

SCENE 8

A Public Square

(Enter Ave Mariah well dressed as Lady Teaz-forth, with a face veil.)

TOBY: (entering, faking it) Is that you, Ave Mariah, or is it the *actual* Lady Teaz-forth I see?!

AVE MARIAH: (unveiling herself) It is I. Yet I think no one, not even Sir Andrew, will mistake me for her ladyship.

TOBY: Be not of such little faith! It is not just the dress. It is even more so the bearing. Act like a true lady and all the world will believe you are a one.

AVE MARIAH: It is not in my nature.

TOBY: Then defy Nature and be as grand as you can be! Come, impersonate the great ladies you have seen.

AVE MARIAH: It will not work, I tell you. (Walks like Lady Teaz-forth, very grand, with her bosom thrust forward.)

TOBY: Not bad! The head held higher still. (Arranges her head.) The nose in the air.

AVE MARIAH: Like so? (Holds her nose very high in the air.)

TOBY: I like it! You are the very picture of aristocracy.

AVE MARIAH: But I cannot speak like a lady. My low-born tongue will betray me. Of that I'm sure.

TOBY: Not so. Speak not. Be disdainful and aloof. Sir Andrew will expect it.

AVE MARIAH: Then how am I to secure the "security" of his so-called love, if I am not to speak to him?

TOBY: Trouble not yourself with so much worry. I will tell him that you plan not to speak to him today, because of a debility with your voice.

AVE MARIAH: We should have rehearsed this more, Toby! If only you were not drunk so much!

(A noise off.)

TOBY: Here comes Sir Andrew, as I told him to. Go off and then return again, and remember you *are* Lady *Teats*-forth! So live up to your name!

(Ave Mariah goes offstage.) (Enter Andrew.)

ANDREW: Toby! There you are! Methought you said upon the village green, back there.

TOBY: I said the village square, right here.

ANDREW: Village green.

TOBY: The village square! But no matter. We are here.

ANDREW: But where, pray tell, is Lady *Teaz*-forth? (Says it carefully.) Is she not coming after all?

TOBY: Be stout of heart, Sir Andrew! Even now I have seen her and spoke with her.

(Enter Ave Mariah opposite, in disguise, acting very haughty.)

ANDREW: Oh, there she *is*! A vision of exquisite loveliness!

TOBY: Perfection itself, if you like that type.

ANDREW: Shall I go to her now and make my suit? I have brought the “security” that you asked me to bring. (Shows a bag of coins.)

TOBY: Good man! It should finalize the marriage. (Pumps a fist into his palm.)

ANDREW: I still hope that she will not require this “security” of my love, but, rather, read it in my eyes, my sighs, or even in my thighs. (Parades his legs as though they are tempting.)

TOBY: These are thighs indeed to win the Queen herself!

ANDREW: Think so? (Parades more.)

TOBY: You would seduce the cruelest caliph in the East, I doubt it not.

ANDREW: Then stop me not! I will to Lady *Teats*forth and display my charms.

(Starts toward Ave Mariah.)

TOBY: It's *Teaz*-forth! Wait, Sir Andrew! Wait!

ANDREW: Why?

TOBY: I told the lady not to speak with you today.

ANDREW: Not speak? Then why are we here?

TOBY: Her throat is sore from some swamp nearby. She fears that her rough voice will offend thee. I will serve as go-between for the two of you.

ANDREW: Our pimp?

TOBY: Watch your words, Sir Andrew Dribbledick! I am no pimp or bawd. I am a marriage broker, if you please. Others would charge sacks and sacks of gold for what I do, and yet I do it only out of kindness to my friend. (Pats Andrew on the shoulder.)

ANDREW: Tell the lady I am *warm* for her. I like the way she comports herself. But she seems somewhat indifferent to me.

(Toby signals Ave Mariah to thrust her bosom out more, using his own bosom to demonstrate. Ave Mariah is reluctant.)

TOBY: Hold, Sir Andrew. I will speak to her. (Goes to Ave Mariah.) We almost have him. Thrust your bosom out more! Like *so*! (Demonstrates.)

AVE MARIAH: Toby, I am being a lady, not a walker of the streets!

TOBY: You are under-playing the part, and will ruin all if you continue thus.

AVE MARIAH: Less is more.

TOBY: When it comes to bosoms, more is more! (Shows her how to thrust her bosom quickly so that Andrew doesn't see.) More!

AVE MARIAH: I do not want to be doing this at all! It is undignified, and we have gulled Sir Andrew enough!

TOBY: You must do this, Mariah – I mean, Lady Teaz-forth. Or we are ruined.

AVE MARIAH: Maybe you should have dressed up like her then!

TOBY: You have to do it just so – with plenty of bosom but also plenty of haughty arrogance!

AVE MARIAH:(Attempts being bosomy and arrogant at the same time.) I cannot do this.

ANDREW: Toby, a word with you.

TOBY: (going to Andrew) Yes, my friend, what troubles you?

ANDREW: This lady is very proud, is she not?

TOBY: She is! She is! Look at that nobility!

ANDREW: She has not looked my way even once.

TOBY: She says that you have brought out such modesty in her.

ANDREW: I have?

TOBY: She says that when you displayed your thighs she could not any longer look your way, because you inspired such lust in her! Even now she is fighting herself, hence the somewhat conflicted postures.

ANDREW: I completely understand. I feel a certain amount of lust myself when I gaze upon my thighs.

TOBY: But of course you do. (aside) God save me from these two!

ANDREW: Tell the lady that I fancy her and would her “hand” were mine.

TOBY: Hallelujah! Where is the “security” you brought?

ANDREW: She still wants the “security” even though she has seen my thighs?

TOBY: She says she affects your person more than Eve affected Adam, or Venus affected Adonis, but the “security” would be but a kind of promise, a mere symbol of your love for her. Where is it?

ANDREW: I put it down somewhere, when displaying my thighs.

TOBY: Good Heavens, man, do you not know there are thieves about? Everywhere!

ANDREW: Oh, it’s over there. (Gets the money bag.) I have lost it not. But see if the lady still requires this “security.” I think it likely that this is no longer an issue between us. I ask that you ask her.

TOBY: Hold here. I will ask. (Goes to Ave Mariah.) He does not want to surrender the “security.”

AVE MARIAH: If I were him, I wouldn’t either.

TOBY: He thinks it's because you lust for his thighs.

AVE MARIAH: What?!

TOBY: He needs a sign from you that you fancy him for himself. Wave to him.

AVE MARIAH: Toby!

TOBY: Wave! (She reluctantly waves.) (rushing back to Andrew) Did you see that, Andrew? She is desperate for you.

ANDREW: I thought as much. So no need for the "security" then!

TOBY: (rushing back to Ave Mariah) He needs another sign that you want the "security" handed forth!

AVE MARIAH: Oh, God!

TOBY: He must not be lost to us at this advanced stage!

AVE MARIAH: All right, but this is the last thing I'll do. Shall I just yell "Give me the bag of gold!" at him?

TOBY: No! Do not give up the game! I told him you can't speak today.

AVE MARIAH: What sign more can there be?

TOBY: You know better than I what men want.

AVE MARIAH: Tell him this: "Sir Andrew, your thighs remind me of two fine oak trees."

TOBY: (going back to Andrew) "Your thighs remind me of two fine oak trees."

ANDREW: Thank you, Toby. But what does *she* say?

TOBY: I don't think your thighs are like two fine oak trees! She does!

ANDREW: Maybe she wants to give me a "security" then? It can help me tremendously with my debts.

TOBY: No, she doesn't! You're going to lose her if you don't act.

ANDREW: Well, with my thighs, maybe I don't have to settle for just some old Lady Teatsforth.

TOBY: (rushing back to Ave Mariah) More! He needs more! Do something!

AVE MARIAH: What?!

TOBY: Flip something at him!

AVE MARIAH: How about this? (She flips her hair provocatively toward Andrew.)

TOBY: Men like that?

AVE MARIAH: They can't resist.

TOBY: He does seem to be responding.

(Andrew strokes his thighs and waist seductively.)

AVE MARIAH: I may collapse in laughter and spoil it all.

TOBY: Don't you dare. He is almost ours. (rushing to Andrew) Did you see the way she flipped her hair? That was her sign that she wants the "security."

ANDREW: That's not what I saw. I saw a woman bewitched by my thighs. Where is *my* "security?" Yes, where indeed is mine?

(Toby runs back to Ave Mariah.)

TOBY: Now he wants a "security" from you. We must win this battle. Quick! Form a money bag with your hands.

AVE MARIAH: How subtle you are, Toby!

TOBY: Well, what then? I'm running out of options.

AVE MARIAH: Let me try this. (Makes a girlish pout by pursing her lips.)

TOBY: What's that? Are you sick?

AVE MARIAH: I'm signaling that I am favorably disposed toward him. (Makes another girlish pout, aimed directly at Andrew.)

TOBY: Let me see. (Rushes to Andrew.) Did you see her sign to you?

ANDREW: I certainly did. And I'm going to give her what she wants in return.

TOBY: You are? Oh, thank God!

ANDREW: Here goes. (Makes the same girlish pout, aimed toward Ave Mariah.)

TOBY: What the hell are you doing?

ANDREW: I'm giving her tit for tat.

TOBY: You are going to drive her away, you idiot! She moved her mouth like that because she is hungry, nothing more. Her family, though esteemed, is fallen on less prosperous times, and she would have of you a few coins to see her through until your wedding. (loud enough for Ave Mariah to hear) Hungry! She is hungry!

ANDREW: She wants my money more than me, I fear.

TOBY: Oh, no, friend Andrew, it is not that at all. You mis-read her overtures.

(They look at Ave Mariah together. She is now miming being hungry by rubbing her stomach.)

ANDREW: She's telling me she's pregnant?

TOBY: No! Never! Those gestures mean she is looking forward to sharing many meals with you over a long and happy married life. And living on her money!

ANDREW: Are you quite certain? What is she doing now?

(Ave Mariah is miming receiving a money bag, delighted, and then taking a gold coin from the bag, expressing exaggerated surprise and then thankfulness. She wiggles the imaginary coin in Andrew's direction.)

ANDREW: She is not asking me to buy her, I hope!

TOBY: Andrew, I fear that you have grown cynical in your later years. The lady is merely showing her modest gratitude for your gift, or gifts, that in your magnanimity you might choose to bestow on her.

ANDREW: My what?

TOBY: Strike now. Or die an old bachelor!

ANDREW: She does seem a fair lady, from this distance, and one whose every movement, though odd, is a delight.

TOBY: Exactly!

ANDREW: And yet is there not one more sign that she might give that she wants me more than any “security” that I might give to her?

TOBY: Andrew!

ANDREW: But one!

TOBY: (hurries to Ave Mariah) He wants one more proof of your sincerity about him.

AVE MARIAH: I am out of proofs, Toby!

TOBY: I think we’ve worn him down. One more and we will have his gold. Be resolute!

AVE MARIAH: There is only one thing left I can think of.

TOBY: What’s that?

AVE MARIAH: Go to him and tell him that I wish to see him dance.

TOBY: Dance?

AVE MARIAH: Any dance at all. To decide once and for all if we are suited to be wed.

TOBY: He may not do it. I sense a growing reluctance on his part.

AVE MARIAH: His part is not reluctant, I warrant you, but he has grown cautious with so many gulls that we’ve subjected him to. Go! And tell him I will be dancing too.

TOBY: I will see. (Goes to Andrew) The lady wants to see you dance.

ANDREW: She does? Which one? A Galliard? A Salterella?

TOBY: What you will. (Signals Ave Mariah to begin her dance.) See her, Andrew. Is she not a catch, worth far more than a paltry bag of gold?

(Ave Mariah starts her female courtship, but less than enthusiastically: flipping her hair, touching her breasts as if bored, striking coy, fake poses now and again.)

ANDREW: (watching her) *Wowzer!* Let me join in that. (He begins his courtship dance, bobbing his head like a pigeon. flapping his arms like wings, making bird noises.)

TOBY: What I must do to earn some cash! It’s harder than if I actually worked for it!

(Both Ave Mariah and Andrew conclude their courtship dances.)

ANDREW: I think I'm in love!

AVE MARIAH: He's not that bad!

ANDREW: I plight this "security" as my promise of my eternal love! (Holds up the bag of coins toward her.)

TOBY: I'll carry it to her, if you like.

ANDREW: No, I want at least to touch her hand.

TOBY: Her hand?

ANDREW: (not sure) Her girdle?

TOBY: Come hither, milady. And take Sir Andrew's gift.

(Ave Mariah signals that she will do so.)

(Ave Mariah and Andrew come toward each other. She tries to look like the haughty Lady Teaz-forth, and he sends a few remaining rituals from his pigeon courtship dance. They meet and he hands her the bag of gold. She extends her hand to him. He takes it, hesitates for a moment when he sees that it is rather coarse for a lady's hand. But then he kisses it anyway. Ave Mariah giggles.)

ANDREW: My one and only lady!

(Ave Mariah starts to speak, but Toby rushes over to prevent her.)

TOBY: Speak not, milady! Remember your voice is lost. We would not want it to be *lost* forever from inopportune use of it just now.

(Ave Mariah nods her head in agreement.)

ANDREW: Oh, happy day!

TOBY: Oh, happy day indeed! I will see the Lady Teaz-forth makes her way back to her estate in safety. Come, milady!

(He takes her by the hand. He tries to take the bag of gold from Ave Mariah, but she won't let go of it.)

AVE MARIAH: (*sotto voce*) I will carry it! It is the token of his love!

ANDREW: Goodbye, fair wife to be!

(Ave Mariah waves fetchingly at Andrew, also waving the bag of gold high.)

TOBY: Goodbye, dear Andrew! You have won the prize this time! Let us go now, the lady in one hand, the “security” in t’other!

(Exit with Ave Mariah waving to Andrew while struggling with Toby over the bag of gold.)

ANDREW: I thank you, Toby, for your kindness in bringing me to this place.
For without you, I would still a lonely bachelor be! . . .
Now I shall go forth and have a crumpet – and a pee!

(Exit all.)