

Happy Arcadia

By W.S. Gilbert

Characters

Strephon A happy Arcadian, betrothed to Chloe
Lycidas The handsomest man in all the world
Colin A virtuous old peasant, father of Chloe
Daphne An elderly Arcadian, Chloe's mama
Chloe A happy Arcadian, betrothed to Strephon
Astrologos A blighted Bogey

SCENE: *Exterior of STREPHON'S cottage. Entrance to cottage R. Large tree C., with seat round it. Pretty Arcadian landscape, cornfields, water, etc.*

STREPHON and CHLOE discovered. STREPHON seated beneath tree, playing on flageolet. CHLOE dancing with pet lamb, decorated with ribbons. They are dressed as a "Watteau" shepherd and shepherdess.

DUET. - STREPHON and CHLOE.

Let us sing,
Let us dance,
And deck our existence with flowers.
And our joy
To enhance
We'll live but in arbours and bowers.
And we'll ne'er
Turn a glance
On palaces, temples and towers.
Oh, that all
Had a chance
Of a life that's as happy as ours!

(After song CHLOE sits down impatiently.)

CHLOE. Oh, bother!

STREP. *(sulkily)* Certainly. Bother!

CHLOE. "A life that's as happy as ours!" What nonsense it is! Why, I'm miserable!

STREP. So am I. Utterly, completely and intensely miserable. Bored beyond expression. Utterly, unmistakably bored!

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- CHLOE. Look at this disgusting little lamb that I'm obliged to go about with all day!
I, who hate lambs!
- STREP. And look at this irritating pipe that I'm obliged to play upon from morning
to night! I, who hate music!
- CHLOE. I always pinch my lamb when nobody's looking.
- STREP. And I always play out of tune when nobody's listening.
- CHLOE. For matter of all that, you were playing out of tune just now.
- STREP. Well, you're nobody.
- CHLOE. Oh, I could shake you for saying that!
- STREP. Ah, you're a nice girl to be engaged to.
- CHLOE. So everybody says.
- STREP. I wish everybody had an opportunity of trying.
- CHLOE. Oh, you great hulking booby, I wish I'd never seen you!
- STREP. Pity you didn't say so when our parents proposed to betroth us!
- CHLOE. I was only three days old, but I remember I thought so.
- STREP. (*furiously*) Look here - let's break it off!
- CHLOE. By all means.
- STREP. Upon my word I can't stand you.
- CHLOE. I assure you, you are absolutely insupportable.
- STREP. You're a flirt!
- CHLOE. You're a booby.
- STREP. You are plain.
- CHLOE. You are hideous.
- STREP. You - you are not as young as you were.

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CHLOE. I am!

STREP. You're not.

CHLOE. I am - you - you - you - (*bursts into tears, then suddenly*) Here's somebody coming.

(STREPHON and CHLOE resume their singing and dancing as DAPHNE enters, with lamb.)

DAPHNE. (*speaking very rapidly*). Oh, what pretty, pretty little birds! Oh, what a happy little man, and, oh, what a happy little maid! Ah, innocent, innocent little people, with their little hearts overflowing with love, and their little bodies moving in harmony with the pretty little songs they sing to one another! Oh, happy, happy, happy little birds!

CHLOE. (*relapsing*). Oh, it's only ma! Never mind ma!

STREP. Oh, it's only aunt - never mind aunt!

DAPHNE. Oh, what pretty little happy innocent

STREP. Oh, nonsense. Drop it - we're quite alone.

DAPHNE. Why - bless my heart alive, you've never been quarrelling - and in Arcadia - happy, happy Arcadia. Oh, naughty, naughty, naughty! Oh, fie! fie! fie! Oh, that isn't pretty behaved at all, at all, at all!

CHLOE. Oh, Strephon is such a donkey!

STREP. So I am - a donkey. A patient, faithful, docile, ill-used, meek, long-suffering - abominably treated animal- a donkey! So I am! Yah!

(Kicks open door of cottage, passionately, and exits in a furious rage.)

DAPHNE. Ah, deary, deary, deary, times are dreadfully changed since I was a girl. Those were the early days of Arcadia, and everybody was really happy and contented. But now it seems that nobody is satisfied even your poor dear papa, who has been an Arcadian for fifty years - and is looked upon as a patriarch by other Arcadians - even he is discontented!

CHLOE. Why, what's the matter with papa?

DAPHNE. Why, he's got all sorts of fancies into his poor old head - he's always wishing he was somebody else. What do you think is his grievance now? Why, that he can't be a woman! He actually and positively wishes he was a

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woman! I'm sure I'd do anything to make him comfortable, but there are some things I cannot and will not do, and that is one! Hush! here he comes.

(THEY retire behind tree C. as COLIN enters.)

(COLIN is a very ugly and remorseful looking man. He enters singing and playing on a pipe. He leads a lamb and dances with great difficulty.)

COLIN. *(singing)*. "Let us sing-let us dance," etc. *(Sees that he is alone.)* Oh, no one here? *(Relapses.)* Ah! *(Sighing and wiping his eyes.)* Here's a miserable object for you! Here is a miserable object for you! Born with a natural taste for crime - nursed in a stolen cradle - weaned upon abstracted pap - my schooling paid for with bad sovereigns - I was taught from my infancy to look upon fraud and dishonesty as the legitimate means of earning a dishonourable competency! Looking forward, as I always did, to retiring in middle life into a condition of guilty respectability, how is it that Fate has so far interfered with my intentions as to turn me into a simple and unsophisticated shepherd of Happy Arcadia? Forty years ago, in sportive mood, I forged a poor little will. It was a very small will, and the testator was dead; still, people were annoyed, and to avoid the consequences I fled to Arcadia, where for forty years I have been compelled, against my will, to lead a life of absolute innocence. I hate innocence - I abhor respectability, and I would return at once to the happy iniquitous world if it were not that my doing so would involve immediate arrest, followed by fourteen years penal servitude. Oh, that I were a woman! Women have such privileges, such immunities! A woman forges a will - she pleads ignorance of business - and she is acquitted. She steals silk dresses or Dutch cheeses, and she pleads kleptomania - and she is acquitted. Oh, woman, woman, if you only knew how to work the prerogatives you possess, you might all retire on a comfortable and dishonest fortune in rather less than no time!

SONG.- COLIN.

"ONLY A WOMAN."

From the first it was always the same,
And many before me have said it
Where men are all saddled with blame,
A woman gets nothing but credit.
Though life's a toss-up for our sins,
The toss always falls as she chooses
If it's "heads" the poor little maid wins
If it's "tails" - her antagonist loses.
For though she is only a woman,
A poor, inexperienced woman
She feathers her nest
With the softest and best,

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Poor timid and innocent woman!

In business a woman beyond
The reach of all business-like men is
She fastens you down to your bond
Like the Jew in the "Merchant of Venice."
And when she believes there's a flaw,
She violates every condition;
And if then you appeal to the law,
She answers with seeming contrition
That please she is only a woman
A helpless and innocent woman
You must be a brute
If you enter a suit
'Gainst a weak and unbusinesslike woman!

(At end of song COLIN bursts into a loud hysterical wail, which brings everyone in in great alarm. He has sunk on the seat round the tree, but on their entry he springs up and sings:)

"Let us sing -let us dance," etc.

CHLOE. *(approaching COLIN kindly)*. Papa! Are you not well?

COLIN. *(smiling seraphically)*. Well? Who is not well in Arcadia?

DAPHNE. Perhaps you are unhappy? If there is any silent sorrow tugging at your poor old heartstrings – tell it, oh, tell it to me - my bosom is easily lacerated - and the tear of sympathy is ever ready to bedew the eye of conjugal affection. Are you unhappy?

COLIN. Unhappy? In Arcadia? For shame! Is not our life the purest and happiest that the intellect of man can devise?

ALL. It is!

COLIN. Are not the very breezes scented with innocence?

ALL. Invariably!

COLIN. Don't buttercups and daisies grow wild in the open air?

ALL. To be sure!

COLIN. Don't the oaks and the elms flourish without the assistance of so much as a watering pot?

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ALL. Certainly.

COLIN. Isn't it summer throughout June and July?

ALL. As a rule.

COLIN. And lastly - and chiefly - and above all- don't the - don't the - **(bursts into tears)**. Oh, it's no use - I've done it for fifty years and I can't do it any longer! I do believe I'm the most miserable old dog in existence!

STREP. But what's the matter with you? Can it be remorse?

COLIN. It can! More - it is!

DAPHNE. But bless us and save us, what in the world has the poor man been and done?

COLIN. Nothing! That's it! For fifty years I have done nothing but dance and tootle on a pipe. Think of what I might have done in' fifty years if I had been permitted to wallow in native wickedness - to coruscate in congenial crime. But circumstances have compelled me to become an Arcadian and now, in my old age, I begin to lament my misspent manhood and to groan over the wasted years that can never be recalled! Ah! It's a weary world!

DAPHNE. I have no sympathy with your views, but it certainly is a very weary world!

CHLOE. I repudiate your sentiments, but it is a very, very weary world, indeed.

STREP. I am aghast at the state of your morals, but it certainly is a confounded ill-contrived, three-cornered, square-peg-in-a-round-hole sort of a world and I wish I was well out of it altogether! Ah!

ALL. *(sighing heavily and shaking their heads)*. Ah!

(ASTROLOGOS, a very pale, lank, disconsolate person, dressed in black, puts his head out of an upper window. He plays a flageolet very badly.)

COLIN *(suddenly)*. There's somebody looking!

(They all spring up and take up refrain of song, "Let us sing-let us dance," COLIN and STREPHON playing, while DAPHNE and CHLOE dance with lambs.)

AST. *(at window)*. Oh, my! Here's a state of innocence for you! Oh, my goodness! Ain't this a state of innocence for you?

ALL. It is!

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AST. Ain't you all happy neither?

ALL. Ain't we just!

AST. Ah, don't I wish I was as happy as you!

DAPHNE. Ah, but you see you're not an Arcadian.

COLIN. You're a miserable dweller in cities and know nothing of the beauties of rustic life.

AST. And don't I wish I could play the pipe in tune?

STREP. You're only a lodger - a tourist - an excursionist - you cannot expect to play the pipe in tune, unless you're a naturalized Arcadian!

(ASTROLOGOS disappears from window.)

(During this dialogue the Arcadians have been dancing and tootling, but when ASTROLOGOS disappears they relapse.)

COLIN. He's gone!

STREP. That's an agreeable person. He's occupied my first floor for the last three months. I hate filthy lucre, but he hasn't suggested anything in the shape of rent.

DAPHNE. Well, why don't you ask him for it?

STREP. An Arcadian dun a lodger for rent? He wouldn't do it. He's too unsophisticated. Hang it all, I hope I haven't come down to hankering after dross. I trust I'm too unworldly to do that. I merely mention, as an incidental fact, curious in itself but of no special importance whatever, that up to the present moment he hasn't suggested anything in the shape of rent.

COLIN. Ha! Strange!

DAPHNE. Droll - very droll.

STREP. Yes, as a matter of fact it is droll - that's just what it is - it's droll.

ALL. Ha! Ha!

(Enter ASTROLOGOS. He is very dismal and lank. He is playing on a pipe and leading a lamb with a ribbon. He goes up to DAPHNE, then to CHLOE, then to COLIN. Each walks off, much alarmed, in succession. STREPHON remains.)

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- AST. *(in tears)*. The simple shepherds seem afraid of me.
- STREP. Well, you're not a pleasant person.
- AST. I'm afraid I'm not. I've such odd ways, haven't I?
- STREP. Your ways are odd.
- AST. I'm always thus. You will never find anything in the shape of change about me.
- STREP. I regret to hear it.
- AST. To tell you the truth I don't believe I'm human.
- STREP. That idea has already occurred to me.
- AST. I believe I'm a sort of demon. Now, would it astonish you to learn that there's a very long and interesting tale attached to me?
- STREP. Not a bit - though it's wonderful how you stow it away.
- AST. *(shaking his head)*. Ah, I could joke like that once - but I don't mean "tail" - an appendage. I mean "tale" - a history.
- STREP. Oh!
- AST. I'll tell it to you. A quarter of a century ago, I was younger than I am now by some years. The first thing I can remember is being a good young man in spectacles.
- STREP. Weak eyes?
- AST. No - capital eyes, but serious disposition. But everybody ridiculed me, especially little boys.
- STREP. I should have smacked 'em.
- AST. So I did, but the cowards kicked me. But I was even with them, for I went to Merlin and asked him to make me a bogy.
- STREP. Couldn't you have taken a mask and some straw, and made one for yourself?
- AST. No, no - to make me a bogy - me, you know - to frighten little boys.
- STREP. I see - but your conversation is not very lucid.

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- AST. Sloppy, ain't it? Well, he made me a bogy and taught me all sorts of conjuring tricks. Dreadful, ain't it?
- STREP. It's appalling.
- AST. Don't be frightened.
- STREP. I'm not.
- AST. Now, it's a proud distinction to be a bogy, but it ain't all pleasure. For instance, I had to live in a coal cellar.
- STREP. I see - to be called out by nursemaids to frighten naughty little boys.
- AST. No - that wouldn't have been so bad - I wasn't called out at all - I was there to be alluded to.
- STREP. But they could have alluded to you without your being there, couldn't they?
- AST. Ah, but that would have been a deception.
- STREP. So it would.
- AST. I hate deception. I wouldn't deceive a nursemaid. Are you fond of nursemaids?
- STREP. (*shocked*). No-are you?
- AST. Ain't I just! Well, I remained in the cellar for twenty years and amused myself conjuring with bits of coal. Can you conjure with bits of coal?
- STREP. No - can you?
- AST. Can't I just! It's very simple - you take a big bit of coal in your right hand and a little bit of coal in your left. Then you put your hand behind your back and you ask the company which hand the big bit is in. If they guess rightly you slyly change the pieces behind your back and confound them. It frightens them horribly.
- STREP. I should conceive that it was calculated to strike them with unspeakable terror. But if you are alone?
- AST. Ah, then you must be the company as well. I used to conjure and guess too, and I always took care to guess wrong, which made my tricks very successful, but I was obliged to give it up, it unnerved me so. In fact, the excitement of the life was too much for me and I had to retire.

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- STREP. And how do you live?
- AST. Well, at first I did very well. Merlin had given me four magic talismans - a cap, a cloak, a ring and a stick. Whoever possesses anyone of these articles has the right to have one wish granted - but only one. So, as I possessed all four, I had four wishes - and I wished four times for beef (of which I am fond), and I got it and I eat it up and now I have no more wishes left, and no more beef. Well, then I earned a living by conjuring. You haven't seen my great feat?
- STREP. Oh, yes, I have - and I was very glad to see that they were feet and not hoofs.
- AST. That's an amusing joke, but it isn't what I mean. I mean my great trick - with the coals. I can't do it here, because there are no coals in Arcadia. It's a pity, because it earns me a deal of money, and if I could only find some bits of coal I should be a made man.
- STREP. But won't other things do as well as coals?
- AST. Such as what?
- STREP. Such as stones for instance - or money (*aside*) - that's a good idea - (*aloud*) Money, such as a sovereign and half a sovereign, or a fifty-pound note and a hundred-pound note.
- AST. Of course - a fifty-pound note and a hundred-pound note will do capitally - I've got the very thing. (*Producing notes. STREPHON very keen after them.*) I'll go this very day.
- STREP. I must drop a hint about that rent. Stop - I know a song with a hint in it. I'll sing it to him. (*Aloud.*) Before you go I should like to sing to you a little thing of my own - a simple little thing - just a suggestion of an idea - nothing more.
- AST. I should like to hear it very much. (*Sits.*)
- STREP. (*aside*). I've got him now. (*Sings.*) Fair love...
- AST. (*interrupting*). Eh?
- STREP. Fair love - (*it's supposed to be sung to a lady*)
Fair love, assuage the wearing woe
 Within this bosom pent;
Thou tellest me that thou must go
 Because thy heart is rent

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Is rent - is rent, rent, rent - is rent - (*Ad lib.*)
Because thy heart is rent. (*Pauses significantly.*)

AST. Exactly-you mean torn, I suppose. You don't mean ha! ha! the hire of a house.

STREP. No, no - of course not. Torn - broken...

AST. I declare, I thought you meant the rent of a house.

STREP. Oh, no - nothing of the kind - torn. Well, it goes on like this: (*Sings.*)
Rent though that heart may be,
Rent though that heart may be
Rent though that heart may be

AST. Exactly. Rent though that heart may be

STREP. (*sings*). Why, give it, love, to me.

(*Holds out his hand as for money. ASTROLOGOS shakes it heartily.*)

AST. Capital - excellent. Only -

STREP. Yes?

AST. Don't you think you've got rather too much "rent"?

STREP. Well, do you know, I *was* thinking I hadn't got quite enough.

AST. Too much. I should reduce my rent. Good-morning.

(*Exit ASTROLOGOS.*)

STREP. He's gone. Now, anybody but an Arcadian would be disappointed. I couldn't help throwing out a hint just to see if he would take it - and he wouldn't. It's very shabby, because he can't know that I don't care about money. That's the great beauty of being an Arcadian - one can't be sordid even if one wants to. Thank goodness I'm a true Arcadian! It is a happy life, after all, and I wouldn't change it for any consideration.

SONG - STREPHON.

There's naught but care, and toil, and strife
For him who leads a city life;
He dines each day in tip-top fig
On dainty meats - the nasty pig
And finishes - unhappy brute

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On first-rate wine and hothouse fruit.
If first-rate wine were given me
How miserable I should be!
For I'm a simple, simple swain,
Who treats such things with much disdain.
Such matters have no charm for me,
A simple swain of Arcadee!
The wretched fellow, you will find,
Gets up just when he feels inclined,
And always takes his nightly rest
At any hour that suits him best.
Whene'er he walks abroad, I vow,
The common people scrape and bow.
If common people bowed to me
How miserable I should be!
For I'm a simple, simple swain, etc.
He goes to opera, ball and play,
(Disgusting joys!) and every day
Some unforeseen enjoyment brings.
Now, there's a dreadful state of things!
And spite of old duennas grim,
Fair maidens fall in love with him.
If maidens fell in love with me
How miserable I should be!
For I'm a simple, simple swain, etc.

(Enter DAPHNE, very excited.)

DAPHNE. Oh, my! Oh, there now! Oh, I've such news! Colin! Chloe! I've such news!

(Enter COLIN and CHLOE.)

COLIN *(shaking her)*. Speak out, woman, can't you? What's wrong?

DAPHNE. Nothing. Everything is right. Lycidas - the handsome, wealthy, gifted Lycidas - has determined to renounce the vanities of a worldly life and is going to become an Arcadian!

STREP. And who is Lycidas?

COLIN. Lycidas is the richest man in the world!

DAPHNE. Lycidas is the noblest man in the world!

CHLOE. Lycidas is the handsomest man in the world!

COLIN. Ha! ha! I was all that once!

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DAPHNE. And why - why do you think he is coming? Because he has taken a fancy to... who do you think?

STREP. You?

DAPHNE. No. Because he has taken a fancy to Chloe! There!

CHLOE. To me! Oh, how delightful! How do I look?

COLIN. To Chloe! My dear child! My darling child! This, indeed, is happiness.

STREP. But here - I say - it don't seem to occur to you that there is a little difficulty in the way. Chloe is betrothed to me.

COLIN. Don't let that distress you - set your mind at rest. I shall offer no obstacle to the betrothal being cancelled.

STREP. Oh, yes - but I say

DAPHNE. Lycidas is so handsome - he is!

COLIN. And such a gentleman - he is!

CHLOE. And so rich - he is! Not that that matters in Arcadia.

DAPHNE. No, that don't matter in Arcadia.

COLIN. Money is vanity - dross - rubbish.

CHLOE. I'm sure I despise it; still, as a matter of fact - curious in itself, but having no special bearing on the case - Lycidas is rich.

STREP. Look here. I'm an Arcadian, and as an Arcadian I'm bound to give every stranger a welcome. But if this stranger is coming after Chloe I'll give him the sort of welcome he don't expect.

DAPHNE. An Arcadian bearing malice! Oh, there now!

STREP. I won't be an Arcadian any longer. I'll resign. I'll go in for athletic exercises. I'll practice night and day with Indian clubs, dumb bells, chest expanders and boxing gloves. My temperament is naturally fierce - it shall have full swing; my disposition is pugilistic, it shall revel unrestrained. I'll - I'll smash this fellow - (*Suddenly.*) Here he comes!

(All take up pipes and sing.)

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ENSEMBLE.

Welcome to this spot,
Free from care and danger,
Welcome to our humble cot,
Welcome, little stranger!

(Enter LYCIDAS. He is magnificently dressed and leads two lambs decorated with ribbons. As he sings he accompanies himself on a pipe.)

SOLO. - LYCIDAS.

(Very melodramatic)

Far away from care and strife,
Far from busy pillage
I will lead a simple life
In this happy village.

ALL. Welcome, welcome to this spot,
Free from care and danger,
Welcome to our humble cot,
Welcome, little stranger -
In this little village of ours!

LYCIDAS. In this little village of theirs!

ALL. Our life is all honey and flowers,
Untainted by sorrow or cares!

QUARTETTE.

On the banks of every stream
Are pleasure-boats ready to launch.
Our cows give nothing but cream,
Our mutton's all saddle and haunch.

ALL. In this little village of ours!

LYCIDAS. In this little village of theirs!

Our life is all honey and flowers,
Untainted by sorrow or cares!
And every night there's a moon.
And figs grow thistles upon,

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And the little pigs squeak in tune,
And every goose is a swan.

ALL. In this little village of ours!

LYCIDAS. In this little village of theirs!

ALL. Our life is all honey and flowers,
Untainted by sorrow or cares!
In this little village of ours!

LYCIDAS. In this little village of theirs!

ALL. Our life is all honey and flowers,
Untainted by sorrow or cares!

DAPHNE. Asparagus all the year round,
And apples that eat like a peach;
And gloves are a penny a pound,
And bonnets a half-penny each.

ALL. In this little village of ours!

LYCIDAS. In this little village of theirs!

ALL. Our life is all honey and flowers,
Untainted by sorrow or cares!

(DANCE.)

LYCIDAS. (*impetuously*). This is the life for me. I see plainly that this is the life for me. I will be a simple shepherd and come and live with you. Oblige me with the address of a house agent, a field, a fold, a flock of sheep and a list of local charities.

COLIN. It is indeed a charming existence. Beautiful climate - unlimited health - nothing to do.

CHLOE. Lovely things to wear.

DAPHNE. Envy, hatred and malice unheard of.

STREP. And money a drug.

DAPHNE. A drug.

COLIN. A drug.

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LYCIDAS. I am sorry to hear that. I am wealthy, and as I pride myself on the completeness with which I do everything I undertake, I had provided myself with money with which I should have liked to pay my footing (*producing bags-three small, one large*).

STREP. A stranger's whim is sacred. We thwart him in nothing.

DAPHNE. In nothing.

CHLOE. In nothing whatever.

COLIN. In nothing at all.

LYCIDAS. Good.

(He distributes the bags. All endeavour to get the big one, which falls to STREPHON'S share.)

DAPHNE. (*opening bag*). Gold!

CHLOE. (*opening bag*). Gold!

COLIN (*opening bag*). Gold!

STREP. (*opening bag*). Copper! (*Disappointed.*)

LYCIDAS. And now, leave me alone with her. (*Indicating CHLOE.*)

STREP. But I say

COLIN (*To DAPHNE*). The gentleman wishes us to leave him with Chloe. Come, Daphne.

DAPHNE. But –

COLIN. Let us humour the young people. Incredible as it may appear, you were once young yourself.

(Exit with DAPHNE.)

LYCIDAS. (*to STREPHON, who remains*). I said I would be alone with her.

STREP. Yes, that's all very well, but -

LYCIDAS. (*sternly*). It is the stranger's whim!

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STREP. Oh, of course, if it is the stranger's whim.

(Exit. Bus.)

LYCIDAS. Now we are alone.

CHLOE. So we are.

LYCIDAS. Maiden, hear me. I am a man of few words - hot, rash, impulsive. I am a whirlwind - a cataract - a volcano. That being so, you will be prepared to hear that I worship you fondly, madly, recklessly. Be mine.

CHLOE. Really this is so sudden.

LYCIDAS. As I said before, I pride myself on the completeness with which I do everything I undertake. That being so, I shall be glad to hear the names of your dressmaker, jeweller, confectioner, livery-stable keeper and favourite clergyman.

CHLOE. But before I reply

LYCIDAS. Ha, an evasion! Then I have a rival! His name and those of his physician, family undertaker and monumental mason!

(Enter STREPHON with stick, unobserved.)

CHLOE. No, no - you are too impetuous. It is true there is a great hulking, foolish, awkward booby always bothering me, but he is nothing.

LYCIDAS. He shall be less than nothing. I will grind him to grey powder and take him in jam. Where is he?

STREP. *(coming forward)*. He is here. *(LYCIDAS alarmed.)* Perhaps you would like to apologize?

LYCIDAS. *(meekly)*. You anticipate my fondest wish. To a true gentleman there is nothing humiliating in a frank confession of error. Favour me with the name of your daily paper, its charge for advertisements, and your favourite form of retraction.

STREP. But one moment.

CHLOE. *(aside to LYCIDAS)*. You had better go, I think. You can return in half an hour.

LYCIDAS. Sir, I retire gracefully. Take the maiden. She is not good enough for you. She is not young enough for you. She is not pretty enough for you - but

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take her nevertheless. She may improve. (*Aside to CHLOE.*) In half an hour. (*Aloud.*) Good-morning!

(*Exit LYCIDAS, followed by STREPHON, shaking his stick significantly.*)

STREP. And now, miss, understand me. I am no longer an Arcadian. If that fellow presumes to address you again, I will smash that fellow. You understand - I will smash him! It's painful, but it must be done.

(*Exit STREPHON.*)

CHLOE. It's very hard. The gentleman is handsome, which is a recommendation, and he's affectionate, which is agreeable, and he's wealthy, which don't matter, and he makes love in the manner which of all others I prefer. I like a man who comes to the point at once. Ah, that's the way to woo!

(*Enter STREPHON in great agitation. He staggers to a seat.*)

STREP. He's gone! Gone! Gone! Ha! ha! ha!

CHLOE. Who has gone? Not Lycidas?

STREP. Lycidas? No, Astrologos! He's vanished! Disappeared! And he owed me three months' rent! It's of no consequence whatever, but as a matter of fact, or rather as a don't matter of fact, he certainly did owe me three months' rent! Ha! Ha! Ha! (*Weeping hysterically.*)

(*Enter DAPHNE and COLIN.*)

DAPHNE. Strephon, my dear Strephon, here is a little parcel which has been sent to you by Astrologos; the wretch has gone, but who knows what this may contain? It's not a matter of any interest to an Arcadian, but I shouldn't be at all surprised if it's an equivalent for the creature's rent.

STREP. Perhaps. Who knows? If it is, it would serve him right to keep it. Just to punish him, you know.

COLIN. Yes, to punish him.

DAPHNE. Exactly, to punish him.

STREP. I'll open it. (*Does so.*) A stick, a ring, a cloak, and a cap! and a note addressed to me. (*Opens and reads.*)

"These things are no longer of any use to me.

There is a mystic power attached to them.

Distribute them as you think fit. ASTROLOGOS."

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Come, that's something!

COLIN. You are to distribute them as you think fit. (*Holding out his hand.*)

STREP. Yes, and I think fit to distribute them by auction.

ALL. Good - by auction.

STREP. (*Table is brought.*) That's it. Now then, ladies and gentlemen, allow me to submit -

ALL. No, no - sing it, sing it.

QUARTETTE.

STREP. Good people all, attend, attend to me,
While I submit the stranger's kit,
Which here displayed you plainly see,
To public competition.

A cap, a cloak, a ring, a cloak, a ring, a box,
And everything in excellent condition.

COL., CH. AND D. In excellent, in excellent condition.

STREP. In excellent condition. (*Takes cap.*)
You place it thus upon your head,
And everywhere you hear it said
That you're a clever, knowing man,
With wit to plot and plan.

COL., CH. AND D. You place it thus, and as I live
An air of innocence 'twill give.
The craftiest man, by such a rule,
Will look a simple fool.

STREP. Now, what shall we say for this little cap?

COL., CH. AND D. Now, what shall we say for that little cap?

CHLOE. A penny!

DAPHNE. Two pence!

COLIN. Three pence!

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- CHLOE. Four!
- STREP. Any more, any more, any more, any more? Four pence -
Any advance upon - going, going, going, going, gone!
- OMNES. Hurrah! hurrah! it's Chloe's cap, it's Chloe's cap,
It's Chloe's cap.
It's a kind of wide-awake, for it hasn't got a nap.
Hurrah! for Chloe's cap!
- STREP. Good people all, attend, attend to me,
While I submit the stranger's kit,
Which here displayed you plainly see,
To public competition.
Now, here's a little cloak,
Such a nice little, sweet little cloak,
Such a dear little, grey little,
Red little cloak I never did see.
- COL., CH. AND D. Come, we must try ere we can buy.
- STREP. Yes, you shall try, and then you'll buy;
Believe me, for I do not joke,

I never saw so lovely a cloak.
'Twill keep the rain-drops from your pins,
And hide a multitude of sins.
- COL., CH. AND D. You place it thus, all square and true,
And you're a merchant, well to do.
You place it thus - you're taken for
A base conspirator!
Now, what shall we say for that little cloak?
- STREP. Now, what shall we say for this little cloak?
- DAPHNE. A penny!
- COLIN. Two pence!
- CHLOE. Three pence!
- DAPHNE. Four pence!
- STREP. Any more, any more, any more, any more?
Four pence! Any advance upon?

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Going, going, going, gone!

OMNES. Hurrah! hurrah! it's Daphne's cloak,
 It's Daphne's cloak, it's Daphne's cloak.
 She's very wide-awake, with a feeling for a joke.
 Hurrah! for Daphne's cloak!

STREP. Now, here's a lot that must, that must be sold,
 A snuff-box, made of solid gold.
 Now, make an offer, if you please
 It's not a thing at which to sneeze.
 Now, what shall we say for this affair?
 What shall we say for the tabatiere?
 What shall we say for this tabatiere
 Of solid gold?

COL., CH. AND D. Now, make a bid for this affair.

STREP. Such a nice little box I never did see.
 Now, make an offer if you please
 It's not a thing at which to sneeze
 A snuff-box made of solid gold,
 Of solid gold.

COL., CH. AND D. Now, make a bid for this affair.
 What shall we say for this affair?
 This gold tabatiere, what shall
 We say for this affair?

STREP. Now, what shall we say for this little box?
 Now, what shall we say for this little box?

COLIN. A penny!

DAPHNE. Two pence!

CHLOE. Three pence!

COLIN. Four pence!

STREP. Any more, any more, any more, any more?
 Four pence - any advance upon?
 Going, going, going, going, gone!

OMNES. Hurrah! hurrah! it's Colin's box,

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It's Colin's box, it's Colin's box,
It's all of solid gold, he's a very sly old fox.
Hurrah! for Colin's box.
Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!
He bid away, away,
Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah! he'll never rue this day.
Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!

(Exeunt.)

DAPHNE. *(examining cloak)*. Well, there now, I declare, it's not such a very bad bargain. It's not very handsome, but then four pence isn't much, and altogether I've no reason to complain of my bargain. *(Takes out knitting.)* So that disreputable old gentleman declared that whoever possessed one of these things should have one wish granted, did he? And there are some donkeys who'd believe that nonsense! Have a wish granted! Why, bless us and save us, don't we live in Arcadia, where nobody has anything to wish for? But some people are never satisfied. You may take a man and make kings and queens of him, and he'll grumble because you haven't made him emperors and empresses! Ah, well - people never seem to know when they're well off. There's my old man - healthy old gentleman - plenty to eat and drink - nothing to do - nothing will satisfy him short of being a woman. There's my nephew Strephon - fine, muscular lad - good-looking, too - he's always grumbling and wishing he was somebody else. Ah! I wish I'd as little to grumble at as he has! There'd be some excuse for a poor feeble old lady - but a fine handsome lad just beginning life! Ah, I wish I was in his shoes.

(Passes behind tree C. STREPHON comes from other side to convey the idea that the change has been effected. He wears the red cloak and knits a stocking.)

STREP. *(with manners of DAPHNE)*. I'd soon show them that there was little to grumble at! *(Sees coat.)* Eh! What? Why, what an extraordinary thing. Why, bless us and save us, if I haven't come out in Strephon's coat. Now, that's a most extraordinary mistake to have made. Why, what a foolish old woman I must be! Now, how could that have happened? Let me see. *(Passes hand over chin in considering- finds it rough.)* Dear me! *(Rubs it.)* How rough my chin is! It must be the cold wind that has chapped it! *(Feels for pocket in skirt to replace knitting. Finds that he has no skirt.)* Why - oh dear! Oh, bless me! Oh, I must be dreaming! If I haven't got on a pair of - Oh! *(Sits and endeavours to hide his legs under seat.)* Oh, Dame Daphne! Dame Daphne! *(Sees legs again.)* Oh! How shocking! I couldn't possibly have put on a pair of - a pair of - a pair of these things without knowing it! Oh, I daren't look at 'em. I'm sure I don't know which way to look! *(Pulls handkerchief out of pocket to cover knees. Sees STREPHON'S name on it.)* Why, it's Strephon's handkerchief and Strephon's clothes *(looks in glass)* and Strephon's face. Oh, there now! If I'm not Strephon! I wished to be

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Strephon and I'm become Strephon. Why, I declare I'm a young man. Bless me, how very embarrassing. But if I'm Strephon, what in the world has become of me? I must have disappeared - vanished from the face of the earth!

(Enter DAPHNE, striding about the stage with the manner of COLIN and exhibiting in pantomime great remorse.)

That's what it is - I'm dead! Deary, deary me! 'Well, I was a good old soul, and he was very fond of me! Deary, deary, deary me!

DAPHNE. *(laughing remorsefully)*. Ha! Ha! Ha! Oh, remorse! remorse!

STREP. *(without looking round)*. So you're there, Colin, are you? Well, poor old Daphne-she's dead!

DAPHNE. Daphne dead? What do you mean? *(Roughly.)*

STREP. *(turning round)*. Why, most extraordinary thing.

DAPHNE. What's the matter with you? Ain't you well?

STREP. *(much puzzled)*. Well, thank'ee, ma'am, I'm not altogether myself this morning. *(Aside.)* It is a most extraordinary thing! If I, who was Daphne, am now Strephon, the question arises, who is the person who is now Daphne? I don't quite like the idea of my poor old body being inhabited by a total stranger. *(Aloud.)* I beg your pardon, ma'am - I don't know whether you're aware of it, but that's my body you've got on!

DAPHNE. Your body? It seems to me it's my wife's body. At all events I married it.

STREP. Why, what in the world do you mean?

DAPHNE. Mean? Why, I was thinking just now that I'd had enough of this innocent Arcadian existence. I've been good for fifty years, and I determined to begin from that moment a career of blood-curdling Crime.

STREP. Gracious! How horrible!

DAPHNE. The only drawback is that a man's so soon found out. Now, there's my missus, said I, she's a good, homely, simple, harmless body no one would suspect her. Why wasn't I my own missus? - and then - presto, will you believe it, all at once I became her!

STREP. Why, that's just what happened to me! I wished to be Strephon and I became Strephon!

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DAPHNE. Why, then you are

STREP. Daphne! And you?

DAPHNE. Colin!

STREP. My husband!

DAPHNE. My wife!

(They embrace.)

STREP. This is really very curious.

DAPHNE. It's the queerest start I ever knew.

STREP. Queerest start! I don't quite like that expression. It isn't exactly ladylike.

DAPHNE. But there's such a plaguey lot of things to put on, and I don't know how they come!

STREP. And there's so few things for me to put on, and they're not at all the sort of things I've been accustomed to. There now, I never, never can show myself in such an extremely scanty dress.

DAPHNE. Go and change those things directly. I don't approve of my wife going about in those clothes.

STREP. Well, but I'm not your wife now, dear - I'm your husband.

DAPHNE. I don't care. I insist on your wearing a petticoat.

STREP. But people will laugh at me. If I'm a man I must dress as such .

DAPHNE. Can't go into that. *(Takes out pipe and puts it in her mouth.)*

STREP. Oh, please don't smoke. I never used to smoke when I was you.

DAPHNE. Can't go into that. I'm not going to change my habits for anyone. Can't do without my pipe and glass of grog, you know. *(Prepares to take snuff.)*

STREP. Oh, dear! oh, dear! what will people say?

DAPHNE. Hallo! What's the matter with this tooth?

STREP. Oh, please be very careful. That tooth is - I never liked to tell you, but it isn't quite real. If you must smoke, please smoke on the other side of your

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mouth. (*DAPHNE makes the change.*) Thank you, oh, so much. (*She takes out knitting and begins to knit.*) And while I am about it, I should like to tell you of two or three little things that any one who inhabits my body will have to attend to. In the first place that right shoulder will want rubbing every morning with Friar's Balsam and nine oils for seven minutes and a half. Please be very careful, as it gets dreadfully stiff if it's neglected. Then, in doing your hair be very careful to change the parting every two days, because it's spreading, and - and - if you please, I don't think I ever mentioned it before, but some of it takes off for convenience, and while I am about it I may mention that just a little tiny wee suspicion of complexion laid on very lightly with a piece of new cotton wool does one's self no harm and gives pleasure to others, and if it isn't done it might be missed!

(*Enter COLIN, skipping girlishly with the manners of CHLOE.*)

COLIN (*running to DAPHNE*). Oh mamma! mamma! I'm so frightened! Oh, dear! oh, dear! I'm so terrified!

DAPHNE. (*roughly*). Hullo! Why, this is me! What do you mean by being me? Who are you? Can't you speak? (*Shakes him.*)

COLIN. Oh, don't, you hurt me! Please don't be angry. But, if you please - you wouldn't think it, but I'm - I'm Chloe!

STREP. Chloe!

COLIN. Yes, such a wonderful thing has happened! I was so angry with Strephon for having quarrelled with me about Lycidas, and so angry with Lycidas for having made me quarrel with Strephon, that I began to wish I wasn't a pretty girl at all! "There now," said I, "I declare that sooner than be tormented with all these tiresome admirers, I'd sooner be a grumpy, ill-conditioned old bear like papa and - and - if you please, I became a bear like papa without knowing it. It's so dreadful for a young lady to be her own papa! And - and - please forgive me, Strephon, for it must be a dreadful disappointment to you!

STREP. Disappointment? Oh, dear, no!

COLIN. What?

STREP. Oh, by the bye, I forgot to tell you, it's an awkward thing to admit, but I'm your mamma!

COLIN. Oh, nonsense. This is my mamma; are you not my dear, dear, kind, indulgent mamma? (*Fondling her.*)

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DAPHNE. Get out! I'm your father.

COLIN. My father?

DAPHNE. Yes, I am the grumpy, ill-conditioned old bear in question.

STREP. We've all been wishing and we've all got our wishes, and a very pretty kettle of fish we made of it!

COLIN. Oh, dear! oh, dear! oh, dear!

ALL. What's the matter?

COLIN. (*Crying.*) If you're my papa and you're my mamma, what's become of my Strephon?

(Enter CHLOE with boxing-gloves.)

CHLOE. Here he is! (*Hitting out.*) One! two! three! four!

ALL. Are you Strephon?

CHLOE. Yes, I am. (*As before.*) One! two! three! four!

DAPHNE. But how did it all come about?

CHLOE. Oh, simplest thing in the world. One, two, three, four - everybody seemed to dislike me - one, two - and everybody seemed to love Chloe - three, four - so I wished I was Chloe - one, two, three, four - and I became - one, two - Chloe - three, four - all at once - one, two, three, four!

COLIN. Then you are really my darling, darling Strephon!

CHLOE. To be sure; and you are?

COLIN. Chloe!

CHLOE. My love!

COLIN. My pet!

(They embrace.)

DAPHNE. But what are you doing with boxing-gloves?

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- CHLOE. I'm practising, to take it out of Lycidas - one, two, three, four - wait till I meet him; you'll see - one, two, three, four.
- COLIN. Oh, don't hurt him; he isn't strong.
- CHLOE. I passed my word that I would smash him, and smash him I will.
- STREP. But a young lady - oh, I forgot, you are - I.
- CHLOE. Yes, and he is me. (*Indicating COLIN.*)
- DAPHNE. And I am he. (*Indicating COLIN.*)
- COLIN. And I am she. (*Indicating CHLOE.*)
- CHLOE. No, I am me.
- COLIN. You can't be me, if I'm me.
- DAPHNE. No, no, surely I am me.
- STREP. So am I. But that's ridiculous, you know - we can't all be me.
- DAPHNE. I've got it. I'm you, you're me, he's she, she's he - no, she must be she.
- STREP. She must be she, he must be he, I'm I - I know I'm I.
- DAPHNE. No, you're I - no, I'm you - no, I see very plainly that if we don't settle who we all are we shall make a precious mess of this.

IDENTITY QUARTETTE.

- COLIN. The question of identity
Suppose we now discuss.
It seems that all of us are me
And neither of us *us!*
- ALL. This interchange will surely be
A source of endless fuss,
If I am he and he is me,
And neither of us *us!*
- COLIN. If I am she, and- she is him,
And him is her, or me,
Arises then the question grim,
Why, who on earth are we?

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- ALL. Oh, that I'd never lived to see
This most unhappy day,
When none of us are he or she,
But each of us is they!
- CHLOE. How horrid, if it should occur,
As it may seem to be,
That none of us are him or her
And all of us are we!
- DAPHNE. If I am he - I should say she
Dear madam - that is, sir,
And he is she - that's meaning me,
Pray, tell me, who is her?
- ALL. Oh, some one please to tell us now,
If I am ma'am or sir,
Or if perchance I'm thee or thou,
Or if I'm him or her.
- STREP. It's very clear you are not me,
You are not you - you say,
You are not he, you are not she,
Then, bless my soul, you're they!
- DAPHNE. There, you see, confusion from beginning to end. Now, I've an idea. Whoever possesses one of these talismans has a right to have one wish granted, but only one. Well, we've had that one, and a pretty mess we've made of it!
- ALL. We have indeed.
- DAPHNE. Then suppose we exchange. You take the cloak, you the ring, you the cap, I the stick,! then we can wish ourselves *ourselves* again.
- ALL. Capital!
- STREP. *(to CHLOE)*. Allow me. *(Giving cloak.)*
- CHLOE. *(to COLIN)*. Permit me. *(Giving ring.)*
- COLIN *(to DAPHNE)*. Suffer me. *(Giving stick.)*
- DAPHNE. And here's my cap. *(Giving cap to STREPHON.)* Now! Wish! All at once - one, two, three!
- ALL. I've wished!

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(All resume their natural demeanour.)

STREP. Why, I'm Strephon again!

CHLOE. And I'm Chloe!

COLIN. And I'm Colin!

DAPHNE. And I'm Daphne!

(All embrace. Enter LYCIDAS.)

LYCIDAS. I've come to the conclusion that this is no place for me. I shall depart by the next train. Oblige me with a rug, a foot-warmer; a smoking carriage, a shilling for the guard, a cheap novel, and a railway time table.

STREP. A railway time table? That's of no use nowadays. But if you are going, perhaps you'd like to take a few little souvenirs with you. We are about to dispose of some by auction.

LYCIDAS. Souvenirs of what?

ALL. Of happy Arcadia!

FINALE. - STREPHON and CHORUS.

In this innocent little vale,
Whenever we've chattels for sale,
We send for an auctioneer.
Now, what shall we say for this little lot?

LYCIDAS. A penny!

DAPHNE. Two pence!

CHLOE. Three pence!

LYCIDAS. Four!

STREP. Any more, any more, any more, any more?
Going at four pence, four pence, four!
Four pence! Any advance upon?
Going, going, going, going, going, going, gone!

(Knocks them down.)

(LYCIDAS takes things and puts them on.)

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ALL.

They go, en masse,
To Lycidas!
Alas! alas! alas!
To Lycidas!
Hurrah! hurrah! for Lycidas!

CURTAIN