

'Tis Pity She's a Whore



INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF JOHN FORD

John Ford was born to a distinguished family in 1586. It is known that he attended Exeter College from 1601-1602. At age 16 he left to study at a prestigious law school, the Middle Temple, where he also wrote poems. By 1606, he was unable to pay tuition and was expelled from the school, so he turned to writing to support himself. By 1608 he had made enough money to return to school, but instead he continued to write. Prior to the start of his career as a playwright, he continued to write long poems and essays published as pamphlets. After 1620 he began to write plays, first in collaboration with Thomas Dekker, John Webster, and William Rowley. In the late 1620s he began to write alone, and it is these solo works for which he is most well-known. Very little is known about his personal life, and there is no record of him after 1639, leading many to believe he died shortly after the 1639 publication of *The Lady's Trial*. *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* is the most well-known of his works.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Following the death of James I (and the end of the Jacobean Period), his son, Charles I took the throne. The Caroline era was dominated by the growing religious, political, and social conflict between the King and his supporters (the Royalist party), and the opposition that evolved in favor of a more representative government. During this period the wealthy had more access to the justice system than the poor, for whom riots offered the most popular means of protesting issues like rising food prices or rent. Since Britain would not have a police force until the mid-nineteenth century, vigilantism and revenge were popular avenues to justice, as symbolized in this play by the Banditti. Religion was also a source of contention, as this period and the two prior political periods had Anglican/Protestant leaders, but England had not fully recovered from earlier religious leaders wavering between Catholicism and Protestantism, which helps to explain Ford's negative depictions of the Catholic Friar and Cardinal. Thus, although Ford is writing about Italy, his subject matter is informed by the politics of his day in England.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Writing during the Caroline era and in the wake of Shakespeare's body of work, Ford had a very similar writing style and explored many of the same themes as his literary predecessors of the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods. The revenge tragedy aspect of *'Tis Pity* puts it in the same genre as

Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* and two works by Shakespeare: *Hamlet* and *Titus Andronicus*. This genre of work focuses on its characters' desire for revenge, and the fatal consequences that stem from this desire. Additionally, another of Shakespeare's works that deals with similar themes is *Measure for Measure*. This play, like *'Tis Pity*, concerns topics of justice and injustice in the law, the hypocrisy surrounding female sexuality, and false religious piety. Many critics also liken this play to an incestuous retelling of *Romeo and Juliet*.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*
- **When Written:** ca. 1629-1633
- **Where Written:** England
- **When Published:** 1633
- **Literary Period:** Carolinian
- **Genre:** Revenge tragedy
- **Setting:** Parma, Italy
- **Climax:** Giovanni stabs Annabella
- **Antagonist:** Soranzo, injustice, the desire for vengeance

EXTRA CREDIT

Early psychology. Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* greatly influenced Ford's view of human behavior. The book held that the balance of four bodily fluids determined human personalities, and that unusual (or "humorous") people had an imbalance of one fluid. Melancholy, in particular, was said to be caused by an excess of black bile. Soranzo refers to Giovanni as "humorous," and he in particular is characterized by melancholy.

Incest Censorship. In early publications of the work, the play's title was unprintable and was often replaced with a euphemistic substitution like *The Brother and Sister*, *'Tis Pity* or simply *Giovanni and Anabella*. It was omitted entirely from an 1831 collection of Ford's plays.



PLOT SUMMARY

The play opens in Parma, as Giovanni and the Friar are having a philosophical discussion concerning the romantic feelings that Giovanni has developed toward his sister, Annabella. Giovanni argues that the prohibition that bars love between a brother and sister is merely an old custom. The Friar counsels him to pray for three days straight on his knees, repenting and weeping, to cure him of his love. Giovanni resolves to try.

In front of Giovanni and Annabella's house, the servant Vasquez challenges Grimaldi, a roman soldier, to a fight. Just as they begin to fight, Giovanni and Annabella's father, Florio, emerges from the house with his friend Donado and Soranzo, and asks for an explanation. Annabella and her servant Puttana watch unseen from the balcony of the house. Soranzo explains that he and Grimaldi are rivals competing for Annabella's love, and Grimaldi had been spreading lies about Soranzo, so he sent his servant Vasquez to challenge Grimaldi. Florio breaks up the fight and insists that no blood be shed over Annabella.

Puttana asks if Annabella is excited by these men fighting over her, but Annabella seems disinterested. Puttana says that she prefers Soranzo because he is wealthy, handsome, and noble. Another of Annabella's suitors, Bergetto, and his servant Poggio enter below. They speak foolishly about how Bergetto plans to win Annabella, and Annabella makes it clear to Puttana that she thinks he is an idiot. When Annabella spots Giovanni, without realizing who it is, she remarks how attractive and sad the man looks. When she recognizes the man as her brother, she goes down to meet him. Giovanni confesses his love for Annabella, and even though she initially expresses worry about the idea of a relationship between them, she also admits that she loves him. The two resolve to love each other, or else to kill each other, and go off to consummate their relationship in the bedchamber.

Donado convinces Florio to let his nephew Bergetto continue to try to win Annabella's heart. Florio says that because he has enough wealth, he does not need to force Annabella to marry against her will, and will defer to her choice. Bergetto and Poggio seem more concerned with ponies and puppet shows than with love, so Donado decides that he must write a letter to Annabella on Bergetto's behalf.

Annabella and Giovanni return from the bedchamber, and she promises that she will not marry another man. Giovanni leaves, and Puttana expresses her support for the relationship even though they are siblings. Florio introduces Annabella to the doctor he has called to look at her because she has not been feeling well. This "doctor" is in fact Richardetto in disguise, who is accompanied by his niece Philotis.

Soranzo is lost in a soliloquy about how deeply he is in love with Annabella when he is interrupted by a former lover, Hippolita. She is enraged because she and Soranzo had carried on an affair while her husband was alive and Soranzo had promised that if her husband ever died, he would marry her. She then encouraged her husband to go on a dangerous journey to find his niece and, as she had hoped, he died on the journey. However, Soranzo did not keep his promise to her, and now Hippolita curses him. Soranzo grows angry at her accusations and scorns her as he leaves.

Vasquez tells Hippolita that she should try to talk with Soranzo at another time, and with less malice. Hippolita tries to seduce Vasquez into helping her get revenge against Soranzo. He

agrees, but in asides he reveals that his true intention is to remain loyal to his master.

Richardetto reveals that he is Hippolita's husband, who is thought to be dead. He begins to plot against Soranzo and Hippolita because the two carried on an affair under his nose. Grimaldi enters, asking for a love potion to make Annabella fall in love with him, but Richardetto comes up with a different plan: he convinces Grimaldi to kill Soranzo, and supplies him with a poisoned **dagger**.

Giovanni visits the Friar and confesses what has happened between him and Annabella. The Friar counsels him to marry her, but Giovanni says that that would ruin her reputation. Meanwhile, Donado writes a letter to Annabella on Bergetto's behalf, but Bergetto and Poggio still seem more interested in puppet shows than in marriage. Donado delivers the letter and Annabella takes it graciously, but says that she cannot love Bergetto. Bergetto enters and says that he has fallen in love with Philotis. He reveals to Poggio that he intends to marry her in secret because his uncle would object to the match.

Soranzo then tries his hand at wooing Annabella, but she is indifferent to him as he pleads with her. She says that she has no intention of marrying, but assures him that if she were to marry, she would marry him. He is temporarily appeased. Suddenly Annabella falls ill, and Puttana reveals to Giovanni that Annabella is pregnant with his child.

Richardetto looks at Annabella and tells Florio that she has the maid's sickness (a type of anemia that often affected young women in puberty). Florio resolves that she should marry Soranzo immediately, and the Friar convinces Annabella that this is the best course of action to atone for her sins.

That same night, Grimaldi hides with the poisoned dagger Richardetto gave him, and waits for Soranzo to visit Annabella. Bergetto and Philotis pass, on their way to the Friar's cell to be married, and Grimaldi mistakes Bergetto for Soranzo. He stabs Bergetto, who then dies. Donado, Florio, Richardetto, and several officers go to find Bergetto's murderer, but the Cardinal protects Grimaldi, so Bergetto receives no justice.

Two days later, at Soranzo and Annabella's wedding, feast, Hippolita interrupts the festivities. She claims to want to lay to rest her anger towards Soranzo, but when she makes a toast to the couple, Vasquez gives her the poisoned wine that she had meant for Soranzo. Before she dies, she curses Soranzo and Annabella. Richardetto tells Philotis that she should avoid men and sex entirely and become a nun. She agrees and leaves to join a nunnery.

Some days later, Soranzo has found out that Annabella had sex before their marriage and is pregnant. He drags her across the room and threatens with a **sword** to tell him who the father is. She refuses to reveal her lover's name, and Vasquez advises Soranzo to be gentler with Annabella. Meanwhile, he finds out from Puttana that it was Giovanni, and he then has the Banditti

(a gang of robbers) gag and blind Puttana for her complicity in the incest. Vasquez and Soranzo plot to get revenge on Giovanni at Soranzo's birthday feast.

Annabella writes a letter to Giovanni about what has happened and how she wants to repent for her sins, which the Friar delivers to him. Giovanni realizes that Soranzo has found out about her pregnancy and says that he will get his own revenge on Soranzo at his birthday feast. Before he attends the feast, he visits his sister in her bedchamber where, in order to save her reputation, he stabs her to death, hoping that he will see her in heaven.

The Cardinal, Florio, Donado, Soranzo, Richardetto, and Vasquez are all in attendance at the feast. Suddenly, Giovanni bursts in with Annabella's heart on his dagger. Giovanni confesses to his incestuous relationship, and Florio dies from a broken heart. Giovanni then stabs Soranzo. Vasquez jumps in and stabs Giovanni, then cries out "Vengeance!" – the watchword for the Banditti, who have been hiding. The Banditti attack and severely wound Giovanni. Soranzo is pleased that he was able to get revenge on Giovanni, and he dies. Giovanni is also happy to have gotten his own revenge on Soranzo and dies quickly after. Vasquez is satisfied that he has carried out a servant's duty for Soranzo.

The Cardinal asks if anyone else knew about the siblings' relationship. Vasquez tells him about the now-blind Puttana, and the Cardinal demands that she be taken outside the city and burned to death. Vasquez, for his own crimes, shall simply be banished. Richardetto finally reveals himself, satisfied that he has seen Soranzo killed and thereby been avenged. The Cardinal surveys the bodies and concludes the strange tale, lamenting that it is a pity that Annabella was a whore.

him to die), and then quickly kills Soranzo, thereby ensuring his own death. Thus Giovanni becomes a prime example of a character who is caught between his desire (whether for his sister or for revenge) and his social duties. Ultimately, his passions lead to his own destruction when he is killed by Vasquez and the Banditti to avenge Soranzo.

Annabella – Annabella is the other half of the play's central couple, along with her brother Giovanni. Her character arc parallels his in many ways. Initially she is said to be beautiful and virtuous, and many suitors wish to win her hand in marriage, including Soranzo, Grimaldi, and Bergetto. Yet when Giovanni confesses his love, she gives in to her own desires and begins a sexual relationship with him. She is caught between those passions and the social and religious mores of her society, particularly as a woman. When she becomes pregnant, custom would dictate that she marry the man who impregnated her, but she cannot—due to the fact that she is not allowed to marry her own brother. Thus she marries Soranzo instead, but he is enraged when he discovers that she was not a virgin when he married her. Compared to Giovanni, Annabella suffers a great deal more for her sins: she is violently threatened by Soranzo; she goes through the difficult process of repenting for her sins; she is ultimately killed by Giovanni; and she is the one who is ultimately called a whore by the Cardinal even though her "crime" is the same as her brother's. In this way, Annabella represents the double standard to which women are held,

Soranzo – One of Annabella's suitors who eventually becomes her husband. Soranzo is said to be wealthy, handsome, and noble. His character arc is similar to those of Giovanni and Annabella in that his passions drive him to ruin. Unlike the siblings, however, his "sins" are driven mostly by bloodlust rather than sexual desire. Initially his love for Annabella is strong, but when he discovers that she has had premarital sex, he is overcome only by the need to get revenge on whichever man impregnated her. He threatens Annabella violently to reveal the name of her lover, and when Vasquez tells him that it was Giovanni, he vows to get revenge. In his character one can also see the hypocrisy and double standard with which society treats women, as he had also had a relationship with a married woman, Hippolita, prior to falling in love with Annabella. Thus he is guilty of the very crime for which he threatens Annabella (that is, before he discovers that her crime is much more socially taboo). Soranzo's eventual fate makes him another example of a character whose passions ultimately lead to his downfall, as he is killed by Giovanni as revenge for marrying his sister.

Vasquez – Soranzo's servant and confidant. Prior to the beginning of the play, Vasquez promised Soranzo's father that he would serve his son faithfully. Vasquez's loyalty is unquestionable even though his morals are less secure. Vasquez serves as a counterexample to the passionate characters of Giovanni, Annabella, and Soranzo, as he is



CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Giovanni – Giovanni is one half of the central couple of the play, along with his sister Annabella. A young man (his name literally means "young man" in Italian) who excelled at school and is very well-read, he is struck by a sexual passion for his sister. At first he is upset by this development, knowing that his feelings violate various social and religious moral codes, and he tries to seek advice from the Friar. Eventually, however, he stops resisting his passion and tells Annabella of his love, which she returns and they in turn proceed to consummate. The situation becomes more and more dire for Giovanni and Annabella as people begin to find out about their relationship, causing Giovanni to become more and more desperate. Eventually his lustful passion turns to bloodlust, and he kills Annabella in order to try to save her reputation. He carries her heart on a **dagger** into a feast for her new husband Soranzo's birthday. With this action, he breaks their father Florio's heart (causing

perhaps the most logical of the play. With his level-headedness, he is able to see through Hippolita's attempts to manipulate and seduce him. He convinces her that he is plotting with her against Soranzo, but in the end he kills her with her own poison. He advises Soranzo not to torture Annabella in order to find out who got her pregnant, and instead finds out the information from Puttana with verbal tact. Although he is not the most ethical character, he demonstrates that characters that are defined by duty and not by passion win the day, as he survives almost all the other characters.

Hippolita – Richardetto's wife and lover to Soranzo, Hippolita also exemplifies society's double standard against women. As he carried on an affair with Hippolita, Soranzo promised that he would marry her if her husband died. After her husband is believed to be dead, however, Soranzo refuses to fulfill his promise. When Hippolita becomes angry with him, Soranzo says she is too violent, which is hypocritical considering he reacts much more violently upon discovering Annabella's infidelity. The abandoned and heartbroken Hippolita has a thirst for blood, but her plots against Soranzo ultimately backfire when Vasquez poisons her instead of poisoning Soranzo. Thus she becomes yet another example of the destructiveness of passion and the desire for revenge.

Florio – Annabella and Giovanni's father. A wealthy merchant, Florio is defined most by his love for his children. He worries that Giovanni is too bookish and wants Annabella to be able to marry for love. He allows Soranzo, Grimaldi, and Bergetto to talk with his daughter and says that he will defer to her choice. When she grows ill, he hires a doctor to come to the house and ensure her health. Florio doesn't do anything wrong in the play, but nevertheless becomes a casualty of other characters' passions. When Giovanni reveals his and Annabella's incestuous relationship and confesses that he has killed her, Florio is overcome by heartbreak and dies.

Puttana – Annabella's guardian and confidant, Puttana's name literally means "whore" in Italian. Puttana helps Annabella keep her various suitors at a distance, but when she sees the love that Annabella feels for Giovanni, she does not judge them. She encourages Annabella's sexuality. At the end of the play, she is judged harshly for her crimes. She is said to be complicit in their incest, and is gagged, blinded, and eventually burned to death. This cruel punishment reinforces the harsh violence against women and women's sexuality in the play.

Friar – Giovanni's tutor and confessor. He counsels Giovanni and Annabella against their relationship, but when he sees that Giovanni is beyond rescuing, he instead tries to convince him to marry his sister. He helps Annabella repent for her sins, then marries her to Soranzo. Unlike the corrupt Cardinal, who seems more invested in wealth and power than in moral justice, the Friar serves as the religious and moral center of the play.

Richardetto – Hippolita's husband who is presumed dead, Richardetto spends most of the play disguised as a doctor.

Although he is also bent on getting revenge (against Hippolita for her infidelity, and against Soranzo for cuckolding him), he uses the passions of others as a conduit for his own revenge, cleverly getting them to unwittingly do his bidding. He is glad to see Hippolita poisoned by Vasquez, and gives Grimaldi a poisoned **dagger** to kill Soranzo, though this plot ultimately fails. He reveals himself only after Soranzo is killed at the end of the play, when he has witnessed "the end of lust and pride." His ability to control his anger saves him from the bloodiest conflicts of the play, and he emerges with his life intact.

Donado – Florio's friend and Bergetto's uncle. He spends most of the play trying to win Annabella for his nephew but acknowledges that Bergetto is too much of an idiot to succeed. When his nephew is accidentally killed by Grimaldi, he seeks justice but is unable to find any within the church, where the corrupt Cardinal protects Grimaldi.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Philotis – Richardetto's niece and Bergetto's eventual fiancée. Philotis is innocent and sweet. She is the only woman to survive the play because Richardetto, seeing the harm that men and sex bring to women in their society, and advises her to leave for a convent.

Bergetto – Donado's nephew and a suitor to Annabella. He and Poggio mostly serve as comic relief with their idiotic revelries. Later in the play he falls in love with Philotis, but when they try to marry in the dead of night, Grimaldi mistakes Bergetto for Soranzo and murders him.

Poggio – Bergetto's friend. He serves as comic relief and facilitates Bergetto's stupidity by allowing him to go to foolish amusements like puppet shows.

Grimaldi – Another of Annabella's suitors and a Roman soldier. He is outmatched by Soranzo and resolves to kill him, but accidentally kills Bergetto instead. He is then protected by the Cardinal because he is of noble blood.

The Cardinal – A religious figure under the Pope, the Cardinal represents the injustice of the church. He protects Grimaldi after he accidentally murders Bergetto and unfairly judges and punishes Annabella and Puttana.

Banditti – A gang of robbers and criminals that carry out vigilante justice against Puttana and Giovanni for Vasquez and Soranzo. They are the only successful correctors of wrongdoing, but this is ironic as they are criminals themselves.



THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in

black and white.



PASSION, LUST, AND BLOODLUST

The characters of *'Tis Pity* are plagued with excesses of passion—both sexual lust and violent bloodlust—that overcome their rational judgment.

As the play shows, both of these sorts of passion can easily overwhelm even the most seemingly noble characters and compel them to act in ways that deviate starkly from societal expectations, including incest and murder. Not only do these passions lead the characters to sin, they also lead them to their own destruction.

The play's central couple, Annabella and Giovanni, most clearly demonstrate the pitfalls of passion, as the brother and sister are drawn into an illicit and incestuous affair against their better judgment and the advice of others. Ford emphasizes the changes passion brings out in Giovanni in particular. Giovanni starts the play as a promising student and noble gentlemen to whom the Friar is devoted. In keeping with his good character, Giovanni initially seeks the Friar's counsel in an attempt to escape from the incestuous passion he feels for his sister. But he is unsuccessful in his struggle, and by the end of the play he has become murderous and mad with lust. Meanwhile, Annabella is inflamed with an equally strong desire for Giovanni. She is at first struck with a pity for his heartbreak that quickly becomes a deep and abiding love for him. Despite repenting for her sinful lust for her brother in the final act of the play, she still allows Giovanni to kiss her in her marriage bed, which is what allows Giovanni to kill her mid-embrace.

Annabella's husband Soranzo embodies another excessive passion: rage. Like Giovanni, Soranzo is highly regarded by respected characters in the play, such as Annabella's father Florio. However, when Soranzo discovers that Annabella is pregnant by Giovanni, he is consumed with rage against her and her lover. His pursuit of revenge leads to the climactic fight with Giovanni that results in Soranzo's death. Soranzo's desire for blood is fulfilled when Giovanni kills Annabella and the Banditti ambush Giovanni, but his rage becomes self-destructive when his plan leads Giovanni to wound Soranzo himself.

The supporting character Hippolyta further demonstrates how excessive passion can lead to rage and senseless violence. Before the play begins, Soranzo tempts Hippolyta to betray her marriage vows. Like Annabella, she pities Soranzo's longing for her and gives in to his pleas, beginning a sexual relationship with him. Her sympathy becomes romantic love—but even these more positive emotions turn into bloodlust when Soranzo's attention turns to wooing Annabella. Hippolyta's pursuit of revenge leads to her death when Vasquez tricks her into drinking the poison she had intended for Soranzo. In choosing revenge over repentance, Hippolyta turns her excess of love into rage and accidentally brings about her own death.

Vasquez, by contrast, is the play's most even-tempered character. Although no more moral than the other characters, his self-control and foresight make him different from the more passionate characters in the play, so his survival at the end of the play serves to further underscore the dangers of excessive passion. Although Hippolyta believes she can use her sensuality and riches to lure Vasquez to her side and make him betray his master Soranzo, Vasquez betrays Hippolyta instead. Vasquez's emotional detachment enables him to resist Hippolyta, which in turn allows him to act in the way that ultimately enables him—unlike Soranzo, Hippolyta, Giovanni, and Annabella—to survive the play.

The play condemns unbridled passion as the downfall of noble people, as the play's morally good characters are powerless against lust, whose all-consuming power corrupts and destroys them. This might suggest that even-tempered moderation is the only way to thrive (or even survive) in the world, but it is only the play's less moral characters (like Vasquez) who escape unharmed. This suggests an even more cynical outlook: perhaps only those who are immoral have the emotional distance to escape the destructive force of passion, leaving only the least human characters of all in control of the world.



DESIRE VS. DUTY

The Italy of *'Tis Pity* demands the chastity and propriety of its citizens, strictly forbidding (among other things) incest, sex before marriage, and extramarital affairs. And yet, these forbidden relationships are the ones that Ford's characters most desire. As a result, Ford portrays his characters as locked inside unresolvable conflicts between their desires and duties, doomed to disappoint themselves or others no matter what they choose.

The tension between desire and duty can best be tracked through the character of Giovanni, who is beholden to a wide range of duties—moral, familial, and social—that his desire for Annabella directly violates. Throughout the play he struggles with how to resolve the tensions created by his love, but each of his actions only further entangles him in a crisis of desire and duty. The Friar makes clear at the beginning of the play that having sex with Annabella would be a terrible sin and a rejection of Giovanni's moral responsibilities. He tells Giovanni that even sleeping with another woman out of wedlock would be better if it could help Giovanni to avoid the worse sin of incest. But Giovanni cannot resist his desire for his sister and enters into a relationship with her in which they promise to love and remain true to each other—or, if not, to kill one another. Thus, his desire causes his first conflict of duty, posing the question of whether he is more obligated to stop his immoral relationship or to keep his vow of love. Both options reflect moral values, but he cannot uphold one without breaking the other. The Friar makes the solution seem simple, urging Giovanni to stop and repent, but Ford does not allow

such black and white moral clarity to prevail.

Giovanni's sinful relationship with Annabella is paralleled by Soranzo's sinful relationship with Hippolyta, the married woman he bedded and promised to marry. However, unlike Giovanni, Soranzo chooses to break faith with his lover in order to keep faith with his God, refusing to fulfill his promise to Hippolyta once she is widowed because he believes the promise he made was wrong (but also, likely, because he simply wanted to bed her, and never intended to marry her). This decision is portrayed as deeply cruel toward Hippolyta and causes her to attempt revenge against him. This parallel relationship thus suggests to the audience that, were Giovanni to make the same choice as Soranzo and break his word to his lover, his actions would be equally condemnable. Thus, Giovanni's initial indulgence of his desire only creates more duties he must juggle.

As Giovanni continues to give into his lust, he impregnates his sister, which creates a new problem. The only way for Annabella to hide her pregnancy is to quickly marry so that she appears to be pregnant by her husband. If Giovanni were not Annabella's brother, social duty would obligate him to marry her (as he impregnated her). However, he cannot fulfill this social duty, since the law does not permit him to marry his own sister. Instead, she must marry someone else to save herself. However, when Annabella's chosen husband (Soranzo) discovers her condition, Annabella's reputation is threatened anyway. In this instance, the consequence of Giovanni's desire—unintended pregnancy—forces him to choose between his duty as a brother and his fidelity to Annabella. Partly out of anger that she has broken off their affair, he decides to kill Annabella, which he frames as a way of protecting her from the scandalizing revelation of their affair. In committing this so-called honor killing, he fulfills the familial duty of protecting the family name, but in the process, betrays Annabella as a lover, surprising her mid-embrace with a knife in the chest. In the last scene, his anger overtakes even this protective impulse as he confesses his incestuous affair to the attendees of Soranzo's banquet. Consistent with Giovanni's other choices in the play, desire—this time for vengeance—outweighs other, more rational considerations. This revelation kills his father, who dies of heart break, showing the great damage Giovanni has caused as a son as well as brother.

Thus, Giovanni cannot escape from the tangled web of desire, moral duty, social duty, and familial duty. His downfall is mirrored in many of the other characters' deaths, as Soranzo, Hippolyta, and Annabella all find themselves trapped in similarly irresolvable conflicts between duty and desire. The impossibility of untangling these webs shows that it is not only the moral weaknesses of the characters that are the problem. The absurdity of these conflicts of duty shows that the society in which the characters live is equally problematic, having given them few options. The result is a play that, without condoning

the various desires that lead these characters astray, allows the audience to feel sympathy for them in the terrible fates they suffer for their actions.



INJUSTICE

Throughout the play, characters seek recourse and revenge for various wrongs them (including incest, infidelity, and murder) and turn to systems of justice both official and unofficial. However, in seeking retribution, these systems of justice prove ineffective, as the men who supposedly administer justice prove immoral and corrupt themselves, thereby complicating the moral message of the play. The woeful inadequacy of all systems of justice in the play ultimately suggests that the social norms and legal rules that govern human behavior can be just as corrupt as the “unjust” behaviors they are intended to punish.

The play portrays unofficial systems of justice—or vigilante justice—as imprecise and excessively bloody, and the characters who attempt to attain vigilante justice are discredited by their failures, both tactical and moral. The problems with vigilante justice are most clearly shown through the character of Grimaldi who attempts to settle his rivalry with Soranzo over Annabella by attacking Soranzo in the dead of night. However, he mistakes Bergetto—a silly young man and former suitor who was already refused by Annabella—for Soranzo, and Grimaldi accidentally murders an innocent man. Grimaldi's failed plan to kill Soranzo is in fact born out of another character's attempts to enact vigilante justice, as it was Richardetto (the husband of Hippolyta) who convinced Grimaldi to attack Soranzo in the first place—an attempt to get revenge against Soranzo for seducing his wife. When Richardetto sees the violence he has caused, he feels remorse at his part in an innocent man's death and voices the play's position on individuals seeking their own justice: that it is far better to allow God to enact justice than to try to bring it about yourself. As Richardetto and Grimaldi's failed plot shows, vigilante justice is prone to human error and can lead to even worse moral crimes than the original transgression.

Though vigilante justice fails at restoring moral order, Ford suggests that official systems of justice are hardly any better. The problems with the official systems become clear when Bergetto's uncle Donado seeks justice for his nephew's murder only to find that the two entities with any legal power in Italy—the state and the church—undermine each other's authority. After committing the murder, Grimaldi runs to the Cardinal's estate to hide. The officers pursuing Grimaldi do not have power to reach him on church grounds, rendering them powerless to fulfill their function in maintaining law and order. Instead Florio and Donado, private citizens, must knock at the Cardinal's door and ask for Grimaldi to be turned over to them to receive punishment. The Cardinal refuses on the grounds that Grimaldi is of noble blood. In this instance, the official

representatives of the state are unable to enforce justice, because the power of another authority—the church—interferes. Thus, the proper officers of the law are shown to be powerless, while the church and the nobility it protects are shown to have too much power, causing the wheels of justice to come to a grinding halt.

Ironically, the only people in the play who successfully carry out a mission of justice, vigilante or otherwise, are the Banditti, who are themselves criminals. Soranzo employs them to help him get revenge for the shame he suffers as a result of Annabella's indiscretion. However, the form their justice takes is extremely brutal. Their ambush of Giovanni at the banquet results in a stage full of dead bodies, and their revenge against Puttana involves putting out her eyes, which seems excessively violent even as it accomplishes the purpose of punishing her for her role in helping Giovanni and Annabella continue their secret affair. Thus, the only successful arbiters of justice are shown to be criminals, and particularly cruel ones at that.

Although the society depicted in the play has complex and strict social norms that purport to uphold moral behavior, these norms lead to immoral behavior and further bloodshed as various characters attempt to take justice into their own hands. Appealing to official channels of justice proves utterly useless, as Parma's toothless and corrupt legal system renders the society essentially lawless. In the face of such frail systems of justice, Ford suggests, humans must trust in God to enact justice in His own way rather than pursuing it themselves. Thus, Ford's deep cynicism about the capability of humans to administer justice impartially reveals his belief that humans must trust in a higher moral authority to answer the more complex moral dilemmas of life.



RELIGIOUS PIETY VS. FALSE IDOLS

Christian religious beliefs are the lens through which the characters in *'Tis Pity* judge their own behavior and the behavior of others. However, the moral complexity of navigating the conflict between their desires and the convoluted social and religious norms of their society means that the characters struggle to identify what is truly good in the eyes of God. Many characters fall victim to false idols and corrupted theological justifications for sin, which shows that religion—though it can be a righteous and helpful guide—can also be easily manipulated for immoral purposes.

The Friar and the Cardinal epitomize the conflict between true and false religious morality. While the Friar is genuinely moral and devoted to God, the Cardinal pretends to be deeply religious, though his primary concerns are earthly matters such as wealth. The Friar's commitment to God ultimately leads him to leave the church, because he thinks he can best serve God by shepherding Giovanni through his precarious spiritual predicament. He advises Giovanni to always think about the pathway to heaven, no matter how painful it is to follow on

earth, and the Friar's own choices show that one does not need an institution or its associated power to lead a pious life. The Cardinal, by contrast, does not believe Grimaldi should have to suffer legal consequences for murdering Bergetto because Grimaldi has noble blood. The Cardinal shows more concern for status and power than for seeing that Grimaldi face the consequences of his actions. Despite having all the trappings and titles of a religious figure, the Cardinal does not put his professed values into practice, showing that just because someone has a religious title does not mean they are a trustworthy spokesman for God's word.

False religion is also pitted against true religion in the arguments Giovanni and the Friar have over Giovanni's love for Annabella. The Friar is again the voice of Christian virtue here, while Giovanni twists the Friar's words to justify his sinful desires, creating arguments that disguise his immoral actions in the language of religion. For example, when the Friar tells Giovanni that physical beauty is a reflection of the beauty of a person's soul, Giovanni twists these words to mean that what is beautiful is good, and therefore his love for Annabella is good since he finds her beautiful. Giovanni also claims that, since devotion to God is good, his devotion to Annabella must also be good. He refuses to acknowledge that this effectively replaces God with Annabella, improperly lifting her to the status of a god.

The creation of false idols out of the object of one's romantic affection is only one example of false religion against which the play warns. Early in the play, Puttana warns Annabella that Donado intends to make his nephew Bergetto into a "golden calf" (a Biblical reference to a false idol made from the gold objects of the Israelites) so that she will not be able to resist his advances. By tricking Annabella into believing that Bergetto writes eloquent love letters and has great riches, Donado tries to tempt Annabella into loving him even though Bergetto is a fool and a fraud. Annabella sees through Bergetto's facade with relative ease, so he never amounts to much of a "golden calf." However, Ford's allusion to the golden calf suggests that wealth and riches can easily supplant God as an object of worship. Likewise, Giovanni begins to idolize Annabella herself, turning away from religious piety in favor of romantic (and incestuous) love. But as the Biblical tale would suggest, both wealth and lovers are hollow objects of worship compared to the real God.

Throughout the play, love, power, status, and other earthly forces take on the outward appearance of divinity, but in fact these lead the main characters away from the true religious piety that the Friar represents. The play is consistent in maintaining its view that religious virtue represents the only true path to happiness, though it is not always as confident in religious figures themselves, such as the Cardinal. The play shows how easily earthly goods can be disguised as spiritual goods, making the various characters and their moral

predicaments all the more complex and sympathetic. Without denying the ultimate truth of a higher moral power, the play adds complexity to seemingly simple moral questions, and shows why it can be so difficult for humans to obey God.



FEMALE SEXUALITY VS. SOCIAL EXPECTATION

The women of *'Tis Pity* give in to the various men who beg them for sex, but they do not themselves initiate relationships out of wedlock. Despite this, they suffer the most for their actions—an unfortunate irony. The importance of sexual modesty in the society they live in is one of the great injustices of the play, as it constitutes an obvious double standard around male and female sexuality. By highlighting how disproportionately women are punished for their sins while their male partners go without punishment for the same transgressions, Ford invites the audience to sympathize with the women who are labeled “whores,” portraying them as victims of a hypocritical society.

Annabella is partly drawn into an incestuous relationship with her brother because of the immense pity she feels for his agony. Although she does not initiate the relationship, she is far more endangered by it socially than he is. Her pregnancy—visible proof of her affair—means that while Giovanni’s sins can remain hidden, hers will become obvious as soon as she begins to show. Even though no one will know that the father is her brother, the rules of her society dictate that once she is discovered to not be a virgin, her reputation will be ruined, even though the same rules do not apply to Giovanni or her suitor Soranzo. To try to hide her affair and bring her pregnancy into line with social expectation, she agrees to marry Soranzo, since she cannot marry her brother. In this way, she guarantees that her child will be born into a marriage, even though Soranzo is not the man who impregnated her. However, when Soranzo discovers Annabella’s pregnancy, he becomes angry that she was not a virgin when he married her, even though he himself had an affair with Hippolita before he married Annabella. When Annabella repents for her relationship with her brother and breaks off their affair, however, Giovanni becomes suddenly concerned about saving her reputation and he kills her. Thus, she is punished both for her sexual relationship with Giovanni and for her marriage to Soranzo which she used to protect the secret of her incestuous affair. She is also punished both for having a relationship with her brother and for ending her relationship with him. Unlike Giovanni, Annabella ultimately repented and accepted the painful consequences of her affair, and yet it is she and not Giovanni who is called a whore. In the final line of the play when the Cardinal declares it a “pity she’s a whore,” Ford is highlighting the absurd gap between his casual dismissal of her illicit sexuality and the authentic moral struggle Annabella underwent as she tried to juggle her pledge of fidelity to her

brother, her marriage vows, and her duty to God.

Hippolita is placed in a similarly unfair situation by Soranzo and the rest of society. Even though both she and Soranzo engage in an affair at Soranzo’s behest, only Hippolita is shunned by society once that affair is discovered. They both plot to get rid of her husband Richardetto so that Hippolita can marry Soranzo. However, once Richardetto is gone, Soranzo refuses to uphold his end of the bargain, and rebuffs her. By refusing to marry her, he ruins her reputation, but does not damage his own in the process. Her pursuit of revenge in the wake of this betrayal leads to her own death. Soranzo thus lures Hippolita into an affair that he can escape without censure, but for which she will suffer fatal consequences. Puttana also suffers as a result of this double standard without even having a sexual relationship, but merely by virtue of knowing about Annabella’s. She is gagged, blinded, and burned to death for her complicity in Annabella and Giovanni’s incestuous relationship, but the Friar, who also knew of their relationship, leaves for Bologna without facing any consequences. The only woman in the play who is *not* killed is Philotis, Richardetto’s niece and the fiancé of Bergetto. Escaping to a convent after Bergetto’s death, she avoids the sexual traps the men of the play create for their paramours by renouncing sexual relationships all together.

It would be easy to assume that, because Ford’s female characters suffer harsher punishments than the male characters for the same sexual sins, Ford believes women are deserving of greater condemnation. However, the care he takes to portray men as the instigators of these illicit relationships and to show the unfairness of the standards to which women are held suggests that he sees women as equally capable of sin even as they are victims of a hypocritical society’s harsh double standards.



SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.



THE GOLDEN CALF

In the Bible, the golden calf is an object of worship (or “false idol”) made by the Israelites—a statue of a cow cast from gold. Early in the play, Puttana warns Annabella that Donado intends to make his nephew Bergetto into a golden calf as he tries to win Annabella. Thus, in the context of the play, the golden calf comes to represent objects and ideas that the characters idolize or worship as they would a god. Donado assumes that Annabella desires marriage to a wealthy suitor above all else, but he’s incorrect—she’s in love with her brother, and doesn’t care about Bergetto at all. Other characters in the play make vengeance their “golden calf,” pursuing it with passion and holding it above all else, often in

situations where temperance and self-restraint would perhaps be more appropriate ideals. Giovanni makes Annabella's love into a kind of golden calf, idolizing her over God as he turns away from religion and toward a life that the church deems sinful. In keeping with the Biblical tale, however, these golden calves are merely false idols, and the play ultimately shows that they cannot take the place of virtue or morality.



SWORDS AND DAGGERS

Throughout the play, swords and daggers are used by various characters to win vengeance, particularly by the men (the only woman who tries to seek vengeance, Hippolita, uses poison instead). Because swords were often used in this literary period as a euphemism for the penis, swords and daggers become linked to manhood and masculine desire, and therefore also create a symbolic link between desire and violence.

Indeed, this method of killing only appears in the play as a consequence of lust. First, Grimaldi goes after Soranzo with a dagger because he is jealous that Soranzo has won Annabella. Soranzo threatens Annabella with a sword because she has been unfaithful to him. At the end of the play, Giovanni kills Annabella with a dagger, having killed her in fulfillment of their earlier vow to love each other or kill each other. Lastly, Giovanni stabs Soranzo because he tortured Annabella, and Vasquez stabs Giovanni in return because he committed incest and cuckolded Soranzo. Thus, swords and daggers inextricably tie lust and bloodlust together in a symbolically male package, and remind readers that carnal desires—for vengeance or sex—ultimately lead to destruction.

Page Number: 1.1.57-61

Explanation and Analysis

As the play opens, Giovanni has just told the Friar of the love he feels for his sister, Annabella. The Friar treats it as a different matter entirely, calling it lust, which he associates with death. In this quote, the Friar sets up some of the major themes of the play: specifically, the destructive side of passion. He foreshadows Giovanni's decline from a virtuous, intelligent young man to a person controlled by lust, correctly predicting that this lust will ultimately cause Giovanni's own destruction. He also understands that Giovanni has started to turn away from religion as he finds divinity not within the church, but through the idolization of his sister. Thus in this quote, Ford sets up the Friar as a knowledgeable man who also constitutes the play's moral center.

☞ All this I'll do to free me from the rod
Of vengeance; else I'll swear my fate's my god.

Related Characters: Giovanni (speaker), Annabella, Friar

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 1.1.84-85.

Explanation and Analysis

At the end of the scene, Giovanni, on the counsel of the Friar, agrees to pray and weep for forgiveness for his lust for Annabella. He hopes to avoid vengeance (presumably from God), but this quote also introduces an idea to which Giovanni returns: that his love for Annabella is divine, and that he himself is a godlike figure as well. This underscores the hubristic nature of Giovanni's incestuous, unbridled passion. This quote can be contrasted with his later quote in Act 5, Scene 5, in which he says, blasphemously, that "vengeance is [his]," despite the Bible's assertion that vengeance belongs to God alone. In this scene he still wishes to remain pious, but this piety quickly erodes in the face of his lust and eventual bloodlust.

Act 1, Scene 2 Quotes

☞ I would not, for my wealth, my daughter's love
Should cause the spilling of one drop of blood.

Related Characters: Florio (speaker), Soranzo, Grimaldi,



QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Penguin Publishers edition of *The Duchess of Malfi*, *The White Devil*, *The Broken Heart* and *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* published in 2014.

Act 1, Scene 1 Quotes

☞ O Giovanni, hast thou left the schools
Of knowledge to converse with Lust and Death?
For Death waits on thy lust. Look through the world,
And thou shalt see a thousand faces shine
More glorious than this idol thou ador'st.

Related Characters: Friar (speaker), Annabella, Giovanni

Related Themes:  

Vasquez, Annabella

Related Themes: 

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 1.2.60-61

Explanation and Analysis

When Florio breaks up the swordfight between Vasquez and Grimaldi, Soranzo explains that he asked Vasquez to challenge Grimaldi because Grimaldi had been spreading lies about him to Annabella. Florio is then prompted to tell them that he wants no one to be harmed in vying for his daughter's affection. This is an ironic foreshadowing of the course of the rest of the play. The lust the men possess for Annabella, along with the lust she possesses for Giovanni, cause almost all of the deaths in the play (including the deaths of Bergetto, Florio, Puttana, Soranzo, Annabella, and Giovanni). Thus, this quote eventually comes to highlight how destructive passion turns out to be in the context of the play.

☞ The rich magnifico that is below with your father, charge, Signor Donado his uncle, for that he means to make this his cousin a golden calf, thinks that you will be a right Israelite and fall down to him presently; but I hope I have tutored you better.

Related Characters: Puttana (speaker), Donado, Bergetto, Annabella

Related Themes: 

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 1.2.118-122

Explanation and Analysis

As Annabella and Puttana look upon Bergetto's foolish revelries, Puttana comments that Bergetto's uncle, Donado, is trying to make Annabella love Bergetto through the use of wealth, making him into a "golden calf." The Biblical reference indicates a false idol created by the Israelites. Though Annabella does not idolize wealth in this way, she and Giovanni make false idols in other ways by worshipping each other over God.

Separately, the Cardinal is later shown to idolize wealth in this way as he saves Grimaldi because he is "noble" and "a

prince," and at the end of the play he confiscates all material possessions from the dead bodies so that they may be given to the church. In contrast to the Friar's humble and devout Christian morality, the Cardinal demonstrates that not all religious figures are necessarily pious.

☞ Oh, that it were not in religion sin
To make our love a god and worship it!

Related Characters: Giovanni (speaker), Annabella

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 1.2.145-146

Explanation and Analysis

Before Giovanni confesses his love to his sister, he has a soliloquy in which he resolves to tell Annabella how he feels. Coming off the heels of Puttana's statement about the golden calf just prior, here he grapples with a different kind of idolization. He begins to doubt Christian morality and piety, saying that it would be easy to idolize Annabella and the love he feels for her if it wasn't sacrilegious to do so. Giovanni's questions show that he is succumbing to lust, as in the first scene he promises to beg God to save him from his sins, while here he laments that he has to worship God at all, and says that he would rather exchange the Christian God for his sister.

☞ On my knees,
Brother, even by our mother's dust I charge you,
Do not betray me to your mirth or hate:
Love me, or kill me, brother.

Related Characters: Annabella (speaker), Giovanni

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 1.2.247-250

Explanation and Analysis

After Giovanni has confessed his love for Annabella, she is initially hesitant to return his sentiments, and he tells her that she must either love him, or he must die. She admits

that she loves him as well, and she makes the same pact: that they must either love each other or kill each other. This resolution continues to associate lust and bloodlust as dangerous passions, and their pact comes back into play at the end of the story. When Annabella eventually returns to religion, repents for her sins and wishes to perform her duties as a faithful wife, Giovanni kills her to save her reputation and because she will no longer love him.

Act 2, Scene 1 Quotes

☝☝ Nay, what a paradise of joy have you passed under! Why, now I commend thee, charge. Fear nothing, sweetheart. What, though he be your brother? Your brother's a man, I hope; and I say still, if a young wench feel the fit upon her, let her take anybody: father or brother, all is one.

Related Characters: Puttana (speaker), Giovanni, Annabella

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 2.1.41-45

Explanation and Analysis

Just after Giovanni and Annabella have consummated their relationship, Puttana tells Annabella that she should be ashamed neither of having sexual desire nor of committing incest. For the encouragement and care she shows toward Annabella (duties she bears as Annabella's guardian), Puttana will later receive an extraordinarily harsh punishment: she is gagged, blinded, and then burned to death. Not only do these events reinforce the hypocritical expectations surrounding women's sexuality, they also demonstrate the lawlessness of the society in general. Many men in the play commit far worse crimes than knowing of and encouraging incest, and are relatively unscathed by the play's events.

Act 2, Scene 2 Quotes

☝☝ Do you know me now? Look, perjured man, on her Whom thou and thy distracted lust have wronged. Thy sensual rage of blood hath made my youth A scorn to men and angels;

Related Characters: Hippolita (speaker), Soranzo

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 2.2.25-29

Explanation and Analysis

When Hippolita goes to Soranzo to air her grievances against him, she highlights the double standards in the society surrounding women's sexuality. While Soranzo is able to lust after Hippolita and have sex with her out of wedlock, the women are more harshly judged for the same actions. Hippolita is accused of sinful adultery, and Richardetto later calls her "wanton" and "lascivious" for her deeds. Soranzo also violently threatens Annabella for a sin that he himself committed with Hippolita: having sex before marriage. Rather than merely criticizing the women as many other plays in this period do, Ford gives these women a means of expressing themselves and also demonstrates that in each case, it is the men who drive the women to their tragic ends.

Act 2, Scene 5 Quotes

☝☝ Marriage? Why, that's to damn her; that's to prove Her greedy of variety of lust.

Related Characters: Giovanni (speaker), Friar, Annabella

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 2.5.41-42

Explanation and Analysis

In the second act, Giovanni returns to the Friar to reveal to him what has passed between himself and Annabella. Rather than being repentant, he tries to justify why their love is good. The Friar, seeing how Giovanni cannot be persuaded, tells him that he should try to convince Annabella to marry. Giovanni's response reveals Annabella's predicament as she tries to juggle various social expectations. As a young woman, she is expected not to have sex before marriage, but under these circumstances, it is necessary to marry in order to preserve her reputation. Of course, marrying her brother is also taboo, and thus she is caught between two warring social expectations as well as her own desire. These expectations will only become exacerbated as she becomes pregnant, leading to her marriage to Soranzo as well as his eventual anger at her deception.

Act 3, Scene 2 Quotes

☝☝ These scornful taunts
Neither become your modesty or years.

Related Characters: Soranzo (speaker), Annabella

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 3.2.37-38

Explanation and Analysis

Soranzo gets his chance at wooing Annabella, but she mocks his statements of love, leading Soranzo to inadvertently point out more of the unfair expectations placed on women in the society. As a young woman, Annabella is expected to be demure when a man comes to ask for her hand in marriage rather than being “scornful.” A similar criticism is levelled against Hippolita when she rants against Soranzo earlier in the play. The men in the play constantly reinforce that women should be virtuous and modest, unless it suits their own lust that women cast off those social expectations. Of course, Annabella is not as innocent as Soranzo believes, and she has no intention of marrying him at this point—thus breaking several of these unfair expectations.

☝☝ Yet know –
Thus far I give you comfort – if mine eyes
Could have picked out a man, amongst all those
That sued to me, to make a husband of,
You should have been that man.

Related Characters: Annabella (speaker), Giovanni, Soranzo

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 3.2.49-53

Explanation and Analysis

In refusing Soranzo’s marriage proposal, Annabella hints at her own inner conflict for the first time, as she understands that she *should* marry Soranzo. But as she mentions to Soranzo (later in the play, after they have married), she refuses him because she does not want to bring him shame, and because she has had sex with another man prior to her marriage. She is caught between her desire for her brother and several social duties: the duty she bears Florio to provide an heir for the family, the duty she bears Giovanni as a sister, the duty she bears Soranzo, who loves her and

expects that she will love him, and the religious and social duty she bears to marry.

Act 3, Scene 4 Quotes

☝☝ RICHARDETTO: Her sickness is a fullness of her blood –
You understand me?
FLORIO: I do – you counsel well –
And once within these few days will so order’t
She shall be married, ere she know the time.

Related Characters: Florio, Richardetto (speaker), Soranzo, Annabella

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 3.4.8-11

Explanation and Analysis

After Annabella has refused Soranzo’s marriage proposal, she falls ill and faints. Puttana reveals to Giovanni that it is because she is pregnant, but this fact is unknown to Richardetto and Florio. Richardetto, who is not actually a doctor but is only disguised as one, has also examined Annabella, but has come to a different conclusion about her illness. The “fullness of her blood” refers to the maids’ sickness that Vasquez mentioned earlier. Maid’s sickness is a form of anemia, but at the time it was believed to be cured through sexual activity. Thus Florio proposes that she shall be cured by marrying Florio (and having sex with him). This diagnosis represents how society’s expectations of women also infiltrate medical practices. However, because this diagnosis is given by someone who is not a real doctor, it provides a critique of these practices.

☝☝ ‘Twas well done, Giovanni: thou herein
Hast shown a Christian’s care, a brother’s love.

Related Characters: Florio (speaker), Friar, Annabella, Giovanni

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 3.4.32-33

Explanation and Analysis

After Annabella falls ill and Puttana has revealed to Giovanni that Annabella is pregnant, Giovanni goes to get the Friar in the hopes that he might absolve her. He tells

Florio that his concern grows out of the fact that she may not live, but in reality he wishes to reveal to the Friar that Annabella is pregnant with his child and to counsel her. Florio's statement to Giovanni is ironic, as Giovanni has essentially forsaken Christianity, and his love has gone far past that of brotherly love, highlighting the religious and social duties and contracts that Giovanni has broken in pursuit of lust.

Act 3, Scene 5 Quotes

☛ RICHARDETTO: Time runs apace.
BERGETTO: Time's a blockhead. [*Kisses her.*]
RICHARDETTO: Be ruled! When we have done what's fit to do, Then you may kiss your fill, and bed her too.

Related Characters: Bergetto, Richardetto (speaker), Philotis

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 3.5.48-51

Explanation and Analysis

Midway through the play, Bergetto falls in love with Philotis, and the two resolve to marry in secret so that Bergetto's uncle Donado cannot prevent them from marrying (as Donado would rather Bergetto marry someone wealthy). In this scene, they run off to the Friar's cell to be married. It is this hasty passion (aided by Philotis's uncle Richardetto) that leads to Bergetto's death, as Grimaldi (also aided by Richardetto) is hiding in wait for Soranzo, whom he believes may also be trying to go to the Friar's cell that evening in order to quickly marry Annabella. This hasty lust on the part of Bergetto makes him the first (but certainly not the last) character to fall because of his passions.

Act 3, Scene 6 Quotes

☛ There stands these wretched things,
Who have dreamt out whole years in lawless sheets
And secret incests, cursing one another.
Then you will wish each kiss your brother gave
Had been a dagger's point.

Related Characters: Friar (speaker), Giovanni, Annabella

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 3.6.24-30

Explanation and Analysis

After Giovanni has retrieved the Friar in order to absolve Annabella of her sins, Annabella repents to him. He describes a terrifying version of Hell, telling her that if she goes to Hell she would wish that Giovanni had killed her instead of kissing her. Of course, the irony of the statement is that when Annabella refuses to continue to give into her lust to Giovanni and repents, he kills her as he kisses her. With these actions, the play argues that there is very little escape from the destructiveness of passions like lust and bloodlust. This quote is additionally notable because it is the first time that the word incest is used in the play.

Act 3, Scene 7 Quotes

☛ Now guide my hand, some angry Justice,
Home to his bosom.

Related Characters: Grimaldi (speaker), Soranzo, Bergetto

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 3.7.6-7

Explanation and Analysis

As Bergetto goes to the Friar's cell in the middle of the night with Philotis, Grimaldi mistakes him for Soranzo. Grimaldi had been hiding in the dark in order to surprise Soranzo and stab him. His hope was to get revenge on Soranzo for stealing Annabella from him, exchanging his lust for her with bloodlust for Soranzo. When he hears Bergetto, he calls on "angry Justice" to help him. This quote demonstrates how ineffectual the laws are in Parma, if a man stabbing another in the dark out of a sense of vengeance is what constitutes justice—even more so considering Grimaldi accidentally murders the wrong man.

Act 3, Scene 9 Quotes

☛ DONADO: Is this a churchman's voice? Dwells Justice here?
FLORIO: Justice is fled to heaven and comes no nearer. [...]
FLORIO: Come, come, Donado, there's no help in this,
When cardinals think murder's not amiss.
Great men may do their wills; we must obey.
But heaven will judge them for't another day.

Related Characters: Donado, Florio (speaker), Bergetto, Grimaldi, The Cardinal

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 3.9.93-97

Explanation and Analysis

After Grimaldi has mistakenly murdered Bergetto, Bergetto's uncle Donado seeks justice for the death of his nephew. He and Florio discover that Grimaldi is hiding in the Cardinal's home, where the officers of the city have no jurisdiction. They knock on the Cardinal's gate to ask him to turn over Grimaldi, and the Cardinal essentially pardons him for his crimes because he is of noble blood. Florio and Donado are shocked by this miscarriage of justice. Florio's statement implying that Heaven will judge the Cardinal shows what he really thinks of the Cardinal, and the play makes it clear that being a religious figure does not necessarily mean that one is morally upright. While the Friar is shown to be virtuous, the Cardinal is corrupted by wealth and power.

Act 4, Scene 1 Quotes

☝☝ Burn, blood, and boil in vengeance. Oh, my heart!
My flame's intolerable! – May'st thou live
To father bastards; may her womb bring forth
Monsters; and die together in your sins,
Hated, scorned and unpitied!

Related Characters: Hippolita (speaker), Annabella, Soranzo

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 4.1.60-61, 64-67

Explanation and Analysis

At Soranzo and Annabella's wedding banquet, Hippolita secretly enters under the guise of putting on a masque for Annabella before revealing herself and toasting the happy couple. She aimed to poison Soranzo with Vasquez's help, but Vasquez gives her the poison instead. As she dies, she curses Annabella and Soranzo. Her death is seen as just retribution for attempting to poison Soranzo, but the play also sees her predictions fulfilled. Soranzo will indeed become the father to an unborn bastard and Annabella's womb will bring forth monsters—the monster of a child born of incest as well as the monstrous behavior of the other characters in the play as they kill each other, mad with their

passion for Annabella.

Act 4, Scene 2 Quotes

☝☝ Your chaste and single life shall crown your birth:
Who dies a virgin lives a saint on earth.

Related Characters: Richardetto (speaker), Philotis

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 4.2.28-27

Explanation and Analysis

After Bergetto's death and following Hippolita's outburst, Richardetto tells Philotis that the best way for a woman to live is to become a nun and join a nunnery. The play doesn't do much in the way of refuting this argument: when Philotis exits to join a convent, she ensures that she is the only woman who makes it out of the play alive. Annabella, Hippolita, and Puttana are all judged and punished in ways that are outsized compared to their crimes, which were giving into or encouraging others to pursue extramarital sex. Though Richardetto's solution ensures Philotis's survival, Ford's play is not without nuance in this matter. Even though the women are judged harshly for their sins, the play does not necessarily suggest that this outcome is just, instead portraying them sympathetically as women who have been wronged. This allows for the interpretation that the women are merely victims of their society's hypocrisy concerning sexuality, as the various male characters desire sex, and then punish the women for giving it to them.

Act 4, Scene 3 Quotes

☝☝ Yet will I not forget what I should be,
And what I am: a husband. In that name
Is hid divinity. If I do find
That thou wilt yet be true, here I remit
All former faults, and take thee to my bosom.

Related Characters: Soranzo (speaker), Vasquez, Giovanni, Annabella

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 4.3.135-139.

Explanation and Analysis

When Soranzo discovers that Annabella is pregnant with another man's child, he threatens her violently and demands to know who the father is. She refuses to betray Giovanni, and Soranzo is on the verge of killing her when Vasquez counsels him to forgive her by saying that forgiveness is "godlike." Thus, like Giovanni later in the play, Soranzo also falls victim to an image of himself as a divine figure as he is in control of her life and death. Soranzo becomes the arbiter of justice for Annabella—before Giovanni takes that responsibility from him at the play's end. It is at this moment that Soranzo's lust turns to bloodlust, as he begins to seek revenge on the man who wronged him. This search for vengeance will, as with other characters, ultimately lead to his own death at the hands of Giovanni.

Act 5, Scene 1 Quotes

☝☝ My conscience now stands up against my lust
With depositions charactered in guilt,
And tells me I am lost.

Related Characters: Annabella (speaker), Giovanni, Friar

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 5.1.6-10.

Explanation and Analysis

After Soranzo's discovery of Annabella's pregnancy, he locks her in her room without the ability to see anyone. She steps out onto her balcony and laments the situation in which she has found herself. She regrets being led to lust by her brother and thus giving up her virtue. The Friar, hearing her true repentance below her balcony, is moved to deliver a letter to Giovanni describing what has happened. However, even though Annabella has repented, the play takes a rather unforgiving stance on her sins. As the Friar has earlier worried, the siblings are too far beyond rescuing, and they even bring others down with them (such as Florio, who is heartbroken by this betrayal and dies upon seeing that Giovanni has killed his daughter). The play allows the incestuous siblings no salvation, except for the fact that they are both (largely) sympathetic characters.

Act 5, Scene 2 Quotes

☝☝ VASQUEZ: Let not your pity betray you till my coming back:
Think upon incest and cuckoldry.
SORANZO: Revenge is all the ambition I aspire;
To that I'll climb or fall. My blood's on fire!

Related Characters: Soranzo, Vasquez (speaker), Giovanni, Annabella

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 5.2.22-25

Explanation and Analysis

After Vasquez discovers that Giovanni is the man who impregnated Annabella, he and Soranzo hatch a plot to get revenge. They invite the dignitaries of Parma to a feast for Soranzo's birthday, including Giovanni and Florio, and plan to set the Banditti on Giovanni when he arrives. This exchange highlights the difference between Vasquez and Soranzo. Vasquez is cool-headed and rational, but spurs Soranzo to intense passions and bloodlust. Because Soranzo is ruled by his passions, he also falls victim to his sins, and is ultimately killed by Giovanni as a result of his scheming. Vasquez, even though his actions are also morally questionable, is spared by his self-restraint and his capacity to be guided by reason before passion.

Act 5, Scene 5 Quotes

☝☝ Kiss me. If ever after-times should hear
Of our fast-knit affections, though perhaps
The laws of conscience and of civil use
May justly blame us, yet when they but know
Our loves, that love will wipe away that rigour
which would in other incests be abhorred.

Related Characters: Giovanni (speaker), Annabella

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 5.5.68-73

Explanation and Analysis

When Giovanni goes to retrieve Annabella before they go to Soranzo's feast, Annabella tells him that she has repented, but worries that the feast will spell death for them. Giovanni laments their situation, and in saying this line provides an interesting commentary. He hopes that people in the future may not hate them so virulently when they hear Giovanni and Annabella's story, knowing how much they loved each other—even if incest continues to be taboo in the future. In this way, Ford does not provide a judgement on their incest, but instead demonstrates how Giovanni and Annabella are victims of an unforgiving and unjust society. Even though they pay for their sins with their

lives, Ford seems to sympathize with their conflicts between desire and duty.

●● ANNABELLA: What means this?
 GIOVANNI: To save thy fame, and kill thee in a kiss.
Stabs her [as they kiss].
 Thus die, and die by me, and by my hand.
 Revenge is mine, honour doth love command.

Related Characters: Giovanni (speaker), Annabella

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 5.5.84-87

Explanation and Analysis

Before Giovanni leaves for Soranzo's feast, he decides that the best and most merciful course of action is to stab his sister to death. In this way, he believes he is sparing her from Soranzo's revenge, saving her reputation before she has a child born of incest, and fulfilling their pact at the beginning of the play (i.e., that if they do not love each other, they must kill each other). Giovanni has completely given over to his passions—lust and bloodlust alike—and he also paints himself as a godlike figure here. He takes control over Annabella's fate, and quotes a section of the Bible in which vengeance is said to belong to God and God alone. Thus, Giovanni's descent from religious piety and into sin is

complete here.

Act 5, Scene 6 Quotes

●● We shall have time
 To talk at large of all; but never yet
 Incest and murder have so strangely met.
 Of one so young, so rich in Nature's store,
 Who could not say, 'Tis pity she's a whore'?

Related Characters: The Cardinal (speaker), Annabella

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 5.5.153-156

Explanation and Analysis

At the end of the play, after the many deaths that have occurred, the Cardinal laments Annabella's sins in light of the fact that she had looked so virtuous on the outside. Though the Cardinal gets the final word of the play, Ford is critiquing this harsh judgment of women because Annabella had real moral struggle throughout, and because she repented for her sins in the end. The fact that the Cardinal has been shown to be corrupt also implies that, even though Annabella did in fact sin, those who judge her were hardly blameless themselves. Thus the events of the play showcase society's failure to be truly virtuous and just, as well as its failure to provide its citizens with a means of living and acting virtuously in a world full of moral complexities and conundrums.



SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

ACT 1, SCENE 1

In the city of Parma, Giovanni and the Friar enter, arguing. The Friar asks Giovanni not to continue the argument that they've been having, saying that philosophical debates can be useful, but Giovanni's opinions are akin to people who argue that there is no God, and are the first to enter Hell. Giovanni is upset, believing that he was only confessing what was in his heart, and that the Friar is offering no comfort.

Giovanni asks the Friar if Giovanni is not allowed to love as all other men do. Giovanni states that the bar against love between a brother and sister is simply a "customary form," and explains why the love he bears his sister Annabella is not sinful. The Friar cries that Giovanni has turned away from religion, and Giovanni asks how he can be cured of his love. The Friar states that he must repent.

The Friar laments that Giovanni had such a strong reputation when he was at school, so much so that the Friar even chose to tutor Giovanni at home rather than remain at the university, but now Giovanni has given himself up to lust, and therefore also to death. The Friar repeats that Giovanni should find another love, and Giovanni tells him that it would be easier to stop the tides of the ocean than his love.

The Friar once more tries to counsel Giovanni to kneel, pray, grovel, and beg for forgiveness for seven full days. He tells Giovanni that if that doesn't work, to return to the Friar, who will continue to think of other solutions in the meantime and pray for him as well. Giovanni agrees to do this and turns home, hoping that he will be spared God's vengeance.

The opening moments of the play, even before Ford introduces the cause of Giovanni's primary conflict, give insight into some of the main struggles of the play's characters as they turn away from religious piety and towards unlawful desires.



Ford quickly reveals the cause of Giovanni's anguish when he reveals that Giovanni is in love with his sister. Thus, Giovanni's predicament not only signifies a rejection of religious morals and customs, but also a rejection of social norms and familial duties.



The Friar's depiction of Giovanni's reputation reinforces the dramatic nature of the transformation that Giovanni undergoes over the course of the play by providing a frame of reference for his descent—from a perfect student to a person driven mad by passion. The link the Friar creates between lust and death also highlights the strong reaction that other characters will have to incest, and foreshadows Giovanni's eventual death as a result of his lust.



The Friar attempts to pull Giovanni back to religious piety and away from his lustful thoughts before he takes any action. Giovanni's hope that he will be spared God's vengeance introduces vengeance as one of the play's central themes, and foreshadows the many plots of revenge and bloodlust that occur throughout the rest of the play.



ACT 1, SCENE 2

The second scene opens on Grimaldi and Vasquez in front of Florio's house. Vasquez has his **sword** drawn, challenging Grimaldi to fight him. Grimaldi taunts Vasquez, saying that Vasquez is unequal to him because Vasquez is only a servant, while Grimaldi is a Roman soldier. Vasquez retorts that even a servant could beat Grimaldi. They continue to mock each other until Grimaldi draws his sword. They fight, and Vasquez begins to beat Grimaldi.

Florio, Donado, and Soranzo come upon Grimaldi and Vasquez as they fight. Florio asks for an explanation as to why they're fighting and scolds Grimaldi for fighting so close to his home. Donado concurs and adds that Vasquez starts these quarrels far too often.

Florio asks what the cause of the argument is as Annabella and Puttana enter on the balcony of the house, unseen. Soranzo chimes in that he asked Vasquez to challenge Grimaldi because he and Grimaldi are rivals for Annabella's love, and Grimaldi has made disparaging comments about Soranzo to him. Soranzo explains that he did not want to stoop to Grimaldi's level and challenge him himself, and so he sent Vasquez in his place. Grimaldi says he will remember this show of disrespect and be avenged. He exits.

Florio questions Soranzo's actions, stating that Soranzo already has Annabella's heart and so he should not worry about what Grimaldi says about him. He says it is natural for losers to complain. Vasquez states that Grimaldi's words were so villainous that they would make even a gentle person angry. Florio tells him to be quiet and put away his **sword**, and that he would not want anyone's blood to be spilt over the love of his daughter. Florio, Donado, Soranzo, and Vasquez exit.

Annabella and Puttana, meanwhile, have been listening in on the conversation from the balcony. Puttana asks Annabella how she likes these men fighting over her. Annabella admits she doesn't care for it much, and that she's thinking about other things. She asks Puttana to leave her to her thoughts, but Puttana instead marvels about how many choices of suitors she has.

The second scene is the first of many acts of violence that will ensue. Swords are often used as a euphemism for male genitalia in this literary era, a device that links masculine desire, violence, and destruction.



Florio and Donado's scolding of the quarrelers demonstrates that they are uninterested in the violence and bloodlust. Throughout the play, these two men are also the least interested in lust, demonstrating how closely connected those two passions are in this play.



The explanation for the fight again links lust and bloodlust, as the duel occurs because of Soranzo and Grimaldi's rivalry over Annabella's love. This is made even more explicit by the fact that Annabella is in view of the audience during this portion of the scene.



As the tensions from the fight subside, the fact that Florio declares that he doesn't want any blood to be spilt over Annabella's love may not be an instance of explicit foreshadowing, but it certainly comes to seem ironic, as Annabella proves to be the reason behind most of the deaths in the play.



Society's skewed expectations about female sexuality are on full display during this scene. Annabella is passive in her relationships with all these characters, allowing the men to initiate their pursuits of her even though Florio reveals that he is leaving the matter of Annabella's marriage up to her.



Puttana describes Annabella's potential suitors. There's Grimaldi, the well-built soldier, whom Puttana does not like because she says that soldiers often have hidden disfigurements, and Grimaldi also bows too submissively (with a pun on being sexually inadequate). She says she prefers Soranzo because he is wise, rich, a nobleman, handsome, healthy, generous, loving, and sexually capable (she notes that he took the widow Hippolita as a mistress when her husband was still alive). Annabella blushes at this long list and asks Puttana if she's been drinking.

Bergetto and Poggio enter below. Puttana reveals that Bergetto is another one of Annabella's suitors, and remarks that he is an "ape in a silken coat." Bergetto tells Poggio that he would never spoil his clothes and leave his dinner for a fight, unlike the other men who rushed out to stop the earlier fight. Bergetto comments how there never was an older brother who was a fool. When Poggio qualifies this statement, Bergetto is upset and says he needs to buy some wit. However, Bergetto says he has another purchase in mind: Annabella. He says he only has to wash his face and change his socks. He then puts on an exaggerated walk. As the two exit, Poggio comments that he's seen a better trot from a donkey.

Annabella and Puttana remark on how idiotic Bergetto is. Puttana tells her that Bergetto's uncle, Donado, means to make Bergetto a **golden calf** to her in the hopes that Annabella will fall down in love to Bergetto. Puttana goes on to say that she hopes she has taught Annabella better than to fall for Bergetto, and that because she is wealthy, she is free to make any choice she wishes.

At that moment, Giovanni enters below. Annabella, who cannot fully make out who it is, says that the man who has entered is like a "celestial creature." She wonders who it is, and comments on how he looks quite sad. Puttana sees that it is her brother. Annabella is surprised, then worried that he looks so downtrodden and seems to be crying. She tells Puttana that they should go down to see him and find out what's wrong.

Giovanni, meanwhile, is crying about how he seems unable to rid himself of the love he feels. He wishes that instead of worrying about his sins, he could make the love he feels for Annabella a god and worship that god instead. He soliloquizes that he must tell Annabella how much he loves her.

While Annabella takes on the traditional role of passive femininity and doesn't care for the rivalries between her suitors, Puttana is encouraging of Annabella's desire, a trait for which she is later severely punished. This is the first mention of Hippolita, who is also punished for her excessive passion—both her own desire for Soranzo and her plot for revenge against him.



Bergetto and Poggio are the comic relief of the play. Their engagement with idiotic diversions makes them laughing stocks to the other characters. But Bergetto's relationship to Annabella also recalls older marriage transactions, in which the suitor with the most wealth would win the approval of a father. In this way, wealth becomes idolized over all else, and literally gives men control over women.



Puttana's reference to the Biblical golden calf demonstrates how earthy possessions and idols can take the place of religion. In Donado's eyes, wealth makes Bergetto worthy of worship as a husband, but Annabella is freed from this way of thinking because her father is wealthy in his own right and she doesn't have to choose the person she loves based on wealth.



While Annabella is indifferent to her other suitors, this scene shows early hints of the love she feels for her brother, though initially she remains safely within the bounds of sisterly duty in her expressions of affection. Unlike Giovanni's impassioned statements, Annabella's are much more muted, highlighting the difference between the free expression of male love and lust and the tempered desire society expects of women.



Coming on the heels of Puttana's reference to the golden calf, Giovanni's idolization of Annabella demonstrates another step in his morale decline.



Annabella and Puttana reenter, and Annabella asks Giovanni if he will tell her what is wrong. They dismiss Puttana and Giovanni asks Annabella to take his hand and walk with him. He tells her that he is sick and worries that it will cost him his life. He compliments her on her beauty, comparing her to Juno and other gods. Annabella asks if he's mocking her, because his words are so hyperbolic. He assures her that he is not teasing her.

Giovanni offers Annabella his **dagger** and asks her to stab him to see what is in his heart. She asks if he is serious; Giovanni says that he is and confesses to her how much he loves her. He declares that she must love him in return, or else he must die. Annabella admits that she worried that this was the case, and if it's true, it would be better if she were dead because they are siblings.

Giovanni tries to quell Annabella's fears, arguing that it makes sense for siblings to love each other because nearness in blood necessitates a nearness in affection. He also reasons that the church says that he may love her. He asks whether he should live (with her love) or die. She tells him he should live, confessing that she loves him just as much, but that she had suppressed her feelings because of the social taboos on incest. They each vow to love each other—or, if one of them stops loving the other, to kill each other. They kiss several times and exit together to “kiss and sleep.”

ACT 1, SCENE 3

Florio and Donado enter. Florio tells Donado that he will not force Annabella to marry someone against her will. He reasons that he only has two children, and that because Giovanni seems so devoted to his studies, Florio doubts he is healthy. Thus, his hopes for an heir rests on his daughter. Because he is so wealthy he is able to allow Annabella to marry whoever she chooses, rather than having to marry for wealth. Florio says that if Annabella likes Donado's nephew, Bergetto, he is welcome to marry her. Donado thanks Florio for giving his nephew a chance. Florio exits.

The stark contrast between society's expectations surrounding male and female sexuality is again on display here. Giovanni initiates both their physical contact and the flirtation between them, while Annabella remains passive. Giovanni underscores his growing distance from God as he compares Annabella to Roman goddesses.



The use of the dagger creates a link between Giovanni's sexuality and the violence that will eventually befall the pair. While Giovanni bears his love quite plainly, Annabella is still hesitant because of the expectations that society places on her not to have sex outside of marriage—and of course she is unable to marry Giovanni, her brother.



Giovanni's logic demonstrates how quickly he has fallen from virtue, and also how easily religion can be appropriated to suit almost any purpose. He attempts to use religious teachings and seemingly lies about what the Friar has told him to justify sinful behavior. Annabella is not as easily swayed from religious and moral duties, but ultimately both characters are ruled by their lust. Their promise to kill each other if they cannot love each other only adds to the destructive force of this passion.



Unlike what was normal at the time, Florio allows Annabella to choose a husband for herself, giving her more agency in how she expresses her sexuality. However, her increased agency is somewhat tarnished by the fact that she falls in love with her brother. Donado, for his part, represents the old school of thinking: that love is secondary to wealth. As Puttana implied with her “golden calf” reference earlier, Donado had hoped that his and Bergetto's wealth would be idolized above all else.



Donado worries that Bergetto is such a dunce that he won't be able to woo Annabella, and says that he'll have to teach Bergetto how to do so. At that moment, Bergetto and Poggio enter. Bergetto says that that he has heard the strangest news from his barber about a man who has come to town that plans to make a mill only with sandbags, and that the man also has a strange horse whose head is situated just behind its tail. He and Poggio are going to see the horse. Donado comments how idiotic Bergetto is, making himself a laughing stock to the world.

Bergetto says that he spoke with Annabella and made her laugh heartily. Donado asks what he said, and Poggio explains that Bergetto said he loved Annabella almost as much as Parmesan, and also that she should want to have his nose because his was as pretty as any young woman's in Parma. Bergetto goes on to say that she asked whether he would inherit his uncle's wealth, by which Donado is encouraged. Bergetto says that he responded of course because he is Donado's favorite child and he will not be cheated of his money. At this Annabella smiled and went away.

Donado shakes his head at Bergetto's hopelessness and resolves that the three of them should return home so that Donado can write a letter to Annabella on Bergetto's behalf, enclosing a "rich jewel" in the letter as well. Then Donado, Bergetto, and Poggio exit.

ACT 2, SCENE 1

Some time later, Giovanni and Annabella reenter from their bedchamber. He tells her not to blush with modesty, but instead to be proud to know that in giving up her virginity, she has conquered his heart. She tells him that she would have blushed with modesty if anyone except him had won her.

Giovanni wonders why it is said that one "loses" one's virginity, when nothing is actually lost and Annabella is still the same. She chides him for speaking so openly about sex, and he tells her that half the pleasure of sex is in talking about it.

Bergetto's idiocy provides the comic relief, but he also demonstrates an important opposition between desire and duty. Even though he seems to have no wish to marry Annabella, he has a duty to his uncle to continue to woo her. He is portrayed as an innocent fool, but even so he later becomes the first casualty of the play, demonstrating the cruelty and injustice of the society.



Bergetto once more reveals his simple-mindedness, but Donado is heartened by Annabella's question about his wealth. He believes that her inquiry shows that she values money, though to the audience (who was privy to her conversation with Puttana) it is clearer that she thinks this is unimportant and that Bergetto is an idiot.



Donado continues to behave in a way that is consistent with his desire to make Bergetto a "golden calf" when he gives Annabella this ring as a token, hoping that he can make her idolize Bergetto's wealth.



The lustful nature of Giovanni and Annabella's love has now been revealed—and consummated. Annabella's response here shows that she has fully given up her modesty, a sin for which she will be harshly judged later.



Though Annabella has given up her virginity, she is still hesitant to speak about sex because of the societal restrictions that are placed on women's sexuality. Women who behave contrary to these norms (as becomes the case for Annabella herself) are labeled "whores." Giovanni, on the other hand, has no such restrictions on his sexual expression.



Giovanni worries that Annabella will have to marry someone else. She swears that she will marry no one else, and that all her suitors are hateful to her in comparison to him. He says he trusts her, and then exits.

Giovanni's worry is well-founded, as young women were expected to marry at an early age, and as Florio has implied earlier, Annabella has a duty to her father to produce an heir—a duty that is in direct conflict with her own desire.



Puttana enters, seeming already to know that Annabella has lost her virginity to Giovanni. Puttana tells her not to be ashamed that they are siblings, because Giovanni is a man, and if a young woman feels sexual desire, she should be able to have anyone.

Puttana presents a much more progressive view on women's sexuality. Not only does she encourage Annabella's having sex before marriage, she also encourages her and Giovanni's relationship. Both women are eventually punished harshly for breaking with societal norms in this way.



Florio calls from outside, and Annabella pretends to be working at her needlework. He commends her on her diligence as he enters with Richardetto (disguised as a doctor) and Philotis. He says that he has called the doctor because he knows that she has been sick lately. Annabella welcomes him.

Florio again proves himself to be a devoted father, and Annabella shows her attempts to remain a dutiful daughter to him. This moment shows a fitting sliver of their relationship: though Annabella is lying about working, she demonstrates a wish to be obedient.



Richardetto explains that many people have spoken of Annabella's virtue and beauty, and that he has brought his niece Philotis to play music for her. Florio welcomes the two of them to the house, and comments that his daughter has not quite forgotten how "to touch an instrument" and that she used to be able to play music (unwittingly making a pun on Annabella's sexual activity).

Richardetto's description of Annabella shows how, similarly to Giovanni, her passions lead to the ruining of her reputation. Unlike Giovanni, however, she becomes a victim of even harsher expectations as any sexual activity is impermissible for an unmarried woman.



ACT 2, SCENE 2

The next scene finds Soranzo in his study, reading a book of poetry by Jacopo Sannazaro. One of the poems argues that love only causes pain, unrest, and eventually animosity. Soranzo disagrees with the poem and writes his own version stating that love's troubles cause happiness. He says that if Sannazaro had met Annabella, he would never have written that verse.

Soranzo is the last suitor of Annabella's to whom the audience is introduced, and he seems to be the most appealing, having a good reputation (based on Florio and Puttana's descriptions in the first act). In contrast with the other characters, he seems driven more by love than by lust at first.



Vasquez interrupts Soranzo's poetry, upsetting him. He asks what's wrong, and Vasquez enters with Hippolita, who is dressed in mourning. Hippolita immediately launches into a tirade, telling Soranzo how much he has wronged her. She describes how first he begged her for sex, and she pitied him. She implies that her husband died out of shame because she disgraced him, and now on top of her husband's death, Soranzo hates her.

The seeming purity of Soranzo's love is quickly tarnished by the introduction of Hippolita. Though he may be in love now, he has certainly given into temptation in the past. As his passions gradually overcome him, the play also tracks his downfall as he succumbs to lust and bloodlust.



As Soranzo tries to argue with Hippolita, she tells him not to try to talk his way out of admitting to the abuse he has done to her. She says that Annabella will rejoice at the expense of her dejection. Soranzo replies that she is “too violent,” and Hippolita once again accuses him of causing her husband’s death. She refuses to let Soranzo interject into her tirade. Vasquez tries to speak with her, saying that she is not within reason, but he doesn’t convince her to listen to Soranzo.

Hippolita continues into a monologue explaining how Soranzo had wronged her. She asks him if he did not swear that he wanted nothing more than to call Hippolita his wife and that he would marry her if her husband died. She describes how this led her to advise her husband to travel a dangerous road to Leghorn. They had heard his brother was dead and had left a daughter behind, and Hippolita asked her husband to bring his niece back from Leghorn so as not to leave her alone. He then died on the way, and Soranzo conveniently forgot his vows.

Soranzo argues that the vows he made to Hippolita were unlawful, and that it would be a greater sin to keep them than to break them. He tells her to look at her own sins in bringing her husband to his death even though he was a great man. Vasquez tells Soranzo that he is being unkind in not keeping his promise. Soranzo tells Vasquez he does not care and demands that Hippolita never return to his house. He exits.

Vasquez says that Soranzo is behaving like a scoundrel. Hippolita says that she will have vengeance and begins to leave. Vasquez stops her and tells her that she does not have as much grounds for vengeance as she might think. He tells her she was too bitter and malicious, and that she came at a poor time. He tells her that if she could be milder, she might win Soranzo.

Hippolita says that she no longer has an interest in Soranzo and goes on to try to flatter and seduce Vasquez with promises that he could be the master of her estate, her wealth, and herself. In return, Hippolita asks him to help execute a plot she has in mind—and to remain silent about it. Vasquez promises to help her, but he privately insinuates that Hippolita is blind to his true intentions.

Soranzo’s judgement of Hippolita will later stand as an example of the hypocrisy that surrounds female sexuality and the societal expectations of chastity. Hippolita merely hurls “violent” insults when she discovers Soranzo has broken his promises, but when Soranzo discovers the same of Annabella later in the play, he becomes literally violent and threatens her with a sword.



Though it is unclear whether Soranzo fell in love with Annabella before or after his affair with Hippolita, his change of heart merely makes him unfaithful, while the same change of heart in a woman like Hippolita (when she turns from her husband to Soranzo) or Annabella (later, when she proves unfaithful to her husband before her marriage) makes her a “whore.”



Again, Ford continues to put the double standard on display. For men like Soranzo, it is easy to have a pre-marital affair and face no consequences, and apart from that they are then given license to break those pre-marital promises under the justification that they are helplessly “sinful.” Annabella does not get this chance later on in the play because she becomes pregnant.



Though Vasquez also buys into the double standard, he has a more rational response than both Soranzo and Hippolita. It is Vasquez’s relatively dispassionate nature that makes him one of the most successful characters of the play and one of the only characters who survives the drama, reinforcing the play’s argument that passions can be destructive.



Vasquez’s dispassionate nature abides even in the face of Hippolita’s offering of wealth, power, and sex. Even though Vasquez is deceptive, his rationality and logic give him power over the other characters, who are ruled by their passions.



ACT 2, SCENE 3

Richardetto (who is still disguised as a doctor) and Philotis enter. Richardetto laments to his niece that his good fortune has turned to disgrace because his disguise necessitates that he be silent about his true identity. Richardetto explains that his wife thinks him dead because he traveled to Leghorn and spread the rumor of his own death.

Richardetto goes on to explain how he wants to find out how extensive and shameful his wife's (Hippolita's) adultery will become following his death. Philotis worries that Richardetto means to get revenge, and Richardetto mildly assures her that she won't know anything of his schemes.

Richardetto asks Philotis if she knows whether the marriage plans between Annabella and Soranzo have progressed. She tells him that Florio intends to give his daughter to Soranzo, but that Annabella doesn't seem to have affection for any of her suitors.

At that moment, Grimaldi enters. He tells Richardetto that he has heard of his skill and asks to speak with him in private. Philotis exits. Grimaldi describes how he loves Annabella and asks whether there is a love potion that can make her fall in love with him. Richardetto expresses his doubts.

Richardetto says that, out of duty towards the Cardinal (who is very close with Grimaldi), he must admit that there is an obstacle between him and Annabella. He tells Grimaldi that Soranzo has Annabella's heart, and states that he will help Grimaldi. He will find out the time that Soranzo and Annabella are meant to meet and will inform Grimaldi, as well as provide him with a poisoned **dagger** in order to kill Soranzo. He says in an aside that in this way he will get revenge on Soranzo, who cuckolded him.

Though he does not identify himself explicitly, the details of Richardetto's journey and arrival match up with Hippolita's story about her dead husband, thus revealing that he is not dead after all. Similar to Vasquez, Richardetto's self-restraint is an asset, as he survives where most characters do not.



Another of the few characters who survive the play's calamitous ending, Philotis, chimes in with her own form of restraint, hoping and counselling Richardetto not to seek revenge. The fact that Richardetto keeps her in the dark ultimately dooms her chances at love when his plans lead inadvertently to her fiancé's death.



Even though Florio has promised to allow Annabella to choose her husband, his clear favorite in Soranzo and his eventual decision to have her wed him reveals the claim to be disingenuous, and demonstrates the expectation that women should allow such choices to be made for them regardless of their own desires.



Grimaldi enters looking for a means of winning Annabella's love, but his lustful passion is quickly taken advantage of by the more even-tempered and deceptive Richardetto.



Richardetto quickly transforms Grimaldi's lust for Annabella into bloodlust for Soranzo, which is made explicit by the fact that Richardetto gives him a dagger. Richardetto, on the other hand, uses logic and manipulation to achieve his means of revenge. Whereas an excess of passion leads to the downfall of some characters, thoughtfulness (even immoral thoughtfulness) leads to the success of others.



ACT 2, SCENE 4

The action cuts to Donado, Bergetto, and Poggio, carrying the letter Donado wrote to Annabella on Bergetto's behalf. Donado says that he will also deliver it to her, but Bergetto says that he wants to deliver the letter. Donado points out the silliness of that idea, because there would be no need to write a letter if he simply meant to deliver it himself. Bergetto reveals that he has written his own letter.

Donado asks to hear Bergetto's letter. Bergetto cannot read his own handwriting and so he asks Poggio to read it. The letter is foolish, crude, and also somewhat insulting to Annabella (one line reads, "I will marry you in spite of your teeth"). Donado is ashamed of his nephew's letter. He tells the two boys to go home and wait there until he returns, and not to run off and waste time on silly amusements. After Donado exits, Bergetto immediately decides to go see the strange horse.

Bergetto and Poggio continue to provide the comic relief of the play, and the more that Bergetto is portrayed as a harmless idiot, the more tragic and unjust his accidental death becomes later in the play, as he is truly innocent of any kind of harmful impulse.



Even though the societal expectations are particularly harsh around women in this play, the conflict between Donado and Bergetto also demonstrates the harmful effects these expectations have on young men. Bergetto seems uninterested in Annabella and merely wants to be amused, but is driven by a duty to his uncle to try to woo her.



ACT 2, SCENE 5

Later that same day, Giovanni returns to the Friar and confesses what he and Annabella have done. The Friar tells him that he has tried to pray on his behalf, but it is no use: Giovanni is surely marked for Hell. Giovanni tries to argue that the Friar is lacking in Christian love. He intends to prove that his actions are good.

Giovanni argues that he learned in school that the composition of the mind was related to the composition of the body. Because Annabella is beautiful, she must also be virtuous in what she does, and love is the purest form of virtue. Thus, their love must be very virtuous.

The Friar tells Giovanni that if there were no God, no Heaven, and no Hell, Giovanni might have some defense. But because Giovanni and Annabella know of God, they know that what they have done is a sin. Giovanni once again argues that Annabella's love is Heaven and that she is divine.

The Friar, seeing how futile it is to try to persuade Giovanni from his sin, instead tries to persuade him to marry Annabella. Giovanni disagrees, saying that their marriage would prove her guilty of lust. The Friar then demands that Giovanni let him hear her confession. Giovanni assents, saying that she will tell the Friar how much she loves him as well, and that they are committed to love each other. The Friar resolves to visit her.

Tension continues to build between Giovanni and the Friar as the Friar's statements track how Giovanni is falling further and further away from Christian virtue, even going so far as to insult the Friar's faith.



Giovanni's attempts to rationalize his love for Annabella merely serve as an attempt to cover up the passion and the lust that he has for her, particularly as they have now consummated their relationship.



The Friar warns Giovanni against his actions and implies that Giovanni has lost his belief in God. Giovanni does little to disprove the Friar as he continues to worship Annabella as though she were divine herself.



In counselling Giovanni and Annabella to marry, the Friar (and Giovanni with his response) is highlighting Annabella's dilemma. Custom dictates that she should marry in order to make her child legitimate, but it also dictates that marrying her brother would be a sin.



ACT 2, SCENE 6

Meanwhile, Florio asks Annabella what Giovanni is doing, and Annabella tells him that he has gone to the Friar. Florio comments on how holy the Friar is, and how he hopes that he'll teach Giovanni how to get to Heaven.

Donado enters and presents the letter he wrote for Annabella on Bergetto's behalf as well as a jewel for her (a ring). He describes how much Bergetto is in love with Annabella. Puttana tells Donado that she has been commending Bergetto to Annabella every night. Donado gives Puttana money in return.

Annabella reads the letter at Florio and Donado's insistence. She returns the jewel she was given, saying that she counts Bergetto's love as a jewel. Donado insists that she keep it. At that moment Florio notices that Annabella is not wearing the ring her mother gave her, which she is meant to give to her husband. Annabella says that Giovanni took it from her that morning.

Florio ignores Annabella's explanation of her ring's disappearance and returns to asking what she thinks of Bergetto. She says that she will not raise his fortunes much and that he should find someone worthier. Donado is appreciative of her frankness and confirms that he and Florio will still be friends.

Bergetto and Poggio enter. Bergetto has bandages on his head. He asks if Annabella liked his letter and proceeds to tell her a funny story. He describes how he was walking and someone pushed him into a wall. Bergetto called the man a rogue, and the man hit him. A doctor (Richardetto) came over to bandage him up, accompanied by a young woman (Philotis) with whom Bergetto immediately fell in love. Bergetto describes how she washed him and kissed him, and he says that she is worth twenty of Annabella.

Donado, who continues to be amazed at Bergetto's stupidity, thanks Florio for allowing his nephew to try to woo Annabella. Donado tells her to keep the jewel in anticipation of her marriage. Donado, Bergetto, and Poggio exit. Giovanni enters, and Florio asks where he has been, describing how Annabella got rid of her foolish suitor. Florio says Soranzo is the only man he likes, and then exits for dinner.

Florio's statement is slightly ironic in light of the previous scene, in which the Friar told Giovanni that he is falling further and further from Heaven.



Donado continues with his attempts to make Bergetto a "golden calf." Even though Annabella does not fall victim to this display of wealth, Puttana certainly takes advantage of it herself.



Annabella is unmoved by the tokens she is given and evidently does not fall victim to the idolization of wealth. However, the audience is reminded of a different kind of idolization when she confesses that her own ring, a symbol of her desire, was given quite recklessly to Giovanni despite the fact that they cannot marry.



Annabella plays on Donado's evident desire for and idolization of wealth by making wordplay using the words "fortunes" and "worthier." This again demonstrates her relative indifference to money compared to love.



Even though Bergetto's marriage plot has failed, his stupidity continues. Bergetto, like many of the other characters, quickly falls victim to the passions of love when he sees Philotis. This passion will eventually spell his downfall at the hands of Grimaldi.



Florio once again reveals his preference for Soranzo, a choice that sets Florio up as a practical father. In comparison with the hot-headed Grimaldi and the wealth-obsessed team of Bergetto and Donado, Soranzo seems like the most reasonable choice, and the play continues to reward characters for reason over passion.



Giovanni asks Annabella whose ring she has. She jokes that “a lusty youth” (Donado) gave it to her. Giovanni tells her she must not wear it and that she must send it back. She asks if he is jealous, and he responds that she will know how jealous he is when night is upon them.

Giovanni then reveals his jealousy—emotions which spur characters to further and further violence throughout the rest of the play. Annabella’s comment about a “lusty youth” is made in jest, but it points at Giovanni’s own weakness.



ACT 3, SCENE 1

Bergetto and Poggio discuss Bergetto’s newfound love, saying that his uncle Donado no longer has any right to think of him as a child. They recount how Philotis has in a way promised to marry him, and he has already gotten consent from her uncle, the doctor (Richardetto).

Bergetto’s transition from focusing on diversions to obsessing over Philotis is quick and provides another example of passion having an all-consuming power that makes people single-minded in their thoughts and actions.



Bergetto tells Poggio that Philotis gave him a codpiece-fastener and a box of marmalade, and then she kissed him. Poggio persuades Bergetto that he should marry Philotis in secret. Bergetto describes how his courage is beginning to rise, and that he is unafraid of Donado’s reaction.

Bergetto’s descriptions of his interactions with Philotis contain many direct and indirect innuendos, and Bergetto adds to them with the euphemism of “rising courage” to make his lust more explicit.



ACT 3, SCENE 2

Florio, Giovanni, Annabella, Puttana, Soranzo, and Vasquez are all gathered. Florio says that although there have been many suitors and many offers for Annabella, Soranzo’s hopes are still the best. He lets the two speak alone. Before Giovanni leaves, he asks Annabella not to be unfaithful, and to think of him as she speaks to Soranzo. Florio, Giovanni, Puttana, and Vasquez exit.

The opening of this scene in which Soranzo vies for Annabella’s affection demonstrates the difficulty of Annabella’s position. She is caught between her desire for Giovanni and her duty as a daughter, a sister, and an unmarried young woman in this society.



Annabella asks what Soranzo wants. He says it must be obvious that he loves her. He asks her if she believes him, and she says that she doesn’t have to believe him. Giovanni enters on the balcony above to listen in.

Giovanni’s wanting to check in on Annabella reflects the society’s general mistrust of women, even though she is merely doing Soranzo a courtesy and acting as her father expects.



Soranzo is taken aback by Annabella’s bluntness and asks her if she cannot love. She says she cannot love Soranzo. Soranzo begins a series of metaphors explaining his love for her, which she wittily rebuts. Giovanni is pleased, but Soranzo believes that she is mocking his love. He tells her that it is unattractive for someone of her modesty and her age.

Annabella’s bluntness, however, does not lie within those expectations, and Soranzo criticizes her for not showing the customary demureness of someone as young and as “modest” (i.e., sexually inexperienced and innocent) as she is. Of course, this is a bit ironic, as Annabella is not nearly as modest as Soranzo might think.



Annabella tells Soranzo plainly that if she loved him, she would be nicer to him. She says that she does not want him to hope falsely for her love, and so he should cease trying to win her. She tries to comfort him in saying that if she were to marry, she would have married Soranzo, but she has no interest in doing so. Giovanni is assured that Annabella loves him. Annabella adds a final word: that if she has to marry in the future, she will marry Soranzo. He takes her promise.

Annabella rejects Soranzo with the same frankness as she rejects Bergetto. In this way, she not only fulfills the promises that she has made to Giovanni and remains true to her love for him, but she is also able to prevent any issues she would encounter in a marriage. Even if she does not yet know that she is pregnant, she understands that she has already broken a vow to any potential suitors in not remaining a virgin until her wedding.



Annabella suddenly falls ill and starts to faint, and Giovanni immediately exits the balcony to come down. Soranzo calls for help within the house. Florio, Giovanni, and Puttana enter. Giovanni takes her in his arms and asks her how she is doing. Florio tells him to take her to her bed while he calls for a doctor. All exit except Soranzo.

Annabella's fainting provides the first glimmer that the marriage plot may not be the only issue at play here, as she is soon discovered to be pregnant. To others, Giovanni's rescue appears to be brotherly love, but the audience understands the deeper worry behind his care.



Vasquez enters and finds Soranzo alone. Soranzo tells him of Annabella's refusal of his advances, and how she immediately fell ill afterward. He worries her life is in danger. Vasquez says aside that Soranzo's life is also in danger by Hippolita. Aloud he says that perhaps it is the "maid's-sickness," (a form of anemia which at the time was believed to be caused by not having sex), and that marriage could provide the remedy. Vasquez asks if she has definitively denied Soranzo. Soranzo tells Vasquez that he will inform him of her words as they return home. They exit.

Though Soranzo seems to worry genuinely about Annabella, his concern is clearly born out of more selfish desires. With Vasquez's reference to the "maid's-sickness," it is shown that not only do the expectations of female sexuality pervade both religion and societal customs, those expectations infiltrate even medical diagnoses. Maid's-sickness, though it is a real illness, is used as an excuse for Annabella to marry Soranzo quickly.



ACT 3, SCENE 3

Puttana and Giovanni are outside Annabella's chambers. Puttana is in great distress, saying that Annabella is undone. Giovanni asks if she is dead, but Puttana tells him instead that Annabella is pregnant. She worries that it is too late for them to repent now. Giovanni asks how she knows, and Puttana tells him not to question her. She says that he cannot let a doctor see her or else they will be found out.

Annabella's pregnancy is a turning point in the play, as now there is proof of her sexual indiscretion, for which she can be severely punished. Giovanni, on the other hand, can still escape punishment as long as no one reveals that he was the one who got her pregnant. Annabella is now caught in the dilemma of having to marry someone quickly to cover up her pregnancy, but having already broken her wedding vows by being pregnant with another man's child.



Giovanni asks how Annabella's condition is. Puttana says that she is fine, but that this fainting and vomiting will continue to happen. He tells Puttana not to let the doctor visit Annabella and to tell Florio that it was only food poisoning. Giovanni asks Puttana to make some excuse for him until he returns. Puttana agrees, and they both exit.

Puttana is also caught in a dilemma of expectations. Her loyalty towards the two siblings is expected of her in her job as Annabella's guardian. However, her complicity in the relationship and pregnancy is judged quite severely later.



ACT 3, SCENE 4

Florio and Richardetto (still disguised as a doctor) enter. Florio asks how the doctor finds Annabella, and Richardetto explains that she seems to be no longer in danger. She said that she thought it was food poisoning, but Richardetto believes that it is the maid's sickness.

Florio resolves to have Annabella married at once to cure her of this sickness. He says that she will marry Soranzo and that he will send someone to find the Friar tonight so that they can be married soon.

At that moment, Giovanni and the Friar enter. Giovanni explains that he called on the Friar so that he might provide some comfort to Annabella. Florio commends him on his "Christian's care" and "brother's love." Florio asks the Friar to persuade Annabella to marry, saying he may be more successful than anyone else. They exit.

Richardetto confirms Vasquez's suspicion of Annabella's condition. Of course, the diagnosis is inaccurate, and the whole scenario is made even more comical by the fact that Richardetto is not actually a doctor.



Of course, Richardetto's false diagnosis gives Florio the excuse he needs to have Annabella married to his preferred suitor, Soranzo, demonstrating that even those with good intentions wield a great amount of power over female sexuality—to negative effect.



Giovanni remains caught between desire and duty, as Florio highlights: he gets the Friar to help Annabella repent for her sins, but Florio assumes that he has done so out of a sense of brotherly love and responsibility.



ACT 3, SCENE 5

Grimaldi enters, saying that if the doctor keeps his word, Soranzo will die before marrying Annabella. Grimaldi understands that his plot is not the most virtuous, but says that when merit cannot win, cunning must. Richardetto (still disguised as a doctor) enters and tells Grimaldi that Annabella and Soranzo are going to marry tonight in the Friar's cell.

Richardetto tells Grimaldi to keep watch for the night and gives Grimaldi the poison. He tells Grimaldi to be quick and sure. Grimaldi assures Richardetto he will and exits. Richardetto is giddy with the prospect of getting revenge on Soranzo.

Philotis enters. Richardetto asks her if she has made up her mind about marrying Bergetto. She says she has resolved to love him, and that he wants to marry tonight for fear that his uncle Donado will prevent the marriage. Richardetto says that they should go early to the Friar's to be married.

At this point, the plot begins to turn towards its more violent outcomes. Grimaldi, having lost the prospect of Annabella's love, opts instead for the shedding of Soranzo's blood in revenge for his disrespect earlier in the play.



Richardetto is less than innocent in this plot, as he is using Grimaldi to get his own vengeance on Soranzo. But rather than being ruled by his passion, he makes a calculated move in sending Grimaldi in his place—a move that will shield him from any negative repercussions.



Richardetto is not free from making mistakes. In his eager excitement over his daughter's impending marriage to Bergetto and the acquisition of Donado's wealth, he inadvertently sends Bergetto to his death.



Bergetto and Poggio enter. Bergetto becomes preoccupied with kissing Philotis, describing how he has a “monstrous swelling” around his stomach. Richardetto says they should hurry, and that he’ll have plenty of chances to kiss her as well as bed her.

Bergetto and Richardetto’s haste, born out of two separate lusts (one for money and one for sex), costs Bergetto his life and Philotis her marriage, proving again the destructive force of blind passion.



ACT 3, SCENE 6

The scene opens on the Friar and Annabella as she is praying and weeping to him. He says he is glad to see her penance, because she is almost “condemned alive.” He scares her with a terrifying description of Hell and goes on to say that she would rather that Giovanni’s kisses were **daggers** than go to Hell.

Because the proof of Annabella’s sins is more tangible than Giovanni’s (in her pregnancy), she is made to repent for her sins. The Friar’s statement regarding Giovanni’s kisses foreshadows that Giovanni, driven mad by passion, will eventually murder Annabella.



Annabella asks if there is any way that she can redeem herself. The Friar says that she must marry Soranzo to save her soul. She agrees to do it.

Annabella turns away from her desire and faces her duty as a young woman by following society’s expectations and marrying Soranzo.



Florio and Giovanni enter. The Friar asks if Soranzo has come, and Florio says that he is waiting downstairs and is overjoyed to be marrying Annabella. Giovanni sees his sister weeping and fears that the Friar is false. Annabella says that she has resolved to marry Soranzo. Soranzo and Vasquez enter. The Friar joins Annabella’s and Soranzo’s hands, and she vows to live with him. They decide to marry very soon.

Annabella’s conflicted feelings come not only from foregoing Giovanni’s love (a decision that leaves both of them heartbroken)—she also knows the danger that might befall her if Soranzo finds out about her pregnancy. Nevertheless, she decides to marry him so as to extract herself from a sinful life.



ACT 3, SCENE 7

Meanwhile, Grimaldi is still on watch with his **sword** drawn, waiting for Soranzo. However, it is Bergetto and Philotis, disguised, who pass him next, followed by Richardetto and Poggio. Grimaldi mistakes Bergetto for Soranzo and stabs him, then flees. Bergetto cries out for a “flesh-tailor” and Philotis realizes that someone has stabbed him. Richardetto tells Poggio to get the officers and some lights. Poggio returns with the officers.

Grimaldi attempts to take revenge on Soranzo, but his mistake introduces another theme into the play: the laws in this society may be relatively feeble (as is seen when the officers are unable to bring Grimaldi to justice), but vigilante justice can be just as ineffectual and destructive.



Richardetto commands the officers to find Bergetto’s murderer, and they leave. Richardetto tries to stop Bergetto’s bleeding but is unsuccessful. Bergetto dies, saying farewell to Poggio. Poggio cries out, and Richardetto tells him that they will try to find out who murdered him.

As Bergetto dies, there are several ironies at play that condemn both bloodlust and vigilantism: first, Richardetto’s desire for vengeance led to the murder of his niece’s fiancé; second, when Bergetto calls out for a doctor, Richardetto is unable to help because he is only disguised as one in order to carry out his revenge plot.



ACT 3, SCENE 8

Vasquez informs Hippolita that Soranzo and Annabella are going to be married in two days. Hippolita wishes that they would marry in two hours so that she can get her revenge on them.

Another plot of revenge is brewing: Hippolita is using Soranzo's wedding in order to carry out her own mission against him as the play continues to tie the themes of lust and bloodlust.



Vasquez reaffirms his commitment to Hippolita's plot. She tells him she will be his even though he is a servant. She says that Soranzo would laugh to see her weep, but that he can laugh and enjoy his revels for now, because in two days he will cease to live.

Vasquez and Hippolita serve as good foils for each other. She is driven by passion and therefore blind to the fact that he is lying to her, leading to her own death. Vasquez is cool and deceptive, a trait that allows him to survive the play.



ACT 3, SCENE 9

Florio, Donado, Richardetto, Poggio, and the officers enter, discussing Bergetto's death. Florio urges Donado to seek justice. Richardetto admits that he was somewhat at fault for not informing Donado that Bergetto and Philotis were in love.

Though Richardetto is unable to admit his guilt in the plot that killed Bergetto, he does admit guilt for not telling Donado of the marriage plan. Thus, the first casualty of the play demonstrates how easily the innocent become wrapped up in the unjust schemes of others.



The officers reveal that they believe they saw the murderer go to the Cardinal's gate, but because they have no jurisdiction in the church, they couldn't pursue him any further. They reveal that the person was a soldier who was a suitor to Annabella. Florio realizes that it was Grimaldi.

The officers serve as a symbol of how ineffectual the law of the land is, and perhaps explain why so many of the characters choose to seek recourse elsewhere for themselves. The officers are forced to yield to the higher power in the land—that is, the church.



Richardetto says the Cardinal is noble and will bring the man to justice. Poggio knocks on the Cardinal's door, and the Cardinal and Grimaldi answer. The Cardinal scolds them for coming to his door at such a late hour. When he sees Donado, he realizes that they have come to address Grimaldi for slaying Bergetto.

Richardetto's trust in the church proves to be overly optimistic. In contrast with the humble Friar, who offers counsel, the Cardinal is immediately harsh, and it seems that he will not be the men's ally as he arrives at the door with Grimaldi.



Grimaldi kneels before the Cardinal, saying that he did not mean to hurt Bergetto, but instead wanted to avenge Soranzo. He reveals that he killed Bergetto mistakenly. He goes on to say that although it was bad luck that killed Bergetto, he submits himself to the Cardinal's punishment.

Though Grimaldi does not lie, it is difficult to say that his reasoning is moral as he admits that he actually wanted to kill Soranzo. Although bad luck killed Bergetto in the most abstract sense, Grimaldi and his bloodlust are actually what killed him.



The Cardinal tells Grimaldi to rise and says to the others that he receives Grimaldi into the Pope's protection for his offence. He says that Grimaldi is nobly born, though Florio thought him too low for Annabella. He tells the men to learn more judgement and to bury their dead. He and Grimaldi then exit.

The Cardinal's introduction shows him to be an indulgent figure who is less concerned with religion than with wealth. It is ironic that he tells the men to learn better judgement here, because he did not judge Grimaldi harshly enough.



Donado is appalled by the Cardinal's words and asks where justice is. Florio tells Donado that although these great men do what they want, Heaven will eventually judge them.

With the final statement of the third act, Florio draws a distinction between all religious figures and those that have actual religious piety. The Cardinal falls victim to vice in holding wealth and nobility above morality.



ACT 4, SCENE 1

Time jumps ahead to just after Annabella and Soranzo have been married, at their wedding banquet. The Friar tells them to feast and enjoy the day. Soranzo says that he has been blessed with luck and with a "most precious jewel" for a wife.

Soranzo keeps with several themes of the play by objectifying and idolizing his new wife by tying her to wealth and jewels. Annabella, for her part, is silent, conforming to the expectations of her as a new bride.



Not everyone shares in the joy of the feast. Giovanni says he would prefer ten thousand deaths to watching Annabella marry another man. Donado is also still grieving at his nephew's death, and Florio urges him to drown his sorrows in wine. Soranzo toasts to Giovanni, his new brother, and to his own and Annabella's happiness. Giovanni refuses to toast.

Giovanni feels betrayed by Annabella's marriage, and his desire to die rather than to see her with someone else fuels his bloodlust. Here he also foreshadows his death as a result of his predicament as well as the specific actions that he takes to try to resolve it (such as killing Annabella and stabbing Soranzo).



A noise is heard offstage. Vasquez tells Soranzo that some young maidens of Parma wanted to perform a masque (a performance with music and dance) for Annabella. Hippolita (who is masked) and other ladies enter and dance. Soranzo asks which of them to thank for the performance.

Hippolita works within the limitations placed on women to get her revenge. As she would not have been allowed into the wedding, she instead uses the guise of dancing for the guests in order to execute her plot.



Hippolita unmaskes herself and reveals that the only thing she wants is to address the rumors in Parma. She joins Annabella's and Soranzo's hands and says that she is glad that they have been married. Soranzo is pleased by this seeming change of heart.

Hippolita's deception is convincing. Following Vasquez's example, Hippolita makes a calm and forgiving speech rather than using violent words, and is rewarded for this dispassion by convincing Soranzo of her honesty.



Hippolita asks one more thing: that they will join her in a toast to symbolize absolving Soranzo of the vows he once made to Hippolita. She calls to Vasquez to give her a cup of wine. Unbeknownst to her, he gives her a poisoned cup. She drinks. Soranzo wants to join in the toast, but Vasquez tells him that he shall have none of the wine.

There is a subtle irony in Hippolita's scheme. She purports to make a toast to absolve Soranzo of his broken vows, when in fact she uses that very toast to poison Soranzo for those sins. However, the logical and loyal Vasquez prevents this premeditated murder.



Hippolita is confused that Vasquez seems to be going against their plan. He reveals that he has given her a poisoned cup and explains Hippolita's plot against Soranzo. He says that he knew it would have been treacherous to turn against Soranzo, but explains that he went along with Hippolita's plan because he could not let her live when she was so desperate to get vengeance on Soranzo.

Vasquez's deception ran deeper than Hippolita's did. Thus, he is able to carry out his own form of revenge, switching Hippolita's cups. He is able to defend himself with a logical argument that he was preventing Soranzo's death and killing Hippolita for the crime she would have committed.



The guests at the wedding, including Richardetto, exclaim that there has been justice. As Hippolita succumbs to the poison, she curses Annabella's womb and swears that Soranzo will father bastards. She dies.

For his actions, Vasquez is rewarded by the guests for justice instead of punished for murder. Hippolita's true hot-blooded nature returns as she curses Annabella's womb, but of course, her prophesies have already come true.



The guests remark at how vile Hippolita was. Soranzo thanks Vasquez for his loyalty and takes Annabella home. The Friar remarks to Giovanni that what has transpired is very worrisome, since a marriage feast that begins in blood is not a good sign for the rest of the marriage.

Hippolita is judged harshly for her words. Even though she intended murder, she did not actually carry it out, and thus her death appears somewhat unfair to the audience, if not to the characters within the play. Whereas Grimaldi receives no punishment for murder, as a widowed woman Hippolita has few protections in society and thus she is treated harshly.



ACT 4, SCENE 2

Richardetto and Philotis enter. Richardetto remarks that Hippolita died too soon, because he was not able to get his own revenge on her. But he acknowledges that his vengeance is not finished, as he wants to get revenge on Soranzo as well.

Though Richardetto also seeks revenge against other characters, the fact that he is not spurred on by emotions or passions—and that other people exact revenge before he does—demonstrates how those characters that are more level-headed are rewarded for their temperance.



Richardetto explains that already the marriage between Annabella and Soranzo is souring, as there are rumors that they fight and that she scorns his love. He suggests to Philotis that she become a nun and pray for her unhappy uncle. He says that any woman who dies a virgin lives as a saint on earth. She agrees to go.

Philotis, for her own part, is the only woman in the play that survives because she goes to a nunnery instead of marrying. Thus, the play also argues for women to lead lives not driven by lust, and rewards characters for Christian virtue and celibacy.



ACT 4, SCENE 3

Soranzo enters with his clothes unfastened, his **sword** drawn, and dragging Annabella behind him. He has discovered that she is pregnant and calls her an adulterous whore. He is enraged that he is about to become a father to a bastard.

Annabella argues that Soranzo pursued her, and that she denied him many times. She tells him that if he would be patient, she could perhaps come to love him.

Soranzo remains unmoved and continues to call Annabella a whore. He demands to know by whom she is pregnant. She says only that he was like a glorious angel, and that any woman would have fallen for him.

Soranzo threatens Annabella violently, saying that if she does not reveal the man's name he will rip up her heart and tear into her with his teeth. He drags her across the floor, but she only sings in Italian that it is a sweet death to die for love. He points his **sword** at her and asks if Florio knows. She swears that he does not. Soranzo asks a final time if she will confess and spare her own life.

At that moment, Vasquez enters and sees Soranzo pointing his **sword** at Annabella. He steps between the two. Vasquez argues that it would be "unmanlike" to kill her because she is his wife, and that any sins she committed before she was married to Soranzo were not against him. He asks Soranzo to control himself and not to be ruled by fury.

Soranzo affirms that Annabella should not live. Vasquez argues again that it is an unfair demand to ask Annabella to confess the "authors of her present misfortunes." Annabella tells Vasquez not to pity her, and that if Soranzo needs to kill her, he should. Vasquez says that Annabella's other suitors would be enraged if they heard Soranzo had killed her, and reasons that is godlike to forgive.

At the top of this scene, Soranzo's discovery of Annabella's sinful pregnancy has transfigured his lust to bloodlust, signaled both literally and figuratively by the fact that he has drawn his sword.



Annabella's response to Soranzo highlights the difficulty of her past position, caught between the expectation of marrying to hide her pregnancy and not wanting to do wrong by her future husband.



Soranzo's hypocrisy is highlighted here, as he judges Annabella for a sin that he committed as well. Annabella, for her own part, also reveals that she still bears love for her brother in her description of him and in her refusal to betray him.



Soranzo's violence reaches its peak here. A far cry from his monologue about his love for Annabella, he has become completely ruled by his bloodlust and his feelings of betrayal, to the point where he is willing to take the life of the wife with whom he had been so in love.



Vasquez again provides a counterpoint to the characters in the play that are ruled by lust and passion. He shows Soranzo why he should not kill Annabella, only to turn around later and try to find out who had done Soranzo this injustice. Thus, he is characterized by a cool-headed, scheming nature in a way that the other characters are not.



Vasquez continues to demonstrate his even temper, even pretending to side with Annabella so that he might later find out who has wronged Soranzo.



Soranzo cries out that he really did love Annabella, and if she had been virtuous, he would not have wanted to live with anyone else. He says that instead she has buried him alive with a “lewd womb.” He continues by saying that whomever has disgraced her might have lusted after her, but Soranzo truly loved her.

Annabella is taken aback by these words, admitting that they wound deeper than his **sword**. Soranzo puts his sword away and apologizes. He says he will not forget that he is her husband, and that in that title is divinity, and forgives her for her faults. Annabella kneels for forgiveness, but Soranzo stops her, saying that she does not need to kneel. He tells her to go to her chamber and that he will come to her soon. She exits.

Soranzo turns to Vasquez, saying that he is hungry for revenge and will eventually make Annabella tell him who got her pregnant. Vasquez tells him that being gentle with her may prove more successful, and Vasquez will in the meantime try to find out in other ways. Soranzo is assuaged by this and exits.

Vasquez tells the audience that he had suspected that there would be issues a while ago, and that he also remembers the proverb that when the wife rules the husband there are usually domestic issues. He worries that Annabella seems already quite late in her pregnancy, and it will be difficult to conceal the truth.

While Vasquez muses on how to find out who impregnated Annabella, Puttana enters, crying. Vasquez sympathizes with her that Soranzo can be furious and demanding. He admits that Soranzo could almost kill Annabella with unkindness. He says it is not Annabella’s fault that she is with child, and Puttana concurs that it was certainly against Annabella’s will.

Vasquez tells Puttana that all Soranzo wants is to find out who did it, and then he wouldn’t be angry anymore—as long as he didn’t find out by having to force Annabella to confess. Vasquez continues by saying that it would be terrible if she revealed Annabella’s lover, but it would relieve Annabella’s discomfort, pacify Soranzo, and gain Putanna love. Puttana asks Vasquez if he will protect her if she confesses. He assures her that he will. She admits that it was Giovanni.

Part of the tragedy of the play lies in the fact that Soranzo truly loved Annabella, and they would have been well-suited for each other if not for Annabella’s and Giovanni’s ill-fated passions.



Soranzo is swayed by Vasquez, and restrains himself from committing any acts of violence. He refers back to what Vasquez said about forgiveness being godlike and says that men in marriage carry divinity, another double standard against women.



Soranzo reveals his aim to be more like that of Vasquez, whose level-headedness allows him to find out information and use it to his advantage, as is shown shortly after this exchange. Soranzo soon attempts to deal with Annabella gently, and has Vasquez do his bidding in order to eventually exact his revenge.



Vasquez reveals another prejudice against women in the society: that they cannot be dominant, or else they ruin marriages. What is ironic is that Annabella is not dominant in either relationship: she waits for both Giovanni and Soranzo to take the lead. She follows her desire, but only when it is permitted by a man.



Vasquez continues to use his cunning to deal with Puttana and find out information from her, without using violence or threats. Instead, he uses manipulative arguments to coax Puttana, putting forth arguments about female sexuality and responsibility that he clearly does not believe himself, but is merely saying to win her over.



Vasquez’s clever maneuvering results in Puttana giving up Giovanni, and he is rewarded for his tact in finding out this information. What seems particularly cruel is the fact that he plays on Puttana’s sense of responsibility towards Annabella. She is bound to serve Annabella and protect her, but Vasquez argues that she would protect her more by revealing Giovanni. It is another catch-22 born out of society’s harsh moralism.



As soon as Puttana says Giovanni's name, Vasquez calls on the Banditti (a gang of Italian outlaws and robbers). He tells them to gag Puttana and to put out her eyes. They seize Puttana. He tells them that if she screams, they should slit her nose. The Banditti exit with Puttana.

As soon as Puttana gives Vasquez the information he wants, he gives her over to the Banditti. This group of mobsters carries out the cruelest form of justice, punishing Puttana harshly for a crime that she did not commit.



Vasquez is overjoyed at having found out this information, and that it is so damning. He starts to leave to tell Soranzo, but Giovanni enters, looking for Annabella. Vasquez tells him that she is in her chamber and that she has become sick. Giovanni states that he thinks she ate too much meat (with a pun on having too much sex), and Vasquez affirms his diagnosis. Giovanni goes to visit her.

While Vasquez has used his cunning to find out the information he wants, Giovanni is still motivated by his passions, as he reveals later when he explains that he is still kissing and making love to her even after she has married. His pun on Annabella having too much sex is shown to be apt, as this infidelity and sin on both their parts becomes their downfall.



Soranzo enters after Giovanni leaves. Soranzo tells Vasquez that he dealt with Annabella gently. Vasquez asks for privacy in order to tell him what he has found out. He adds to let Giovanni take his time in Annabella's bedchamber and leave freely, as he has sinned so greatly that he is essentially sold to death. Soranzo and Vasquez exit together.

Again, Ford divides the characters into those ruled by passion and those that are not. Soranzo attempts to control himself in order to get revenge, but his emotions eventually get the better of him, unlike Vasquez. Giovanni, however, is completely consumed by his desire.



ACT 5, SCENE 1

Annabella enters on the balcony with a letter. She says goodbye to pleasure and tells Time to take its course, hoping that someone will tell her woeful tragedy in the future. She admits how guilty she is, and the Friar enters unseen, below. She reveals her hope that only she is punished for her sins, and not Giovanni. She goes on to describe how the Friar told her many times that she was going to Hell, but she stuck to her sins anyway.

Annabella's repentance moves the Friar as she acknowledges her wrongdoing and understands the punishment that may come from her sins. The Friar is moved by her wish to no longer be driven by her passions. However, she has not completely lost her love for Giovanni, as she wishes that he will not have to be punished for the sins that they both have committed.



The Friar is moved by Annabella's honest and free confession, and when she reveals her hope that she might bear her letter of repentance to some good man, he reveals himself. She gives her letter to him and tells him to give it to Giovanni and command him to repent. She also wants the Friar to tell him that she is imprisoned in her chamber and is not even allowed to see Puttana, and that he should not trust Soranzo. The Friar agrees to do so.

The Friar is moved by Annabella's words, and it is notable that he aims to give her a chance to right her wrongs rather than letting her become a victim of Soranzo's passion. Though he may not be able to free her himself and carry out justice, his morality is consistent throughout, demonstrating that religious virtue (as exhibited by the Friar if not by the Cardinal) is the goal towards which all the characters should strive.



ACT 5, SCENE 2

Vasquez enters, expressing his shock to Soranzo at what has come to pass: first Soranzo married a whore who threw herself onto him, and then Annabella laughed at cuckolding him.

While Annabella did marry him as a pregnant women, it is a particularly harsh judgment to call her both a whore and to say that she laughed at making him a cuckold. She tried to avoid marrying him and causing him shame, but it would have been ruinous to be discovered pregnant as an unmarried woman. Additionally, Florio brought about her marriage; at no point did she express interest in marrying Soranzo. Thus, in many ways she is a victim of the men around her.



Soranzo begins to develop another scheme. He says that he will bid Annabella to dress in her bridal robes, and then asks Vasquez if the Banditti are ready to wait in ambush. Vasquez vaguely assures him that they are. Soranzo commands Vasquez to invite the dignitaries of Parma to his birthday feast, including Florio and Giovanni. He confesses that his blood is boiling with a need for revenge.

Soranzo continues on his quest for revenge against the other characters, and it is he who begins the next plot. His bloodlust lays the groundwork for the rest of the deaths in the play, setting up the destruction that is often the result of such unbridled passion.



ACT 5, SCENE 3

Giovanni enters in a good mood, musing that he thought his and Annabella's love would die when she married, but that he enjoys having her just as much as when she was a virgin.

Unlike Annabella, Giovanni has clearly remained unrepentant for his sins, and even confirms that they have continued their sins following Annabella's marriage as he continues to lust after her.



The Friar enters, bearing Annabella's letter. Giovanni reads it and turns cold. The letter is written in Annabella's blood, and she writes to him that they have been discovered. Giovanni turns to the Friar, believing it is he who has revealed them.

Annabella's letter demonstrates the true nature of her repentance, as she turns to violence against herself in order to tell Giovanni that they have been discovered and should discontinue their affair.



Vasquez enters and invites Giovanni to Soranzo's birthday feast, telling him that Florio will also attend. Giovanni agrees to come. Vasquez questions him several times, but each time Giovanni assures him that he will be in attendance. Vasquez is satisfied with this response and leaves.

Giovanni's affirmation that he will attend the party rather than immediately striking out against Soranzo demonstrates a level of restraint that the audience rarely sees from Giovanni, but he quickly reveals that he has his own plans for vengeance.



The Friar asks Giovanni if he actually intends to go. Giovanni is resolute, telling the Friar that he will go, and resolves to strike against Soranzo as Soranzo is surely plotting against him. The Friar says that he has no wish to take part in what is about to come, and exits to return to Bologna.

Giovanni sets his sights on revenge, and the Friar will have no part of it. Even as he exits, he remains the moral center of the play, and he leaves Parma unscathed as a direct result of his religious piety. His exit thus also marks a final departure of Christian values from the characters themselves.



Giovanni, once again alone, begins to formulate a plot. He asks for the courage to have a glorious death. He compares himself to an oak tree that, when falling, can crush several bushes so that they perish with him.

Giovanni becomes the final character to turn to revenge, following Hippolita, Grimaldi, and Soranzo in their pattern of feeling lust that descends into bloodlust. The final two scenes of the play trace the path from sin to inevitable destruction.



ACT 5, SCENE 4

Soranzo, Vasquez, and the Banditti enter. Vasquez commands them to be merciless and bloody. He tells them that Soranzo will ensure their pardons and make them free, and he gives them money in addition. Vasquez tells them to wait for the watchword. They exit, to hide.

The Banditti return once again as lawlessness and violence seem to saturate the play more and more. The fact that they are the play's means of doling out justice only reinforces the extent to which the society has failed the characters.



Soranzo asks Vasquez if the guests will all come. Vasquez assures him they will and reminds Soranzo of all the wrongs that have been done to him by Annabella, Giovanni, and Hippolita. He tells Soranzo to let Giovanni have Annabella once more so that he may be sent to Hell in the very act that will damn him.

Though Vasquez is a loyal and logical servant to Soranzo, he does still encourage Soranzo to get vengeance and to give into his passions. Vasquez's motivations are unclear, but the difference between him and Soranzo—that is, the fact that Vasquez seems immune to both a desire for sex and a desire for revenge—is what ultimately leads to Soranzo's death and Vasquez's survival, even as they plan to commit equally immoral acts.



Giovanni enters and Soranzo welcomes him. Giovanni asks how Annabella is, and Soranzo tells him that she is still getting ready for the feast. He tells Giovanni to go to Annabella's chamber and Giovanni exits to get her. The Cardinal, Florio, Donado, and Richardetto enter. Soranzo greets each of them and invites them in.

Soranzo sets up the pieces for the final scene, clearly drawing lines in the sand: the men who have convened at the feast are meant to judge and punish Giovanni and Annabella when they arrive together and are revealed. Yet Soranzo underestimates Giovanni's intelligence, as he anticipates Soranzo's plot.



ACT 5, SCENE 5

The action jumps to Annabella's chamber, where Annabella and Giovanni are lying on the bed. He asks why she has repented, wondering if Soranzo is a more experienced lover than he is. Annabella tells him not to joke when he is in grave danger. He replies that no danger is as great as losing her. She says she believes the banquet will mean death for the two of them.

As the scene opens with Giovanni and Annabella lying on a bed, it remains ambiguous whether they have had sex. However, their dialogue implies that Annabella has indeed repented for her sins and does not want to continue to be with Giovanni, even though she still has affection for him.



Giovanni tells her that philosophers teach that someday the Earth shall turn to ash in a single minute, and that if this is true, Heaven and Hell may also be true. He finds hope in that he may meet Annabella again in another life. He tells her to pray, so that she may be able to go to Heaven.

Here, Giovanni heavily questions traditional religious teaching, and once more reveals his conflicting feelings surrounding religion. He is caught between a desire to idolize Annabella and a desire to be with her in another life, and he remains hopeful of this outcome in asking her to pray.



Giovanni and Annabella share a kiss, and Giovanni tells her that in the future he hopes that even though the laws may still condemn them, once people hear of their true love, they will understand their passion without feeling such a strong hatred towards them. They kiss a second time, and Giovanni asks for forgiveness and bids Annabella farewell.

This exchange seems particularly striking because, even though incest is taboo in society to this day, Ford effectively portrays Giovanni and Annabella not as monstrous villains, but as sympathetic and conflicted human beings unable to live within the confines of their society.



Giovanni asks for one more kiss and draws a **dagger**. As they kiss, he stabs Annabella to save her reputation, saying “revenge is mine.” With her last breath, she asks Heaven to forgive him, and to forgive her for her sins. Giovanni remarks how Annabella’s unborn child owed him both its life and its death. He says that he has prevented Soranzo from executing any plots against Annabella. He urges himself to stand up to commit his last act.

Giovanni and Annabella’s final exchange shows an important difference between them. While Annabella repented and returned to religion, Giovanni continued to be driven by his passion for Annabella and even suggests that he is a godlike figure. He holds both Annabella’s and her unborn child’s life in his hands, and his statement that “revenge is mine” is a Biblical allusion, as God says that vengeance belongs exclusively to him. Ultimately, however, they were both ruled by lust, and this passion doomed them both.



ACT 5, SCENE 6

The play jumps back to Soranzo’s birthday feast, where the Cardinal, Florio, Donado, Soranzo, Richardetto, and Vasquez are taking their places at the table. They begin to eat, and Soranzo realizes Giovanni’s absence and asks where he is. Giovanni enters with a heart on his **dagger**. Giovanni tells them that the heart on his dagger is Annabella’s.

Rather than submitting himself to the will of others, Giovanni continues his rampage, flaunting his crime. The fact that Giovanni carries Annabella’s heart into the feast links lust and bloodlust, as her physical heart demonstrates that Giovanni took not only her love, but also her life.



Florio asks if Giovanni is crazy. Giovanni confesses that he is indeed mad, and tells his father how much he loved Annabella and how he enjoyed her bed the past nine months, but she became pregnant. Florio says that he is lying, and Vasquez goes to find Annabella.

A far cry from a Catholic confession, Giovanni refuses to be ashamed of his sins and almost seems to take pride in admitting what he has done.



Vasquez returns and confirms that Giovanni is telling the truth. Florio dies in shock. The Cardinal berates Giovanni for breaking his father’s heart. Soranzo asks Giovanni if he plans to survive the murders he has committed. Giovanni tells him he does, and stabs Soranzo as well.

Together, Giovanni and Soranzo’s hot-bloodedness causes the final casualties of the play: not only each other’s deaths, but also the deaths of Annabella, Florio, and Puttana. Very few are spared from the destruction of passion.



Vasquez says that he can no longer stand by and watch. He launches at Giovanni, and they fight. Vasquez wounds Giovanni, stabbing him again and again. Seeing that Giovanni is not yet dead, he shouts "Vengeance!" and the Banditti emerge. They fight Giovanni, who falls to his knees. Vasquez calls them off, and the Banditti flee.

Soranzo, barely alive, says he is pleased to see his wrongs avenged on Giovanni. He tells Vasquez not to let Giovanni live, and then dies. Giovanni thanks Vasquez for stabbing him, saying that he has saved Giovanni from having to kill himself. The Cardinal tells Giovanni that he should beg for mercy, to which Giovanni replies that he has found mercy in the justice that has occurred. Giovanni asks only that he be able to see Annabella's face again.

Donado and the Cardinal worry that they will be murdered as well. Vasquez assures them that he has no intention of killing them, as he has now paid his duty to Soranzo's father. He explains that he was brought from his native Spain to Italy by Soranzo's father and served him dutifully. He vowed to serve Soranzo faithfully as well.

The Cardinal asks if anyone else was complicit in this incest. Vasquez tells the Cardinal of Puttana, and says that he blinded her and kept her alive to confirm Giovanni's story. The Cardinal tells him to take her outside the city and burn her. Donado concurs that this verdict is just. Vasquez then asks what should become of him. The Cardinal says that he should only be banished and must leave Italy within three days. Vasquez exits.

The Cardinal surveys the damage and asks that all the gold and jewels be confiscated from the bodies for the Pope's use. Richardetto interjects to say that he can no longer hide his identity, removing his disguise at last. The Cardinal greets him as a friend.

The Cardinal sums up the course of events in amazement, remarking that incest and murder have never intertwined in such a bizarre way. In the final line of the play he wonders, "Who could not say, 'Tis pity she's a whore?'"

The Banditti's last appearance, summoned by the watchword "vengeance," marks a ruthless ending to Giovanni's tragedy, but more than anything highlights the lack of justice, law, and morality within the society.



Soranzo achieves his vengeance, but at the ultimate cost. Giovanni once again demonstrates the catastrophe and chaos of the law in Parma. He continues to deny religion in not begging the Cardinal and God for mercy.



Vasquez's backstory provides an explanation for his loyalty to Soranzo. Vasquez is one of the few characters who is not caught between desire and duty; he merely adheres to duty and is rewarded greatly for this loyalty, as his life is spared.



Even though Vasquez has committed far worse crimes than Puttana, a fellow servant, their punishments differ greatly, highlighting again the different standards to which men and women are held.



The Cardinal once more demonstrates that he is not the voice of a moral and just church, but is instead concerned primarily with money and power. When Richardetto reveals himself, it provides another example of a character that remains alive only because he was not spurred to lust or violence.



Though the Cardinal gets the last word of the play, the fact that he has been portrayed as superficial and corrupt lays the foundation for a strong argument that Ford is critiquing such harsh judgment of women. Annabella is shown throughout to be a sympathetic (if conflicted) character who works through a real moral conundrum before repenting, and this derogatory summation of her plight represents a failure of the society and the men around her.





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