *Tom*, I have often told you what your Rogueries would come to. I told you, you would never leave

Rak.

Villain, be assur'd, I will be reveng'd on thee.

Risq.

I desire of your Worship that we may not be put together, I do not care for such Company.

Mr. Wisd.

Mr. Constable, convey them to the Round-house, let them be kept separately, and in the Morning you shall hear from me.

Rak. [To Wisd.]

Sir, shall I beg to speak one Word with you?

Mr. Wisd.

You are sure he hath no Arms about him, Mr. Constable.

Const.

No, Sir, he hath no Arms about him nor any thing else.

Rak.

This Prosecution will end in nothing but your own Shame; [*Apart to Wisd.*] so you had best set me at Liberty: Be assur'd t

Mr. Wisd.

And is this what you have to say, Sir?

Risq.

Don't believe a word he says, Sir; for he is one of the damnedst Liars that ever was hang'd: He'll tell you he kept a Justice

Mr. Wisd.

He says he kept you as such.

Risq.

Ay, there it is now. Art thou not a sad Dog, *Tom*? But thou wilt pay for all thy Rogueries shortly.

[Wisdom points to the Constable.]

Const.

Come, bring them along; march, you poor beggarly Rascal you a Rogue and be damn'd to you, without a Penny in your Pocket.

SCENE XII.

Mr. Wisdom, Mrs. Wisdom, Mrs Softly.

Mr. Wisd.

Don't be frighten'd, my Dear, while you are at home; you are in no Danger. Sister *Softly*, I am sorry you find my Family in

Mrs. Soft.

I am heartily sorry for your sake, Dear Brother; but Heaven knows how soon it may be our own Fate; for I suppose you know

Mrs. Wisd.

We must find some way to break the Neck of this Trade. Here's my poor Wife will not be able to stir abroad this Winter.

Mrs. Soft.

Not stir abroad this Winter! Marry forbid it; she hath staid at home longer already than I would have done, had the Danger

Mr. Wisd.

The Letter Writers

Oh lud! here's Doctrine for my Wife. May your Body never enter my Doors again I pray Heaven. [*Aside.*] But if you have

Mrs. Soft.

Oh! dear Sir, the Wife who loves her Husband as well as her self is an exceeding good Christian. That Man must be a mos

Mr. Wisd.

Hoity-toity! I hope you'll allow that a Woman ought to avoid some Pleasures for the sake of her Husband.

Mrs. Soft.

Oh! certainly! Ought, no doubt on't. But to speak freely, I am afraid when once a Woman's Pleasures run counter to the In when once she finds greater Pleasures Abroad than at Home, I am afraid all the threaten'g Letters in *Europe* will not keep

Mr. Wisd.

Oh lud! oh lud!

Mrs. Soft.

But to shew you that I am of a contrary Opinion, I will leave the most agreeable Company in the World to go home to my

Mr. Wisd.

I will see you into the Chair.

Mrs. Soft.

Sister, your Servant.

Mrs. Wisd.

My Dear I am yours. What shall I think! *Rakel* cannot be guilty of such Villany. But then how came his Servant here? He

SCENE XIII.

Mr. Wisdom, Mrs. Wisdom.

Mrs. Wisd.

I wish you well home, Madam; and may you never come abroad again. My Dear, I am afraid she hath quite struck you dur

Mrs. Wisd.

Alas! my Dear, I wish this Affair had not happen'd. I vow, I feel a sort of Pity for these poor Wretches, whom Necessity h

Mrs. Wisd.

His Method of robbing, perhaps, and the next time cut our Throats.

Mrs. Wisd.

Strict Justice seems too rigorous in my Opinion; and tho' it may be a womanish Weakness, I could wish you would forgive

Mr. Wisd.

Be assur'd, my Love, it is a womanish Weakness which makes you plead for the Life of a young Fellow. By the Womens

Mrs. Wisd.

In one so young, Vice hath not so strong a Root.

Mr. Wisd.

You lye, my Dear, Vice hath often the strongest Root in a young Fellow. So, say no more, I am determin'd he shall be hang'd; I will go take my Mess of Sugar-Sops and to bed. In the Morning early I will go to a Justice of the Peace.

Mrs. Wisd.

But consider, my Dear, will you not provoke the rest of the Gang to Revenge?

Mr. Wisd.

Fear nothing, my Dear.

While in your Husband's Arms you keep your Treasure

You're free from Fear of Hurt. *Mrs. Wisd.*

or Hope of Pleasure.

The End of the Second Act.

ACT III.

SCENE I.

SCENE, An Inner-Room in the Round-house.

Commons, Rakel.

Com.

Prithee, *Tom*, forgive me.

Rak.

Forgive thee! Death and Damnation! Do'st thou insult my Misfortunes? Do'st thou think I am come to the Tree, where I am

Com.

Amen, if I design'd thee any Mischief.

Rak.

Rat your Designs; it is equal to me whether you design'd it or not, and I will forgive you and that Rascal *Risque* at the same

Com.

Nay, but dear *Tom*, why the Danger is not so great as thou apprehendest; it will never be believ'd that thou didst intend to rob my Uncle: Thy Reputation will prevent that.

Rat.

But it will be believ'd that I intended to cuckold your Uncle; my Reputation will not prevent that: And I would rather sacrifice

Com.

To save the Devil, you should lie with all my Aunts, or with my Mother and Sisters: Nay, I will carry a Letter for you to a

Rak.

Carry a Letter! If thou wilt get me two Letters that were taken out of my Pocket when I was search'd, I will forgive thee thy

Com.

But I suppose he hath read them already?

Rak.

Then they are ruin'd already.

Com.

Prithee, what are the Letters?

Rak.

I believe, Sir, you may guess what Business is between them and me.

Com.

Hearkee, *Tom*. There is no Smut in them.

Rak.

There is nothing more in them than from the one an Invitation to come and see her, and from the other a very civil Message

Const. [Enters.]

Captain, you must go before the Justice. As for you, Sir, you have your Liberty to go where you please: I hope you will be

Rak.

Mr. *Constable*, I am oblig'd to you, and the next time you take me up I hope I shall have more Money in my Pocket. Come, bring the Ladies off in the easiest manner imaginable.

Rak.

What hath the Devil inspir'd thee with?

Com.

Suppose now I should swear that I forg'd their Hands. Luckily for the Purpose I have had a Quarrel this very Day with my

Rak.

Which we might if they were as ready to believe any thing as thou art to swear any thing; but as the Case happeneth to be

Com.

The Letter Writers

The Invitation must be from my Aunt *Wisdom* by his being there odd, if there be no Direction, it may do Thou art such a d

SCENE II.

Mr. Wisdom, Mrs. Wisdom.

Mr. Wisd.

Pray, no more of your Good–nature, my Dear. It is a very good–natur'd thing truly, to save one Rogue's Throat, that he ma

Mrs. Wisd.

Nay, my Dear, I dare not trust my self even in my own House without you, now you have provok'd the Gang. So, if you ar

Mr. Wisd.

Indeed, my Dear, I will carry you to a Masquerade as soon. No, no; no more visiting there. If my Sister's Husband's Broth half an Hour than half a dozen modern Comedies; nay, than the lewd Epilogues to as many modern Tragedies.

Mrs. Wisd.

Which you never suffer me to go to, tho you seldom miss your self.

Mr. Wisd.

Well, I must not lose a Moment, Good–morrow.

Mrs. Wisd.

So you leave me behind to be murder'd.

Mr. Wisd.

You'll come to no harm, I warrant you.

Mr. Wisd.

I cannot think that, when I know what you are going upon. If this generous Creature should have Honour enough to preser

SCENE III.

Mrs. Wisdom, Betty.

Mrs. Wisd.

Call a Chair.

Bet.

Madam!

Mrs. Wisd.

Call a Chair.

Bet.

And is your Ladyship resolv'd to venture abroad?

Mrs. Wisd.

I begin to laugh at the Danger I apprehended. But, however, that I may not be too bold, order the Footman to take a Blund

Bet.

I am heartily glad to see your Ladyship hath so much Courage; I always lik'd those Families the best where the Ladies gov Ladies govern there are Secrets, and where there are Secrets there are Vails I liv'd with a Lady once who used to give her

Mrs. Wisd.

Go, do as I bid you in a Moment, I have no Time to lose; I will but put on my Mantle and be ready.

SCENE IV.

Mrs. Softly's House.

Mrs. Softly [Alone.]

Mrs. Soft.

That he should convey himself under her Table without her Knowledge is something difficult to believe. Nor can I imagin

SCENE V.

Mr. Softly, Mrs. Softly.

Mr. Softly.

My Dear, your Servant: No News of my Brother *Wisdom* yet; I have been considering how lucky it is that ours was not the

Mrs. Soft.

Heaven send the Gang be quite broke, I shall be oblig'd to make more Servants mount the Guard now whenever I go out.

The Letter Writers

Mrs. Soft.

It would be much more advisable for you to stay at home, and then no one need mount Guard upon you but your Husband

Mrs. Soft.

Never name it, I am no more safe at Home than Abroad; for if the Rogues should set our House on Fire, I am sure no one would wish to be in it.

Mr. Soft.

Still my Arguments retort upon me, and like Food to ill Blood promote the Disease, not the Cure. Well, my Dear, take you

Mrs. Wisd.

Why do you wish so?

Mr. Soft.

Because I am sure you must be lam'd first.

Mrs. Soft.

Why indeed, my Dear, I think no one would stay at home who had Legs to go abroad.

Mr. Soft.

Truly, my Dear, if I were sure she would have staid at home, I would have chosen a Wife without Legs before the finest le

Servant [Enters]

Sir, Mr. *Wisdom* to wait on your Worship.

Mrs. Soft.

Shew him up: Will you stay and hear the Trial.

Mrs. Soft.

No, I have other Business; by that time I am dress'd, I expect a Lady to call on me to go to another Trial; I mean the Rehea

SCENE VI.

Mr. Wisdom, Mrs. Softly.

Mrs. Soft.

Brother *Wisdom*, your Servant: My Wife tells me you have made a Discovery of the Incendiaries. Ha, ha, ha! she little thin

Mr. Wisd.

No, nor do you think who will appear to have written them.

Mr. Soft.

I hope we shall not appear to have written them.

Mr. Wisd.

No, no. One of the Fellows I have in Custody offers to swear it on the other.

Mr. Soft.

How! but you know we cannot admit of such a Testimony, whereof we know the Falsehood.

Mr. Wisd.

And what then? you don't take the false Oath, do you? Are you to answer for the Sins of another.

Mr. Soft.

But will not the other Circumstances do without that of the Letter?

Mr. Wisd.

Yes, they will do to hang him; but will not have the same Terror on our Wives.

Mr. Soft.

I am glad of it with all my Heart, I am sure I have severely paid for all the Terrors I have given my Wife: If I could bring h

Mr. Wisd.

Well, Brother, if it be so, I have no Reason to repent having been a Valetudinarian. but let me tell you, Brother, you do no

Mr. Soft.

And let me tell you, Brother, you do not know what it is to have a Woman of Spirit to govern.

Mr. Wisd.

The Letter Writers

A Fig for her Spirit, I know what it is to have a virtuous Wife; and perhaps I am the only Man in Town that know what it is
Mr. Soft.

Brother, do not upbraid me with my Wife's going abroad: If she doth, it is in the best Company. And for Virtue for that, S

Mr. Wisd.

Ay, ay, and I believe so too But don't let the Squeamishness of
your Conscience put a stop to my Success: And let me tell you, if you
are not advantaged by the Stratagem, you will be disadvantaged by the
Discovery; for if you put such a Secret into your Wife's Bosom, let me
tell you, you are not *Solomon* the Second.

SCENE VII.

Mr. Wisdom, Mr. Softly, Constable, Rakel, Risque, Clerk, Servants.

Servant.

Sir, Here is a Constable with some Prisoners.

Mr. Soft.

Bring them in. Brother *Wisdom*, I will stretch both Law and Conscience as wide as possible to serve you.

Const.

Come, Gentlemen, walk in and take your Places.

Mr. Soft.

Are these the two Fellows, Mr. Constable, that you found last Night broke into Mr. *Wisdom*'s House.

Const.

Yes, an't please your Worship.

Risq.

We are the two Rogues, an't please your Worship.

Mr. Wisd.

This Fellow is to be admitted Evidence against the other.

Risq.

Yes, I am Evidence for the King.

Mr. Soft.

Where is my Clerk? Mr. *Sneaksby*, let that Fellow be sworn.

Risq.

May it please your Worship, I have a sort of Scruple of Conscience; I have been told that you are apter to hire Rogues to s

Mr. Soft.

What doth the simple Fellow mean?

Mr. Wisd.

Perhaps we shall not want his Evidence; here are some Papers which were found in the other's Pocket. I have open'd one o

Mr. Soft.

Mr. Sneaksby, read these Papers.

Sneaks. [reads]

To Ensign Rakel. Parole, Plunder.

Mr. Wisd.

Plunder's the Word, agad!

Sneaksby.

For the Guard To-morrow Ensign Rakel, two Serjeants, two Corporals, one Drum and six and thirty Men.

Mr. Soft.

Why the Rogues are incorporated, they are regimented we shall shortly have a standing Army of Rogues as well as of Sol

Mr. Wisd.

Six and Thirty Rogues about the Town To-day: Mr. *Softly*, we must look to our Houses, I expect to hear of several Fires a

The Letter Writers

Mr. Soft.

Truly, Brother *Wisdom*, I fear it will be necessary to keep the City Train'd—Bands continually under Arms.

Mr. Wisd.

They won't do, Sir; they won't do. Six and thirty of these bloody Fellows would beat them all. Sir, six and thirty of these

Mr. Soft.

Mr. *Sneaksby*, read on, we shall make farther Discoveries I'll engage.

Sneaksby.

Here's Woman's Hand may it please your Worship.

Mr. Soft.

Read it, read it. There are Women Robbers as well as Men.

[*Sneaksby* reads.]

Be here at the Time you mention, my Husband is luckily out of the Way; I wish your Happiness be as you say, entirely in th

Mr. Wisd.

What's that? Who's that?

Sneaksby.

Elizabeth *Wisdom*.

Mr. Wisd. [*Snatches the Letter.*]

By all the Plagues of Hell, my Wife's own Hand too.

Mr. Soft.

I always thought she would be discover'd one time or other, to be no better than she should be.

[*Aside.*]

Mr. Wisd.

I am confounded, amazed, speechless.

Mr. Soft.

What's the Matter Brother *Wisdom*? Sure, your Wife doth not hold Correspondence with these People; your Wife! that durst not go abroad for fear of them; who is the only Wife in Town that her Husband can keep at home.

Mr. Wisd.

Blood and Furies, I shall become the Jest of the Town.

Sneak.

May it please your Worship, here is one Letter more, in a Woman's Hand too.

Mr. Soft.

The same Woman's Hand, I warrant you.

[*Sneaksby* reads.]

Sir, Your late Behaviour hath determin'd me never to see you more: If you get Entrance into this House for the future, it wi
Lucretia Softly.

Mr. Wisd.

Ha!

Mr. Soft.

Lucretia Softly! give me the Letter. Brother *Wisdom*, this is some Counterfeit.

Mr. Wisd.

The Letter Writers

It must be so. Sure it cannot come from *Lucretia* the Second; she that is as chaste as the first *Lucretia* was. She correspond

Mr. Soft.

'Tis impossible!

Mr. Wisd.

You may think so; but I who understand Women better will not be so easily satisfy'd I'll go fetch my Wife hither, and if sh

SCENE VIII.

To them. Mrs. Wisdom guarded.

Mrs. Wisd.

Let the rest of my Guards stay without my Dear, your Servant.

Mr. Wisd.

This must be some Delusion, this can't be real.

Mrs. Wisd.

I see you are surpriz'd at my Courage, my Dear; but don't think I have ventur'd hither alone, I have a whole Regiment of Guards with me.

Mr. Wisd.

You have a whole Regiment of Devils with you, my Dear.

Mrs. Wisd.

Ha, ha, ha.

SCENE IX.

To them, Mrs. Softly.

Mrs. Soft.

Joy of your coming abroad, Sister *Wisdom*; I flew to meet you the Moment my Servants brought me the agreeable News y

Mrs. Wisd.

I am extremely oblig'd to you, Madam; but I wish this Surprize may have no ill Effect on poor *Mr. Wisdom*; he looks as if

Mrs. Soft.

Nay, it will be a great Surprize to all your Acquaintance; you must have made a hundred Visits before i will be believ'd.

Mrs. Wisd.

Oh! my Dear, I intend to make almost as many before I go home again.

Mr. Wisd.

Plagues and Furies!

Mr. Soft.

I fancy Brother *Wisdom*, you begin to be as weary of the Letter-Project as my self.

Mr. Wisd.

Hearkee, You, Crocodile Devil! Come here, do you know this Hand?

[Softly shews Mrs. Softly her Letter at the same time.]

Mrs. Wisd.

Ha!

[Starts.]

Mr. Wisd.

You counterfeited your Fear bravely, you were much terrify'd with the Thoughts of the Enemy while you kept a private Correspondence with him.

SCENE the Last.

To them, Commons.

Com.

The Letter Writers

So, Uncles, I see you take Turns to keep the Rendezvous. Uncle *Wisdom*, I hope you are not angry with me for what I said

Mr. Wisd.

I shall take another Opportunity, Sir, to talk with you.

Com.

Well, Aunt *Wisdom*, I hope you will reconcile my Uncle to me, I should have waited on you last Night according to your

Mrs. Soft.

My Letter, Brute.

Com.

Yes, Madam, did you not send me a Letter last Night that you would never see my Face again, desiring me to forget that I

Rak.

You see a Man who is justly punish'd by the Shame he now suffereth for the Injury he hath done you. Those two Letters y

Com.

Rob my Bureau, Sir!

Rak.

Nay, Dear *Jack*, forgive me, these Ladies have the greatest Reason to be offended, since the Letters being found in my Po

Mrs. Wisd.

Excellent Creature.

Rak.

But, Gentleman, if you please to look at these Letters, you will find they are not directed to me.

Mrs. Wisd.

They have no Direction at all.

Mr. Soft.

I told you, Brother My Wife could not be guilty.

Mr. Wisd.

I am heartily glad to find mine is not you see, Madam, what your Disobedience to my Orders had like to have occasion'd

Mrs. Wisd.

His Carelessness hath cured me for the future.

Mr. Wisd.

And so, Sir, you keep Company with Highway-men, do you.

Mr. Soft.

What do you mean, Sir?

Mr. Wisd.

Sir, You will know when your Acquaintance is sent to *Newgate*. Brother *Softly*, I desire you would order a Mittimus for th

Com.

A Mittimus! for whom?

Mr. Wisd.

For these honest Gentlemen, your Acquaintance, who were broke into my House.

Com.

Do you know, Sir, that this Gentleman is an Officer of the Army?

Mr. Wisd.

Sir, it is equal to me what he is. If he be an Officer, he only proves that a Rogue may be under a red Coat, and very shortly

Com.

Why, Sir, you will make your selves ridiculous, that will be all you will get by it. I'll be the Captain's Witness, he had no i

Mr. Wisd.

And I suppose, Sir, you will be his Witness that he did not write the Letter threatening to murder my Wife.

Mrs. Soft.

That I will. If any one be convicted as an Incendiary, I am afraid it will go hard with you two. I over-heard your fine Plot.

The Letter Writers

[Shewing a Letter.]

Mr. Wisd.

Sure it cannot be my Husband's.

Mrs. Soft.

As surely as that which you receiv'd was written by mine.

Mrs. Wisd.

Amazement! What can it mean?

Mrs. Soft.

Only a New Way to keep a Wife at Home; which, I dare swear, mine heartily repents of.

Mr. Soft.

Ay, that I do indeed.

Mr. Wisd.

And is it possible that these terrible threatening Letters can have come from our own dear Husbands?

Mrs. Soft.

From those very Hands that should defend us against all our Enemies.

Mr. Soft.

Come, Brother *Wisdom*, I see we are fairly detected; we had as good plead Guilty and sue for Mercy. I assure, you my Dear, I shall think my self very happy if you will return to your old way of Living, and go abroad just as you did before this happen'd.

Mr. Wisd.

Truly, I believe it would have been soon my Interest to have made the same Bargain.

Mrs. Soft.

Lookee, my Dear, as for the Blunderbusses, I agree to leave them at home: But I am resolv'd not to part with the additional

Mr. Soft.

Well, Brother *Wisdom*, what shall be done with the Prisoner? This Fellow's Oath will have no great Weight in a Court of J

Mr. Wisd.

Do just what you will; I am so glad and sorry, pleas'd and displeas'd, that I am almost out of my Senses.

Rak.

I told you how the Prosecution would end. Upon my Honour, Sir, I had no Design upon any thing that belongs to you, but

Mr. Wisd.

Your very humble Servant, Sir. I do believe you by the Emptiness of your Pockets; but this Gentleman seem'd to have som

Mr. Soft.

With what Conscience, Sirrah, did you presume to take a false Oath?

Risq.

With the same, Mr. Justice, that you would have received it; when you knew it to be false. Lookee, Gentlemen, you had be

Rak.

By your Amendment, I know not what I may be brought to do till I get you to the Regiment.

Com.

Well, Uncle *Wisdom*, you are not angry, are you?

Mrs. Wisd.

Let me intercede, my Dear.

Mr. Wisd.

You always are interceding for him, I wish his own good Behaviour would. I think, for the sake of Religion, I will buy him

Rak.

The Letter Writers

Well, Brother, if thou do'st come among us, it may be some time or other in my Power to make thee Reparation But to you

Mrs. Wisd.

Unless by desisting for the future.

Mrs. Soft.

Be assur'd if my Sister forgives you the Injury you intended her, I never will.

Mr. Soft.

Come, come, my Dear, you must be of a more forgiving Temper; and since Matters are like to be amicably adjusted, you s

Rak.

Pray Ladies, let me give you this Advice: If you ever should write a Love-Letter, never sign your Name to it And, Gentles

Those Wives for Pleasures very seldom roam,

Whose Husbands bring substantial Pleasures home.