



PREVIEW SCRIPT

“Exit Right, Running”

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Exit Right, Running.

a comedy drama in One Act.

by

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Exit Right, Running

A One Act Comedy Drama

Synopsis

It's 1642 and the theatre world is in disarray. Theatres are closing down and actors are in search of alternative employment. At the same time, Cromwell's men are seeking out royalist supporters and, as all actors are branded as royalists, their lives are in danger.

Two actors, Melarky and Kendrick, are on the run. They have an assignation to meet a supporter in a fish market who will help them escape.

They are accosted by two prostitutes who identify our two heroes as actors of some note. The ladies are bribed with presents of theatrical costume to keep silent.

Soon after this encounter the militia, descend on our actors, in the form of Captain Clay and Corporal Bradshaw. They have extracted evidence from the streetwalkers as to the actors' identities and intend to carry out a summary execution.

However, Kendrick has a revelation that saves their lives; Kendrick is a woman who has been disguised as a man in order to enjoy a career as an actor.

Now her secret is out Kendrick has to abandon her partner to find her adventures elsewhere.

Cast

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Joseph Melarky | Middle-aged actor, with crisp and resonant diction. |
| Kendrick, alias Jane Carter | Mid-twenties, sharp and quick witted. |
| Polly | Prostitute. Loud and good-humoured. |
| Lizzie | Another Prostitute. Polly's friend. |
| Captain Clay | An officer in Cromwell's army. |
| Corporal Bradshaw | Young soldier with a sadistic streak. |
| Percy Farnworth. | Elderly, aristocratic. A royalist supporter. |

Set

A London fish market in the evening. There is a backdrop of nets and hessian sacking with some sign-boards indicating the names of fish sellers and their produce. At various points around the stage there are boxes and nets.

Exit Right, Running

Melarky and KENDRICK enter stage left, carrying a large sea chest. they stagger to the centre of the stage.

Melarky This is it.

Kendrick You sure?

Melarky Positive.

Kendrick Thank God! Thank God!

(They drop the chest down, then sit on it, exhausted.)

Kendrick A cock's stride away you said. A bloody big cock! I'm knackered.

Melarky At least we're here. Still in one piece.

Kendrick I'm getting too old for this chasing around lark.

Melarky Old? I'm twice your age.

Kendrick I feel old. I feel more like ninety. I can't get my breath. I shouldn't be arse-tearing around like this. So, where is he?

Melarky Don't ask me.

Kendrick He'd better show up.

Melarky He will.

Kendrick So you say.

Melarky He will.

Kendrick We're not late are we?

Melarky No!

Kendrick So, where is he?

Melarky No idea have I!

Kendrick It's unprofessional.

Melarky He's a busy man.

Kendrick So you keep telling me.

Melarky A very busy man. He's a man of honour. He owes me a favour. He'll be here. And watch your language. Show him some respect. I know you.

Kendrick What is he? A bloody saint or something?

Melarky Just watch you language, all right?

Kendrick What is this place, anyway? What's that stink?

Melarky Fish! It's the fish market.

Kendrick I don't like it down this end. Never did.

Melarky What's wrong with it?

Kendrick What's right with it? It bloody stinks, and it's crawlin' with vermin.

Melarky I don't mind fish. Reminds me of the sea

Kendrick One thing I can't stand....it's bleeding vermin gnawing at ya in your bed.

Melarky When I retire that's where I'm going. To the sea. The south coast somewhere. Dover or thereabouts. Maybe Folkestone. Maybe over the channel. Normandy....or further south...somewhere like that.

Kendrick Woke up one morning and there was this bloody big chunk out of my leg. Rats! That's what that was! Big, black rats. I was at death's door for a month. I was covered in these huge great sores, I was.

Melarky I like to be close to the continent. I've had some times over there. Parlez-vous Francais, m'sieur?

Kendrick Wha'?

Melarky Parlez-vous Francais?

Kendrick Piss off.

Melarky That's it you see. No finesse. Typical of the youth of today, full of crudity. Where's the elegance...the charm.

Kendrick This place gives me the creeps. What was wrong with somewhere like the Red Lion?

Melarky Our friends, the militia, have taken up residence. They have their spies everywhere.

Kendrick Is nothing sacred? Look at those poxy rats! There must be dozens of 'em.

Melarky I see they're not carrying muskets and pikes... more than I can say for some rats in the city.

Kendrick They must be Royalist rats then.

Melarky More than likely.

Kendrick That is very reassuring that is. Very reassuring. However, Mister Melarky, my friend, I'm warnin' you, if I get bitten.....

Melarky My god!

Melarky picks up some sacking from the side of the stage.

Melarky You need a nurse maid. Here! Cover yourself with this.

Kendrick Caw! What's been in this? Jesus! Who chose this place?

Melarky He did.

Kendrick It should be torched this place.

Melarky We would have met in Windsor Castle but it's occupied.

Kendrick stands and moves around.

Kendrick Very funny. I'm not happy Melarky, d'you know that? I'm far from happy. I put my fate in your hands and up to now I've had nothing but grief. We've spent the day dodging from one alley to the next and this sodding chest of yours is not getting any lighter. I'm definitely not happy.

Melarky I did somehow, get that impression. Anyway, it's not my chest now. It's our chest. If it wasn't for my chest you wouldn't have a chest. So, now relax, boy!. You're making me nervous.

Kendrick And don't call me boy. I've told you about that.

Melarky I apologise. I'm sorry. It's habit.

Kendrick Ten years you've done it.....boy this, boy that. It's humiliating.

Melarky It's habit. It's just stuck.

Kendrick Then unstick it.

Melarky Ten years is it? Doesn't seem that long..

Kendrick Seems a lifetime to me.

Melarky Hasn't been all bad has it. I think there's probably one more Romeo left in me, you know. And you could get away with Juliet again quiet easily, I'm sure. You've still got the voice.

Kendrick We'd be a laughing stock.

Melarky I don't know.

Kendrick Anyway, it's all very hypothetical, isn't it. I'm not happy at all.

A baby is heard bawling from a nearby house.

Kendrick *(to the baby)* At least you've got a roof and a bed.

Melarky And a nice warm breast to suckle on.

Kendrick A warm bed, a decent meal and a hot toddy. That'd do me.

Melarky And a juicy part to learn. Still, we've got bread in our pockets and the promise of a bed tonight...what more do you want? Stop striding around and relax!

Kendrick I don't believe you. I do not believe you. Relax, he says.

Melarky stands and opens the chest. There is a sudden volley of musket fire in the near distance. Melarky and Kendrick freeze for a moment.

Kendrick What am I doing here? What have I ever done to deserve this? I've always been honest. I've worked hard. Haven't I worked hard? I've never wished harm on anyone. Have I ever wished harm on anyone? No! So, why me? *(Melarky lays out some bread and cheese and a bottle of wine on top of the chest.)* Now what? What are you doing?

Melarky I'm hungry. *(At baby's cries.)* Will someone feed that brat!!!

Kendrick How can you eat in this shit hole place.

Melarky I've dined in worse "shit-holes" as you delicately put it...

The baby stops crying.

Kendrick Someone's happy.

Melarky How do you know? Perhaps they've just shoved a pillow over its head. Put it out of its misery.

Kendrick Cheerful bloody soul you are.

Melarky Where's your sense of humour you miserable bastard.

Kendrick You're crazy. Here we are, surrounded by cut-throats, thieves, murderers...and I don't know what on all sides, and you have a picnic. We're asking for it.

Melarky Yes! Don't you think it creates a marvellous feeling of dramatic tension.

Kendrick When you're lying in the gutter with your throat cut and your life blood gushing around the fish heads that will be very dramatic.

Melarky Better that than some slow lingering lonely death in a dark dungeon in the Tower. Come and have some of this Cheshire. It's your favourite. Come on, boy. Whoops! Sorry! Come on, Kendrick, my dear friend. Why have your throat cut on an empty belly?

Kendrick You.....

Melarky Come on.

Kendrick I must be mad. I'm the crazy one. Why did I come?

Melarky For your art!

Kendrick What art? My art is dying. It's dead. It's gone, thanks to Master Cromwell and his merry band of murderous swine. I was perfectly happy back in Shrewsbury.

Melarky Nothing like long, drawn out days of tedium to enhance the spirit.

Kendrick I was perfectly happy.

Melarky Then you were a very lucky young man, Kendrick. I have always believed that a perfectly happy soul was purely a creature of myth.

Kendrick Which proves, Melarky, that sometimes you can be wrong.

Melarky To commune with nature overlong breeds insanity, in my humble opinion. Grey skies, wind and rain only have a limited fascination.

Kendrick At least I was safe.

Melarky There was that, but still, it didn't take much to bring you back. One short letter.

Kendrick Felt sorry for you, didn't I.

Melarky You felt sorry for me?

Kendrick Yes! You alone in the middle of all this up side down world.

Melarky Kendrick, it was me who felt sorry for you. I'm the one with all the contacts. I'm the negotiator. I make all the deals. Without me you're lost. You'd be up to your neck in pig shit for the rest of your life if it were not for yours truly. I'm a survivor.

Kendrick Is that right?

Melarky Right.

Kendrick And there I was thinking that you couldn't survive without me.

Melarky Deluded.

Kendrick Deluded am I? Who else could play Cleopatra to your Antony.... Desdemona to your Othello...?

Melarky This wine is particularly good. It has the bouquet of a warm, summer meadow in Provence.

Kendrick Well?

Melarky Very well. My experience needs your youth and your youth needs my experience. Together we survive. Agreed?

Kendrick Fair.

Melarky You fool, of course I needed you. I need you. I missed you like an old slipper. When you're my age you'll understand how difficult it is to bow to the wisdom of someone half your age, if that makes sense.

He hands Kendrick a glass of wine.

Kendrick Perfectly.

Melarky Here! A toast. To us! The team! Melarky and Kendrick, actors extraordinaire!

Kendrick The team...Kendrick and Melarky
Melarky As you wish.
Kendrick Kendrick and Melarky....and the future!
Melarky The future.
Kendrick Where did you get this wine?
Melarky A French tailor who remembered my Antony.... with a tear in his eye.
Kendrick And did he remember my Cleopatra?
Melarky He did say it was not particularly memorable.
Kendrick Did he?
Melarky I jest. On the contrary he thought you were passing good.
Kendrick Magnanimous!
Melarky Then he did go on to say how rarely has he seen a man portray a women with suchsensuality. He thought you must have some French blood in you.
Kendrick Now you exaggerate. Very humorous.
Melarky No truthfully friend, together we have the magic, you and I, to lighten up the darkest day. And we will again.
Kendrick With luck.
Melarky We will. (*They embrace.*) Even if it's to France we must go.
Kendrick But I don't have the lingo.
Melarky You should see their theatres..
Kendrick But, they don't know us, do they. Here everyone knows us.
Melarky Which, in the present climate, is not to our advantage.
Kendrick I'd never pick up the jargon..
Melarky Rubbish. You're an actor, boy...er man. It's your trade to pick up words. You had Cleopatra off in a week...word perfect. I couldn't fault you.
Kendrick It's an option, I suppose.
Melarky It certainly is.
Kendrick Although I'd miss the grey skies and wind and rain.
Melarky Like a carbuncle on your backside.
Kendrick This cheese is old.
Melarky It's mature.
Kendrick It's old. It's old and stale.
Melarky It's all experience, Kendrick. Isn't that what we actors thrive on.....experience?
Kendrick Some experiences I can do without and eating stale cheese is one of them.
Melarky You disappoint me sometimes.
Kendrick The feeling's mutual.
Melarky I embrace all experiences, good and bad. It's all part of my vocabulary. When I played the Jew it was my experiences as a boy at Westminster that helped me to see the part.
Kendrick Didn't know you played the Jew. When did you play the Jew then?
Melarky Another life. Another world. Before your time.
Kendrick Played Portia. I was fourteen.
Melarky Where was that?
Kendrick Blackfriars. Went well. Although there was one performance that got a bitwell, out of control. The geezer playing Shylock was wetting himself. Some anti-Semitic bastard slipped him a note. Warned him that if he went on he'd be feeding the fishes that night. Anyway, he did go on, and it was all quiet until the trial scene....and as soon as he went up to claim his pound of flesh all hell broke out. That was one wild, murderous audience.
Melarky You see a few of them in your time. You get used to it. Let it wash over you.
Kendrick No. That was different. They chased him off stage. We all tried to laugh it off as you do, you know, tomorrow's another day and all that, but when tomorrow came he didn't show. Disappeared off the face of the earth.
Melarky Poor man..

Kendrick You wouldn't get me to play the Jew. I'd like to hang around this mortal coil a little while longer, thank you very much..

Melarky It's getting cold.

Kendrick We get the breeze off the river round here.

Melarky I went past Blackfriars the other day ,when you were in the country.

Kendrick Oh yes! How was it?

Melarky Not pretty, young friend.

Kendrick Oh, yeah?

Melarky The militia had rounded up some actors. They cut them to bits.

Kendrick No!

Melarky They stuck their heads on pikes, about a dozen of them, up Ludgate Hill. I knew them all. All good men.... and boys. One was Peter Henshawe.

Kendrick Peter Henshawe? Played Juliet at The Curtain last year with the Earl of Leicester's Boys.

Melarky That's the one.

Kendrick Don't believe it. He was brilliant. What was he? Fourteen?

Melarky He was thirteen when he played Juliet, I do know that.

Kendrick What a waste. A gentle boy like that.

Melarky I couldn't believe the crowd. A few weeks ago they were throwing flowers at his feet...now they were crying for his blood. They were monsters. "Death to the Royalists!" they screamed. . "Death to the Royalists!" ..

Kendrick God save the King.

Melarky Amen!

Kendrick The fickle bastards!

Melarky You can never tame an audience. It's always waiting. It's always waiting to turn and bite.

Kendrick Was there not one friendly face.

Melarky Oh aye! I saw one or two weeping. I saw the odd rosary under a shawl, but they made sure they weren't seen. And I saw something else.

Kendrick What was that?

Melarky I saw Nathan, you know, landlord of "The Red Lion", screaming louder than the rest.

Kendrick Not Nathan. He's a regular at Blackfriars. We've had many a hogs head off him.

Melarky That's what fear does.

Kendrick I don't believe it. Listen, we've got to be careful, 'cos we'll be stuck on the end of some soddin' pike somewhere and so-called friends will be looking up and spitting in our faces. I don't want that. I certainly don't want that. Do you want that? When I go I want a nice peaceful churchyard with birds singing and everyone crying their bleeding eyes out. That's what I want. (*Another volley of musket fire is heard close by.*) I can't stand it. They know our names. We're too bloody well known, that's our problem. They'll want to make an example of us that's what they'll want to do. They won't rest until they find us.

Melarky Kendrick. Calm down.

Kendrick I'm an artist, that's all I am. To hell with politics. They can't tar us all with the same brush. I'm an artist. I live for my art. My life is my art. Yes, I've been paid by royalists. Yes, I've entertained royalty so does that mean my life must be forfeited....snuffed out like some plague ridden rat.

Melarky Kendrick!

Kendrick What?

Melarky Let's have some decorum here.

Kendrick Sorry!

Melarky That's all right.

Kendrick I....

Melarky The best we can do is remain calm. We need clear wits.

Kendrick You're right.

Melarky When one is surrounded by confusion and mayhem stay calm. That's the best way.

Kendrick Absolutely.

Melarky Remember “As You Like It”.

Kendrick That’s going back a bit. Happy days.

Melarky And these whores in the gallery started a cat fight. Then all the groundlings joined in. there was blood and snot everywhere. And what did we do?

Kendrick We carried on.

Melarky Yes, that’s it. We quietly carried on. And what happened?

Kendrick It was...magical. Someone pointed to us...and everything went quiet. You could hear a pin.

Melarky And then they all cheered. Remember? They cheered and cheered. I thought they’d never stop. They said they could hear it right across the river.

Kendrick We’ve had our moments.

Melarky Not half! *(The sound of a guitar playing a gentle ballad is heard from a nearby house.)* Listen! *(Pause)* How one gentle soul illuminates the darkest night.. Sanity will prevail. We’ll get it all back again

Kendrick God willing. *(the sound of soldiers marching through a street close by with dogs barking at them is heard. The music stops.)* Melarky, they’re upon us. May the saints preserve us. What do we do? What do we do?

Melarky Keep still..

Kendrick How can we keep still? They’re all around us.

Melarky The dog only chases a running cat.

Kendrick I wonder at your logic sometimes, Melarky. A dead cat is not a happy cat.

Melarky They’re moving on.

The sound of marching slowly dies into the distance. Lizzie and Polly enter carrying baskets of fruit.

Polly And what do we have here?

Lizzie There’s handsome.

Polly What’s your pleasure, gents?

Melarky Good evening, ladies.

Polly Hark at that. Sounds like a real gent don’t he.

Lizzie We’re no ladies, are we Polly love.

Polly That’d be a larf. I’d say.

Melarky You certainly look like ladies to me.

Lizzie I’ll say this, we spend as much time in the company of real gents as do the real ladies. I’ll wager my life on that.

Melarky I thought so. There’s no mistaking that aristocratic poise and natural elegance..

Polly Here, I don’t half like that sort of talk. Where you from then?

Melarky A lost land.

Polly Where’s that?

Melarky Where the imagination is free to roam.

Polly Gerraway! Here, I could listen to that voice all day.

Lizzie All the fish has gone, love. So what you want round ‘ere?

Melarky Simply passing through.

Lizzie The likes of you only pass through ‘ere when they’re lookin’ for trade.

Polly *(To Kendrick)* He’s a shy one. ‘Ere! We’re open for business, darlin’... Juicy plums and oranges. How’d you like to get your tongue into something juicy, love?

Kendrick Another time, perhaps.

Polly Or, I could play your flute for a small fee. I always get a standin’ ovation, don’t I Lizzie love.

Lizzie Not half. Every time. They stand to attention like little roundheads.

Melarky If only we had the time.

Polly Don’t I know you?

Melarky I don’t think so.

Polly I’ve seen you somewhere, haven’t I.

Melarky We move around a lot.

Polly I never forget a face.

Melarky My face is very forgettable. Perhaps you confuse me with a gargoyle on the cathedral. There's one there with bulging eyes and flapping ears that could pass for my twin.

Polly He's a larf, isn't he. For some reason I'm seeing you in a costume, all white, like a Roman.

Melarky Perhaps you have the gift.

Polly Gift?

Melarky Perhaps you're a visionary. Maybe in a past life I roamed the world as a Roman Emperor, although, I confess, it is beyond my personal recall.

Polly I could listen to that voice all day, I really could. Words just flow together.

Lizzie Tell you what I'll do. I'm stupid, I know I am, but I likes your face so I'll do you a quick hand job for small change.

Kendrick Very kind, but no thanks.

Lizzie And that's a bargain. On top of that I'll let you suck on my breast. I've still got some good, fresh milk left.

Kendrick Tempting, but no thanks.

Polly It'll come to me soon. What's in the chest?

Lizzie Running away to sea are we?

Melarky Clothes. Costumes. Costumes for all occasions.

Kendrick We're tailors.

Melarky And costumiers.

Kendrick Tailors and costumiers.

Melarky You want a Bacchanalian feast...we can supply the garb. You name it...hose, farthingales, doublets, fine lace petticoats...we have them all.

Kendrick Silk cloaks, grotesque masks for that special occasion.

Polly What about Roman? Do you do Roman?

Lizzie Yea! There's a lot going for Roman these days.

Kendrick Yes, we do. Roman orgy? We have the togas.

Melarky And all the accoutrements. Very popular.

Polly Open up then! Let's have a gander. Come on.

Melarky We don't have much time.

Polly A little peep.

Lizzie Come on love. A quick flash.

Melarky What do you think?

Kendrick Fair enough! A quick flash.

Melarky and Kendrick clear things off the top of the chest and open it.

Melarky What we have here are purely samples, ladies. They've been around a bit.

Polly and Lizzie dive in to the chest. Polly pulls out a fine cloak, Lizzie pulls out a white toga with gold embroidery. Polly moves around the stage swirling her cloak whilst Lizzie holds up the toga and embraces it.

Lizzie Look at this, Polly! Look at all this work. It's all gold tha' is.

Polly I like tha'. That's a bit of all right.

Lizzie Fit for an Emperor, this is, no mistake.

Polly I could do a bit of trade with that wrapped round me.

Lizzie Not half.

Melarky Careful, ladies. The fabric's very delicate.

Lizzie Hark at 'im. Anyone would think we're not used to a bit of finery.

Polly Yea! We've got fine dresses lined with the best lace, ya know.

Melarky I'm sure you have.

Lizzie The best that money can buy.

Melarky I'm sure.

Polly What else you got in there then?

Polly and Lizzie go to the chest and throw all the clothes up in the air. Melarky and Kendrick try to stop them but the more they try the more the two women run rings around them. the women enjoy this game but Melarky and Kendrick grow angry.

Melarky That's enough! That is enough. Please would you kindly replace the garments into the chest. Thank you.

Polly I do like that voice

Lizzie *(Reading a label inside one of the costumes)* Hello! What's this? "Property of The King's Men Theatre Company".

Kendrick Special order. We deal a lot with theatres. Please ladies, could we have...

Polly Here's another one. "Property King's Men".

Melarky and Kendrick hurriedly collect the costumes and replace them in the chest.

Melarky As my friend said, we do a lot of business with theatres.

Kendrick They have us running around in circles. It's London one day, then it's Chester then Bath.

Melarky Our life's not our own. And they want everything yesterday.

Kendrick And God help you if you get anything wrong. They are merciless.

Melarky They have no mercy.

Kendrick The quality of mercy is very strained.

Melarky If you miss the dead line...look out!

Kendrick Take my advice, don't work for a theatrical company. There's no money in it and they want their pound of flesh.

The last garment is shoved into the chest. Melarky and Kendrick sit on the chest, exhausted. Lizzie is still holding the toga.

Polly We like the theatre don't we Lizzie

Lizzie We do Poll.

Polly In fact we go most weeks, don't we Liz.

Lizzie That we do.

Polly That is to say, we did go every week until they all closed down.

Lizzie That's a shame that is.

Polly Bleedin' criminal if you ask me, Liz.

Lizzie Bad for trade.

Polly Not half. Trade's right off. But, no doubt, things will pick up again.

Lizzie The world's full of randy, rich old geezers who don't get it up much.

Polly Mind you, these Roundheads are fruity.

Lizzie Aren't they just.

Polly It's livin' in the country does it. All that fresh air and fresh meat.

Lizzie That's probably what it is.

Polly And don't they hate actors.

Lizzie Don't they just.

Polly You mention the word 'theatre' and they go all funny.

Lizzie 'Cos they're all friends of Charlie aren't they these actors. They're not real people like we are.

Polly You put your finger on it, Liz. What did they call 'em, these actors? The plague of society?

Lizzie That's it. Dirty black plague of society.

Polly Tell you somethin', Liz.

Lizzie What's tha', Poll?

Polly If I was an actor, say, running away, I wouldn't like to be, say, in London, particularly round about 'ere at this time of day.

Lizzie That could be very dangerous, that could.

Polly And particularly if I had some cock and bull story about being a tailor...or costumier

Melarky }
Kendrick } I.....we.....

Melarky We assure you that...

Polly I do love that voice. You two are famous aren't ya.

Kendrick No, we're only....

Lizzie Are they?

Polly I didn't recognise them at first. It's Melarky and Kendrick, the famous actors.

Lizzie Get away. Melarky and Kendrick.

Polly That one's Melarky and that one's Kendrick. Am I right?

Kendrick Right.

Lizzie I don't believe it. Very pleased to meet you, I'm sure.

Melarky So....

Polly The times we've seen you. Mind you, we don't understand a blind word you're saying most of the time...but it sounds lovely, don't it Liz.

Lizzie Really lovely.

Melarky I'm sure you understand, ladies, the subterfuge was necessary. Times are dangerous as you so aptly put it.

Polly I really could listen to his voice all night.

Melarky I trust our secret is safe with you?

Polly What do you say, Liz?

Lizzie It's a problem, Poll. I'm sure these are very nice gentlemen, but on the other 'and, they're bleedin' royalists aren't they.

Polly Very true.

Lizzie We could turn our backs on it all.....

Kendrick Yes!

Lizzie But, we've got to live with it.

Polly Very true, Liz. You see, gents, here's the problem. What do we look like to you, honestly?

Melarky Honestly, I would saythat you were two, kind-hearted ladies with a very generous nature.

Polly And honestly I say to you that was bull-shit and you're laughing at us.

Melarky I assure you....

Polly I assure you that what you really think...is that we are scum-bags, pox-ridden whores and not worth the time of day. Am I right?

Melarky Madam, all I can say is that I have the utmost respect for your profession. After all, we do have a lot in common.

Kendrick We both provide a service and we aim to satisfy.

Polly You see Liz, that's why they put on all these airs and graces. One minute they're kings and emperors, the next they're sod all, no better than the rest of us.

Lizzie Yea, that's right. Yea! Must be terrible. You got to feel sorry for 'em really.

Melarky Look, take the toga...a keepsake. Sorry, we have no money.

Polly And me?

Melarky Take what you want from the trunk.

Polly takes a cloak from the trunk.

Polly How's this, Liz.

Lizzie You look like a real Duchess in that Poll.

Melarky I assume we can count on your silence.

Polly I think you can safely do that, gents. After all, you brought us lots of trade when you were working. It's only fair. Night-night, gentlemen.

Lizzie It's been a pleasure. Ta-ta!

Polly and Lizzie exit stage right. Percy Farnworth enters stage left.

Farnworth Friends!

Melarky Percy.

Farnworth I thought those two would never leave. I heard everything. We've got to get you out of London.

Kendrick Where to?

Melarky Does it matter?

Kendrick It does to me. I don't want to be buried alive in some pig shit hole.

Farnworth It's Worcester. It's safe there. No barbarians.
Melarky And what's the work?
Farnworth It's a private company. Minor roles. But clean air and good food.
Kendrick How many in the company?
Farnworth A round dozen. Very elite.
Kendrick And who gets top billing?
Farnworth The Earl. He's not good but he's enthusiastic .He who holds the purse strings etcetera, etcetera.
Kendrick I see.
Farnworth Are you for it?
Melarky I am.
Kendrick So be it.
Farnworth Is everything in this chest?
Melarky Everything we own.
Farnworth Wait here. I have a coach in an inn nearby.

Farnworth exits stage left.

Kendrick Worcester!
Melarky That's all right.
Kendrick I don't know anyone in Worcester. Do you know anyone in Worcester?
Melarky I stayed over night once. On the way to Chester. Nice enough.
Kendrick Minor roles. And we'll be working with amateurs.
Melarky Look on it as a temporary change of fortune.
Kendrick Let's hope so.
Melarky This ban won't last for ever. We'll be back.

A church bell is heard chiming ten o' clock. A watchman in the distance is heard calling out "Ten o' clock and all's well and God bless our Lord Oliver Cromwell". This call is repeated and is heard fading away into the distance.

Melarky And may he rot in hell.

Captain Clay and Corporal Bradshaw enter, with swords drawn from stage right. Corporal Bradshaw has a bundle of clothes under his arm.

Bradshaw Hold, in the name of Cromwell and good Captain Clay.
Kendrick Christ almighty.
Bradshaw On your knees gentlemen. Now! Knees.
Melarky Yes sir.
Bradshaw Don't "sir" me you royalist turd. I'm a corporal. That is sir there. That is Captain Clay. Now, hands on heads. They're all yours sir.
Clay Thank you corporal. It's been a long day, hasn't it corporal.
Bradshaw It has, sir. A very long day.
Clay It has been a long, weary day. And the corporal and myself are tired and hungry. Therefore, gentlemen, your complete and utter co-operation would be much appreciated. No point in dragging out this sordid business longer than is necessary. Agreed? You may respond.
Melarky *(Adopting a broad London accent)* Whatever you says, sir. Please sir, I'm a simple man and.....
Bradshaw Shut it!
Clay And you? Are you in agreement?
Kendrick *(As broad as Melarky)* Am I.....?
Clay Are you in agreement with what I've just said, man, or are you going to be difficult?
Kendrick I'd never do tha', sir. Not to you, sir. Not never.
Clay Good. Perhaps we'll get an early night after all corporal.
Bradshaw Let's hope so, sir.
Clay To cut to the chase, you are the famous actors, or should I say infamous conveyors of filth and blasphemous utterances, Melarky and Kendrick.
Melarky That's a larf, no joke. Actors? We're no actors, sir.

Clay What?

Melarky Couldn't do tha' to save our lives, sir. Not us, sir.

The remainder of this play has been deleted from this preview copy, but the following synopsis completes the action ...

The actors attempt to persuade the soldiers that they are really costumiers, but the soldiers are having none of it as the two prostitutes have 'grassed' on them. Finally, in desperation, Kendrick tells them she is in fact a woman dressed as a man and therefore cannot be an actor. Once this revelation is proved to be true, the soldiers have no option but to leave them alone.

Melarky is astounded, but has to leave briefly to check whether the occupant of an approaching cart is Farnworth returning for them or not. Kendrick, realising that things can never be the same between them, slips away unseen into the night.

For further details on purchasing a full copy of the script, or for information on royalties, please contact :-

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