

'Tis Pity She's a Whore (1633)

John Ford

Soranzo: I carry hell about me, all my blood is fired in swift revenge.

Vasques: That may be; but know you how, or on whom? Alas! to marry a great woman, being made great in the stock to your hand, is a usual sport in these days; but to know what ferret it was that hunted your coney-burrow,— there is the cunning.

Soranzo: I'll make her tell herself, or —

Vasques: Or what? you must not do so; let me yet persuade your sufferance a little while: go to her, use her mildly; win her, if it be possible, to a voluntary, to a weeping tune; for the rest, if all hit, I will not miss my mark. Pray, sir, go in; the next news I tell you shall be wonders.

Soranzo: Delay in vengeance gives a heavier blow.

[Exit.]

Vasques: Ah, sirrah, here's work for the nonce! I had a suspicion of a bad matter in my head a pretty while ago; but after my madam's scurvy looks here at home, her waspish perverseness, and loud fault-finding, then I remembered the proverb, that "where hens crow, and cocks hold their peace, there are sorry houses." 'Sfoot, if the lower parts of a she-tailor's cunning can cover such a swelling in the stomach, I'll never blame a false stitch in a shoe whilst I live again. Up, and up so quick? and so quickly too? 'twere a fine policy to learn by whom: this must be known; and I have thought on't —

Enter Putana, in tears.

Here's the way, or none.— What, crying, old mistress! alas, alas, I cannot blame you; we have a lord, Heaven help us, is so mad as the devil himself, the more shame for him.

Putana: O Vasques, that ever I was born to see this day! Doth he use thee so too, sometimes, Vasques?

Vasques: Me? why he makes a dog of me; but if some were of my mind, I know what we would do. As sure as I am an honest man, he will ge near to kill my lady with unkindness: say she be with child, is that such a matter for a young woman of her years to be blamed for?

Putana: Alas, good heart, it is against her will full sore.

Vasques: I durst be sworn, all his madness is for that she will not confess whose 'tis, which he will know; and when he doth know it, I am so well acquainted with his humour, that he will forget all strait: well, I could wish she would in plain terms tell all, for that's the way, indeed.

Putana: Do you think so?

Vasques: Foh, I know it; provided that he did not win her to it by force. He was once in a mind that you could tell, and meant to have wrung it out of you; but I somewhat pacified him from that; yet sure you know a great deal.

Putana: Heaven forgive us all! I know a little, Vasques.

Vasques: Why should you not? who else should? Upon my conscience she loves you dearly; and you would not betray her to any affliction for the world.

Putana: Not for all the world, by my faith and troth, Vasques.

Vasques: 'Twere pity of your life if you should; but in this you should both relieve her present discomforts, pacify my lord, and gain yourself everlasting love and preferment.

Putana: Dost think so, Vasques?

Vasques: Nay, I know it; sure it was some near and entire friend.

Putana: 'Twas a dear friend indeed; but —

Vasques: But what? fear not to name him; my life between you and danger: 'faith, I think it was no base fellow.

Putana: Thou wilt stand between me and harm?

Vasques: U'ds pity, what else? you shall be rewarded too, trust me.

Putana: 'Twas even no worse than her own brother.

Vasques: Her brother Giovanni, I warrant you!

Putana: Even he, Vasques; as brave a gentleman as ever kissed fair lady. O they love most perpetually.

Vasques: A brave gentleman indeed! why therein I commend her choice — better and better — [*Aside.*] You are sure 'twas he?

Putana: Sure; and you shall see he will not be long from her too.

Vasques: He were to blame if he would; but may I believe thee?

Putana: Believe me! why, dost think I am a Turk or a Jew? No, Vasques, I have known their dealings too long, to belie them now.

Vasques: Where are you? there, within, sirs!

Enter Banditti.

Putana: How now, what are these?

Vasques: You shall know presently. Come, sirs, take me this old damnable hag, gag her instantly, and put out her eyes, quickly, quickly!

Putana: Vasques! Vasques!

Vasques: Gag her, I say; 'sfoot, do you suffer her to prate? what do you fumble about? let me come to her. I'll help your old gums, you toad-bellied bitch! [*They gag her.*] Sirs, carry her closely into the coal-house, and put out her eyes instantly; if she roars, slit her nose; do you hear, be speedy and sure. [*Exeunt Banditti with Putana.*]

Why this is excellent, and above expectation — her own brother! O horrible! to what a height of liberty in damnation hath the devil trained our age! her brother, well! there's yet but a beginning; I must to my lord, and tutor him better in his points of vengeance: now I see how a smooth tale goes beyond a smooth tail; but soft — what thing comes next? Giovanni! as I could wish; my belief is strengthened, 'tis as firm as winter and summer.