

Cambridge University Press
 978-1-316-61248-4 — The Alchemist
 Ben Jonson, Edited by R. J. L. Kingsford
 Excerpt
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ACT THE FIRST

SCENE I: A Room in LOVEWIT'S House.

Enter FACE, in a captain's uniform, with his sword drawn, and SUBTLE with a vial, quarrelling, and followed by DOL COMMON.

Face. Believe 't, I will.

Sub. Thy worst. I fart at thee.

Dol. Have you your wits? why, gentlemen! for love—

Face. Sirrah, I'll strip you . . . out of all your sleights.

Dol. Nay, look ye, sovereign, general, are you madmen?

Sub. O, let the wild sheep loose. I'll gum your silks With good strong water, an you come.

Dol. Will you have

The neighbours hear you? will you betray all? Hark! I hear somebody.

Face. Sirrah—

Sub. I shall mar

All that the tailor has made, if you approach.

Face. You most notorious whelp, you insolent slave, Dare you do this?

Sub. Yes, faith; yes, faith.

Face. Why, who

Am I, my mungrel? who am I?

Sub. I'll tell you,

Since you know not yourself.

Face. Speak lower, rogue.

Sub. Yes, you were once (time's not long past) the good,

Honest, plain, livery-three-pound-thrum, that kept Your master's worship's house here in the Friars, For the vacations—

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THE ALCHEMIST

ACT I

Face. Will you be so loud?

Sub. Since, by my means, translated suburb-captain.

Face. By your means, doctor dog!

Sub. Within man's memory,
 All this I speak of.

Face. Why, I pray you, have I
 Been countenanced by you, or you by me?
 Do but collect, sir, where I met you first.

Sub. I do not hear well.

Face. Not of this, I think it.
 But I shall put you in mind, sir;—at Pie-corner,
 Taking your meal of steam in, from cooks' stalls,
 Where, like the father of hunger, you did walk
 Piteously costive, with your pinch'd-horn-nose,
 And your complexion of the Roman wash,
 Stuck full of black and melancholic worms,
 Like powder-corns shot at the artillery-yard.

Sub. I wish you could advance your voice a little.

Face. When you went pinn'd up in the several rags
 You had raked and pick'd from dunghills, before day;
 Your feet in mouldy slippers, for your kibes;
 A felt of rug, and a thin threaden cloak,
 That scarce would cover your no buttocks—

Sub. So, sir!

Face. When all your alchemy, and your algebra,
 Your minerals, vegetals, and animals,
 Your conjuring, cozening, and your dozen of trades,
 Could not relieve your corps with so much linen
 Would make you tinder, but to see a fire;
 I gave you countenance, credit for your coals,
 Your stills, your glasses, your materials;
 Built you a furnace, drew you customers,
 Advanced all your black arts; lent you, beside,
 A house to practise in—

Sub. Your master's house!

Face. Where you have studied the more thriving skill
 Of bawdry since.

Sub. Yes, in your master's house.
 You and the rats here kept possession.

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Make it not strange. I know you were one could keep
 The buttery-hatch still lock'd, and save the chippings,
 Sell the dole beer to aqua-vitæ men,
 The which, together with your Christmas vails
 At post-and-pair, your letting out of counters,
 Made you a pretty stock, some twenty marks,
 And gave you credit to converse with cobwebs,
 Here, since your mistress' death hath broke up house.

Face. You might talk softlier, rascal.

Sub. No, you scarab,

I'll thunder you in pieces: I will teach you
 How to beware to tempt a Fury again,
 That carries tempest in his hand and voice.

Face. The place has made you valiant.

Sub. No, your clothes.—

Thou vermin, have I ta'en thee out of dung,
 So poor, so wretched, when no living thing
 Would keep thee company, but a spider, or worse?
 Rais'd thee from brooms, and dust, and watering-pots,
 Sublimed thee, and exalted thee, and fix'd thee
 In the third region, call'd our state of grace?
 Wrought thee to spirit, to quintessence, with pains
 Would twice have won me the philosopher's work?
 Put thee in words and fashion, made thee fit
 For more than ordinary fellowships?
 Giv'n thee thy oaths, thy quarrelling dimensions,
 Thy rules to cheat at horse-race, cock-pit, cards,
 Dice, or whatever gallant tincture else?
 Made thee a second in mine own great art?
 And have I this for thanks! Do you rebel,
 Do you fly out in the projection?
 Would you be gone now?

Dol. Gentlemen, what mean you?

Will you mar all?

Sub. Slave, thou hadst had no name—

Dol. Will you undo yourselves with civil war?

Sub. Never been known, past *equi clibanum*,
 The heat of horse-dung, under ground, in cellars,
 Or an ale-house darker than deaf John's; been lost

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THE ALCHEMIST

ACT I

To all mankind, but laundresses and tapsters,
 Had not I been.

Dol. Do you know who hears you, sovereign?

Face. Sirrah—

Dol. Nay, general, I thought you were civil.

Face. I shall turn desperate, if you grow thus loud.

Sub. And hang thyself, I care not.

Face. Hang thee, collier,

And all thy pots, and pans, in picture, I will,
 Since thou hast moved me—

Dol. O, this will o'erthrow all.

Face. Write thee up bawd in Paul's, have all thy tricks
 Of cozening with a hollow cole, dust, scrapings,
 Searching for things lost, with a sieve and sheers,
 Erecting figures in your rows of houses,
 And taking in of shadows with a glass,
 Told in red letters; and a face cut for thee,
 Worse than Gamaliel Ratsey's.

Dol. Are you sound?

Have you your senses, masters?

Face. I will have

A book, but barely reckoning thy impostures,
 Shall prove a true philosopher's stone to printers.

Sub. Away, you trencher-rascal!

Face. Out, you dog-leach!

The vomit of all prisons—

Dol. Will you be

Your own destructions, gentlemen?

Face. Still spew'd out

For lying too heavy on the basket.

Sub. Cheater!

Face. Bawd!

Sub. Cow-herd!

Face. Conjuror!

Sub. Cut-purse!

Face. Witch!

Dol. O me!

We are ruin'd, lost! have you no more regard
 To your reputations? where's your judgment? 'sight,

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sc. I

THE ALCHEMIST

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Have yet some care of me, of your republic—

Face. Away, this brach! I'll bring thee, rogue,
 within

The statute of sorcery, tricesimo tertio
 Of Harry the eighth: ay, and perhaps, thy neck
 Within a noose, for laundring gold and barbing it.

Dol. [*Snatches FACE'S sword.*] You'll bring your head
 within a cockscomb, will you?

And you, sir, with your menstrue—[*dashes SUBTLE'S vial
 out of his hand.*—gather it up.—

'Sdeath, you abominable pair of stinkards,
 Leave off your barking, and grow one again,
 Or, by the light that shines, I'll cut your throats.

I'll not be made a prey unto the marshal,
 For ne'er a snarling dog-bolt of you both.
 Have you together cozen'd all this while,
 And all the world, and shall it now be said,
 You've made most courteous shift to cozen yourselves?
 You will accuse him! you will *bring him in* [*to FACE.*
Within the statute! Who shall take your word?

A whoreson, upstart, apocryphal captain,
 Whom not a Puritan in Blackfriars will trust
 So much as for a feather: and you, too, [*to SUBTLE.*
 Will give the cause, forsooth! you will insult,
 And claim a primacy in the divisions!
 You must be chief! as if you only had
 The powder to project with, and the work
 Were not begun out of equality?

The venture tripartite? all things in common?
 Without priority? 'Sdeath! you perpetual curs,
 Fall to your couples again, and cozen kindly,
 And heartily, and lovingly, as you should,
 And lose not the beginning of a term,
 Or, by this hand, I shall grow factious too,
 And take my part, and quit you.

Face. 'Tis his fault;

He ever murmurs, and objects his pains,
 And says, the weight of all lies upon him.

Sub. Why, so it does.

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THE ALCHEMIST

ACT I

Dol. How does it? do not we
 Sustain our parts?

Sub. Yes, but they are not equal.

Dol. Why, if your part exceed to-day, I hope
 Ours may, to-morrow, match it.

Sub. Ay, they *may*.

Dol. May, murmuring mastiff! ay, and do. Death on
 me!

Help me to throttle him. [*Seizes SUB. by the throat.*]

Sub. Dorothy! mistress Dorothy!

'Ods precious, I'll do any thing. What do you mean?

Dol. Because o' your fermentation and cibation?

Sub. Not I, by heaven—

Dol. Your Sol and Luna—help me. [*to FACE.*]

Sub. Would I were hang'd then! I'll conform myself.

Dol. Will you, sir? do so then, and quickly: swear.

Sub. What should I swear?

Dol. To leave your faction, sir,
 And labour kindly in the common work.

Sub. Let me not breathe if I meant aught beside.
 I only used those speeches as a spur
 To him.

Dol. I hope we need no spurs, sir. Do we?

Face. 'Slid, prove to-day, who shall shark best.

Sub. Agreed.

Dol. Yes, and work close and friendly.

Sub. 'Slight, the knot

Shall grow the stronger for this breach, with me.

Dol. Why, so, my good baboons! Shall we go make
 A sort of sober, scurvy, precise neighbours,
 That scarce have smiled twice since the king came in,
 A feast of laughter at our follies? Rascals,
 Would run themselves from breath, to see me ride,
 Or you t' have but a hole to thrust your heads in,
 For which you should pay ear-rent? No, agree.
 And may don Provost ride a feasting long,
 In his old velvet jerkin and stain'd scarfs,
 My noble sovereign, and worthy general,

Ere we contribute a new crewel garter
 To his most worsted worship.

Sub. Royal Dol!

Spoken like Claridiana, and thyself.

Face. For which at supper, thou shalt sit in triumph,
 And not be styled Dol Common, but Dol Proper. . .

[*Bell rings without.*]

Sub. Who's that? one rings. To the window, Dol:

[*Exit DOL.*—pray heaven,

The master do not trouble us this quarter.

Face. O, fear not him. While there dies one a week
 O' the plague, he's safe, from thinking toward London.

Beside, he's busy at his hop-yards now;

I had a letter from him. If he do,

He'll send such word, for airing of the house,

As you shall have sufficient time to quit it:

Though we break up a fortnight, 'tis no matter.

Re-enter DOL.

Sub. Who is it, Dol?

Dol. A fine young quodling.

Face. O,

My lawyer's clerk, I lighted on last night,
 In Holborn, at the Dagger. He would have

(I told you of him) a familiar,

To rifle with at horses, and win cups.

Dol. O, let him in.

Sub. Stay. Who shall do't?

Face. Get you

Your robes on: I will meet him, as going out.

Dol. And what shall I do?

Face. Not be seen; away!

[*Exit DOL.*]

Seem you very reserv'd.

Sub. Enough.

[*Exit.*]

Face. [*aloud and retiring.*] God be wi' you, sir,

I pray you let him know that I was here:

His name is Dapper. I would gladly have staid, but—

Dap. [*within.*] Captain, I am here.

Face. Who's that?—He's come, I think, doctor.

Enter DAPPER.

Good faith, sir, I was going away.

Dap. In truth,
 I am very sorry, captain.

Face. But I thought
 Sure I should meet you.

Dap. Ay, I am very glad.
 I had a scurvy writ or two to make,
 And I had lent my watch last night to one
 That dines to-day at the sheriff's, and so was robb'd
 Of my pass-time.

Re-enter SUBTLE in his velvet cap and gown.

Is this the cunning-man?

Face. This is his worship.

Dap. Is he a doctor?

Face. Yes.

Dap. And have you broke with him, captain?

Face. Ay.

Dap. And how?

Face. Faith, he does make the matter, sir, so dainty,
 I know not what to say.

Dap. Not so, good captain.

Face. Would I were fairly rid of it, believe me.

Dap. Nay, now you grieve me, sir. Why should you
 wish so?

I dare assure you, I'll not be ungrateful.

Face. I cannot think you will, sir. But the law
 Is such a thing—and then he says, Read's matter
 Falling so lately.

Dap. Read! he was an ass,
 And dealt, sir, with a fool.

Face. It was a clerk, sir.

Dap. A clerk!

Face. Nay, hear me, sir, you know the law
 Better, I think—

Dap. I should, sir, and the danger:
 You know, I shew'd the statute to you.

Face. You did so.

Dap. And will I tell then! By this hand of flesh,
 Would it might never write good court-hand more,
 If I discover. What do you think of me,
 That I am a chiaus?

Face. What's that?

Dap. The Turk was here.

As one would say, do you think I am a Turk?

Face. I'll tell the doctor so.

Dap. Do, good sweet captain.

Face. Come, noble doctor, pray thee let's prevail;
 This is the gentleman, and he is no chiaus.

Sub. Captain, I have return'd you all my answer.
 I would do much, sir, for your love—But this
 I neither may, nor can.

Face. Tut, do not say so.

You deal now with a noble fellow, doctor,
 One that will thank you richly; and he is no chiaus:
 Let that, sir, move you.

Sub. Pray you, forbear—

Face. He has

Four angels here.

Sub. You do me wrong, good sir.

Face. Doctor, wherein? to tempt you with these
 spirits?

Sub. To tempt my art and love, sir, to my peril.
 Fore heaven, I scarce can think you are my friend,
 That so would draw me to apparent danger.

Face. I draw you! a horse draw you, and a halter,
 You, and your flies together—

Dap. Nay, good captain.

Face. That know no difference of men.

Sub. Good words, sir.

Face. Good deeds, sir, doctor dogs-meat. 'Slight,
 I bring you

No cheating Clim o' the Cloughs, or Claribels,
 That look as big as five-and-fifty, and flush;
 And spit out secrets like hot custard—

Dap. Captain!

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THE ALCHEMIST

ACT I

Face. Nor any melancholic under-scribe,
 Shall tell the vicar; but a special gentle,
 That is the heir to forty marks a year,
 Consorts with the small poets of the time,
 Is the sole hope of his old grandmother;
 That knows the law, and writes you six fair hands,
 Is a fine clerk, and has his cyphering perfect,
 Will take his oath o' the Greek Testament,
 If need be, in his pocket; and can court
 His mistress out of Ovid.

Dap. Nay, dear captain—

Face. Did you not tell me so?

Dap. Yes; but I'd have you

Use master doctor with some more respect.

Face. Hang him, proud stag, with his broad velvet
 head!—

But for your sake, I'd choke, ere I would change
 An article of breath with such a puckfist:
 Come, let's be gone.

[*Going.*]

Sub. Pray you let me speak with you.

Dap. His worship calls you, captain.

Face. I am sorry

I e'er embark'd myself in such a business.

Dap. Nay, good sir; he did call you.

Face. Will he take then?

Sub. First, hear me—

Face. Not a syllable, 'less you take.

Sub. Pray you, sir—

Face. Upon no terms, but an *assumpsit*.

Sub. Your humour must be law.

[*He takes the four argels.*]

Face. Why now, sir, talk.

Now I dare hear you with mine honour. Speak.
 So may this gentleman too.

Sub. Why, sir—

[*Offering to whisper* FACE.]

Face. No whispering.

Sub. Fore heaven, you do not apprehend the loss
 You do your self in this.

Face. Wherein? for what?