

The Good Audition Guides

SHAKESPEARE MONOLOGUES FOR WOMEN

edited and introduced by

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The Comedy of Errors

WHO 🗨️ *Luciana, sister-in-law of Antipholus of Ephesus.*

WHERE 🗨️ *Before the house of Antipholus of Ephesus.*

WHO ELSE IS THERE 🗨️ *The Antipholus who comes from Syracuse, but who Luciana believes to be her sister's husband.*

WHAT IS HAPPENING 🗨️ *There is confusion between identical twin brothers, both named Antipholus. Luciana mistakenly believes that the Antipholus she is haranguing has been unfaithful to his wife, her sister Adriana, and here urges him to be a more careful adulterer.*

WHAT TO THINK ABOUT 🗨️

- *She begins by being cross with Antipholus but then her tone changes and she gives him advice on how to misbehave without getting caught.*
- *Decide where Luciana has learnt the tricks of successful sexual deceit.*
- *Perhaps her sister is close by and within hearing.*
- *Decide how attractive Antipholus might be to Luciana.*
- *Luciana starts by calling Antipholus 'you' but then changes to the more familiar and intimate 'thy' and through the speech vacillates between the two.*
- *The speech is written in alternating rhymes. Think about how the formal quality affects the tone of what Luciana has to say.*

WHERE ELSE TO LOOK 🗨️ *Women despairing in their different ways of their husbands' behaviour are Emilia (Othello, p. 114) and the Duchess of Gloucester (Henry VI, Part Two, p. 76).*

Luciana

“ And may it be that you have quite forgot
 A husband's office? Shall, Antipholus,
 Even in the spring of love, thy love-springs rot?
 Shall love in building* grow so ruinous?
 If you did wed my sister for her wealth,
 Then for her wealth's sake use her with more kindness.
 Or if you like elsewhere do it by stealth,
 Muffle your false love with some show of blindness.
 Let not my sister read it in your eye.
 Be not thy tongue thy own shame's orator.
 Look sweet, speak fair, become disloyalty.
 Apparel vice like virtue's harbinger.*
 Bear a fair presence, though your heart be tainted,
 Teach sin the carriage of a holy saint,
 Be secret-false: what need she be acquainted?
 What simple thief brags of his own attainment?
 'Tis double wrong, to truant with your bed,
 And let her read it in thy looks at board.*
 Shame hath a bastard fame, well managed;
 Ill deeds are doubled with an evil word.
 Alas, poor women! Make us but believe
 (Being compact of credit)* that you love us;
 Though others have the arm, show us the sleeve.
 We in your motion turn and you may move us.
 Then, gentle brother, get you in again;
 Comfort my sister, cheer her, call her wife;
 'Tis holy sport to be a little vain
 When the sweet breath of flattery conquers strife. ”

(Act 3, scene 2, lines 1–28)

GLOSSARY

in building – while being constructed

apparel vice like virtue's harbinger – dress up vice like the herald of virtue

board – mealtimes

compact of credit – credulous, easily deceived

Julius Caesar

WHO 📖 *Portia, wife of Brutus, who is plotting to kill Julius Caesar.*

WHERE 📖 *The garden of her house in Rome, c. 44 BC.*

WHO ELSE IS THERE 📖 *Brutus, her husband. The young servant Lucius is asleep nearby.*

WHAT IS HAPPENING 📖 *Once again, her husband Brutus has crept from their bed and left her alone. Portia finds him and pleads with him to tell her the cause of his strange behaviour.*

WHAT TO THINK ABOUT 📖

- *It is the early hours of the morning. Use that to create a sense of time and atmosphere.*
- *There is an air of conspiracy. Portia will not want to wake anyone, and there is a young servant asleep close by.*
- *Consider how often and how long Portia has been lying awake and what makes her unable to bear her anxieties any longer.*
- *Decide what might have been going through Portia's mind as she wondered what her husband was being so secret about.*
- *Think about the history of their marriage and why this conversation is so difficult for them both.*
- *Portia thinks it is unhealthy to be out at night. She is as keen for both to go inside as she is to find out her husband's secrets.*

WHERE ELSE TO LOOK 📖 *Lady Percy (Henry IV, Part One, p. 68) also pleads with her husband to tell her what is on his mind.*

Portia

“Y’ave ungently, Brutus,
Stole from my bed; and yesternight at supper
You suddenly arose and walk’d about,
Musing and sighing, with your arms across,
And when I ask’d you what the matter was,
You star’d upon me with ungentle looks.

I urg’d you further; then you scratch’d your head,
And too impatiently stamp’d with your foot.
Yet I insisted; yet you answer’d not,
But, with an angry wafture of your hand,
Gave sign for me to leave you. So I did,
Fearing to strengthen that impatience
Which seem’d too much enkindled, and withal
Hoping it was but an effect of humour,
Which sometime hath his hour with every man.
It will not let you eat, nor talk, nor sleep,
And could it work so much upon your shape
As it hath much prevail’d on your condition,
I should not know you, Brutus. Dear my lord,
Make me acquainted with your cause of grief.
Is Brutus sick? And is it physical
To walk unbracèd* and suck up the humours
Of the dank morning? What, is Brutus sick?
And will he steal out of his wholesome bed,
To dare the vile contagion of the night
And tempt the rheumy and unpurgèd* air
To add unto his sickness? No, my Brutus,
You have some sick offence within your mind,
Which by the right and virtue of my place
I ought to know of. And upon my knees
I charm you by my once commended beauty,
By all your vows of love, and that great vow
Which did incorporate and make us one,
That you unfold to me – your self, your half –
Why you are heavy, and what men tonight
Have had to resort to you, for here have been
Some six or seven who did hide their faces
Even from darkness. ”

(Act 2, scene 1, lines 236–77, with some cuts)

GLOSSARY

physical . . . *unbracèd* – therapeutic . . . without protection
rheumy and unpurgèd – damp and unpurified