

The Rover by Aphra Behn
M/M SS, SmS, R&D

THE ROVER

WILLMORE Thou art all charms, a heaven of sweets all over: plump, smooth, round limbs, small rising breasts, a bosom soft and panting. I long to wound each sense. Lights there! Who waits? – There yet remains a pleasure unpossessed, the sight of that dear face. Lights there! 190
Where are my vermin?

[Exit WILLMORE]

ARIADNE My captain with a woman! And is it so?

(Enter WILLMORE with lights, sees ARIADNE, and goes to her)

WILLMORE By heaven, a glorious beauty! Now, a blessing on thee for showing me so dear a face. Come, child, let's retire, and begin where we left off. 195

LA NUCHE <aside> A woman!

ARIADNE Where we left off? Pray, where was that good captain?

WILLMORE Within, upon the bed, child; come, I'll show thee. 200

BEAUMOND Hold, sir –

WILLMORE Beaumont, come fit to celebrate my happiness! Ah, such a woman, friend!

BEAUMOND Do ye know her?

WILLMORE All o'er, to be the softest, sweetest creature. 205

BEAUMOND I mean, do ye know who she is?

WILLMORE Nor care; 'tis the last question I ever ask a fine woman.

BEAUMOND And you are sure you are thus well acquainted? 210

WILLMORE I cannot boast of much acquaintance; but I have plucked a rose from her bosom – or so – and given it her again. We've passed the hour of the bergère* together, that's all.

BEAUMOND And do you know – this lady is my – wife? 215

(Draw)

WILLMORE Hah! Hum, hum, hum, hum.

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(Turns and sings, sees LA NUCHE, and returns quick with an uneasy grimace)

BEAUMOND Did you not hear me? Draw!

WILLMORE Draw, sir? What, on my friend?

BEAUMOND On your cuckold, sir, for so you've doubly made me! Draw, or I'll kill thee! 220

(Passes at him; he fences with his hat, LA NUCHE holds BEAUMOND)

WILLMORE Hold, prithee, hold –

LA NUCHE Put up your sword; this lady's innocent, at least in what concerns this evening's business. I own, with pride I own, I am the woman that pleased so well tonight.

WILLMORE <aside> La Nuche! Kind soul to bring me off 225
with so handsome a lie. How lucky 'twas she happened to be here!

BEAUMOND False as thou art, why should I credit thee?

LA NUCHE By heaven, 'tis true; I will not lose the glory on't. 230

WILLMORE Oh, the dear, perjured creature, how I love thee for this dear, lying virtue. (to ARIADNE aside) Hark ye, child, hast thou nothing to say for thyself to help us out withal?

ARIADNE I! I renounce ye, false man! 235

BEAUMOND Yes, yes, I know she's innocent of this, for which I owe no thanks to either of you, but to myself who mistook her in the dark.

LA NUCHE And you it seems mistook me for this lady.* I favoured your design to gain your heart, 240
For I was told that if this night I lost you,
I should never regain you. Now I am yours,
And o'er the habitable world will follow you,
And live and starve by turns as fortune pleases.

WILLMORE Nay, by this light, child, I knew when once 245
thou'dst tried me, thou'dst ne'er part with me. Give me thy hand, no poverty shall part us. (kisses her) So, now here's a bargain made without the formal foppery of marriage.

you? A woman has a sweet time on't with any soldier lover of 'em all, with their iron minds and buff hearts. Feathered inamoratos* have nothing that belongs to Love 95 but his wings. The devil clip 'em, for Petronella!

LA NUCHE (*pausing*) True, he can ne'er be constant.

PETRONELLA Heaven forbid he should! No, if you are so unhappy as that you must have him, give him a night or two and pay him for't, and send him to feed again. But 100 for your heart, 'sdeath, I would as soon part with my beauty or youth; and as necessary a tool 'tis for your trade – a courtesan and love! But all my counsel's thrown away upon ye. (*weeps*)

LA NUCHE No more, I will be ruled. I will be wise, be rich, 105 and since I must yield somewhere and some time, Beaumond shall be the man, and this the night. He's handsome, young and lavishly profuse. This night he comes, and I'll submit to interest. Let the gilded apartment be made ready, and strew it o'er with flowers; adorn 110 my bed of state; let all be fine. Perfume my chamber like the phoenix's nest,* I'll be luxurious in my pride tonight, and make the amorous, prodigal youth my slave.

PETRONELLA Nobly resolved; and for these other two who wait your coming, let me alone to manage. 115
[Goes out]

Act 4, Scene 4

Scene changes to a chamber, discovers FETHERFOOL in bed

FETHERFOOL This gentlewoman is plaguy long in coming; some nicety now, some perfumed smock, or point* nightclothes to make her more lovely in my eyes. Well, these women are right city cooks, they stay so long to garnish the dish till the meat be cold – but hark, the door 5 opens –

(*Enter CARLO softly, half-undressed*)

CARLO This wench stays long, and love's impatient. This the chamber of La Nuche, I take it. If she be awake, I'll let her know who I am; if not, I'll steal a joy before she thinks of it. 10

FETHERFOOL Sure 'tis she; pretty modest rogue, she comes i' th' dark to hide her blushes. Hum, I'm plaguy eloquent o' th' sudden – (*whispering*) Who's there?

CARLO 'Tis I, 'tis I, my love.

FETHERFOOL Hah, sweet soul, make haste. There 'twas 15 again.

CARLO (*to himself*) So kind, sure she takes me for some other, or has some inkling of my design. Where are you, sweetest?

FETHERFOOL Here my love, give me your hand. 20

(*Puts out his hand, CARLO kneels and kisses it*)

CARLO Here let me worship the fair shrine, before I dare approach so fair a saint.

(*Kissing the hand*)

FETHERFOOL (*aside*) Hah! What a pox have we here? Would I were well out o' th' t'other side. Perhaps 'tis her husband, and then I'm a dead man if I'm discovered. 25

(*Removes to t'other side, CARLO holds his hand*)

CARLO Nay, do not fly – I know you took me for some happier person.

(*FETHERFOOL struggles; CARLO rises, and takes him in his arms and kisses him*)

FETHERFOOL (*in a shrill voice*) What, will you ravish me?

CARLO Hah, that voice is not La Nuche's! Lights there, 30 lights.

FETHERFOOL (*holds CARLO*) Nay, I can hold a bearded Venus, sir, as well as any man.

CARLO What art thou, rogue, villain, slave?

(*They fall to cuffs, and fight till they are bloody; fall*)