

TRIS. AND CUS. But why join ye with him?
T. TRUSTY. For mirth?
C. CUSTANCE. Or else in sadness?
M. MERRY. The more fond of you! Both? Hardly! The matter guess!
T. TRUSTY. Lo, how say ye, dame?
M. MERRY. Why, do ye think, Dame Custance, That in this wooing I have meant aught but pastance?
C. CUSTANCE. Much things ye spake, I wot, to maintain his dotage. 10
M. MERRY. But well might ye judge I spake it all in mockage. For why? Is Roister Doister a fit husband for you?
T. TRUSTY. I dare say ye never thought it.
M. MERRY. No, to God I vow. And did not I know afore of the insurance¹ Between Gawin Goodluck and Christian Custance? And did not I for the nonce, by my conveyance,² Read his letter in a wrong sense for dalliance, That, if you could have take it up at the first bound, We should thereat such a sport and pastime have found, That all the whole town should have been the merrier? 20
C. CUSTANCE. Ill ache your heads both! I was never wearier, Nor never more vexed since the first day I was born.
T. TRUSTY. But very well I wist he here did all in scorn.
C. CUSTANCE. But I feared thereof to take dishonesty.³
M. MERRY. This should both have made sport and showed your honesty, And Goodluck, I dare swear, your wit therein would low.
T. TRUSTY. Yea, being no worse than we know it to be now.
M. MERRY. And nothing yet too late; for when I come to him, Hither will he repair with a sheep's look full grim, By plain force and violence to drive you to yield. 30

C. CUSTANCE. If ye two bid me, we will with him pitch a field,⁴ I and my maids together.
M. MERRY. Let us see be bold.
C. CUSTANCE. Ye shall see women's war.
T. TRUSTY. That fight will I behold.
M. MERRY. If occasion serve, taking his part full brim, I will strike at you, but the rap shall light on him, When we first appear.
C. CUSTANCE. Then will I run away As though I were afeard.
T. TRUSTY. Do you that part well play And I will sue for peace.
M. MERRY. And I will see him on. Then will he look as fierce as a Cotswold lion.⁵
T. TRUSTY. But when goest thou for him?
M. MERRY. That do I very now. 40
C. CUSTANCE. Ye shall find us here.
M. MERRY. Well, God have mercy on you. *Exeat.*
T. TRUSTY. There is no cause of fear; the least boy in the street—
C. CUSTANCE. Nay, the least girl I have will make him take his feet. But hark! methink they make preparation.
T. TRUSTY. No force, it will be a good recreation.
C. CUSTANCE. I will stand within, and step forth speedily, And so make as though I ran away dreadfully.⁶ *Exeant.*

ACTUS IV. SCENA vii.

R[alph] Roister, M[atthew] Merrygreek, C[hristian] Custance,⁷ D[obinet] Doughty,⁸ Harpax, Tristram Trusty.⁹

R. ROISTER. Now, sirs, keep your ray,⁸ and see your hearts be stout. But where be these caitiffs? Methink they dare not rout.⁹ How sayest thou, Merrygreek? What doth Kit Custance say?

⁴ Engage in a battle. ⁷ Enters later.
⁵ I.e., a sheep. ⁸ Army, due order.
⁶ Full of fear. ⁹ Assemble.

M. MERRY. I am loath to tell you.
R. ROISTER. Tush, junk, man: yea or nay?
M. MERRY. Forsooth, sir, I have spoken for you all that I can. But if ye win her, ye must e'en play the man; W'ou to fight it out, ye must a man's heart take.
R. ROISTER. Yes, they shall know, and thou knowest I have a stomach.¹
[M. MERRY.] "A stomach," quod you? You, as good as e'er man had.
R. ROISTER. I trow they shall find and feel that I am a lad. 10
M. MERRY. By this cross, I have seen you eat your meat as well As any that e'er I have seen of or heard tell. "A stomach," quod you? He that will that deny I know was never at dinner in your company.
R. ROISTER. Nay, the stomach of a man it is that I mean.
M. MERRY. Nay, the stomach of a horse or a dog, I ween.
R. ROISTER. Nay, a man's stomach with a weapon, mean I.
M. MERRY. Ten men can scarce match you with a spoon in a pie.
R. ROISTER. Nay, the stomach of a man to try in strife.
M. MERRY. I never saw your stomach cloyed yet in my life. 20
R. ROISTER. Tush, I mean in strife or fighting to try.
M. MERRY. We shall see how ye will strike now, being angry.
R. ROISTER. Have at thy pate then, and save thy head if thou may. *[They strike at each other.]*
M. MERRY. Nay, then have at your pate again by this day.
R. ROISTER. Nay, thou mayst not strike at me again in no wise.
M. MERRY. I cannot in fight make to you such warrantize;² But as for your foes, here let them the bargain by.³
R. ROISTER. Nay, as for they, shall every mother's child die.
M. MERRY. ⁴ Courage. ⁵ Ah, pay the penalty for.
R. ROISTER. ⁶ Guarantee.

And in this my fume a little thing might make me To beat down house and all, and else the devil take me. 30
M. MERRY. If I were as ye be, by Gog's dear mother, I would not leave one stone upon another, Though she would redeem it with twenty thousand pounds.
R. ROISTER. It shall be even so, by his lily wounds.
M. MERRY. Be not at one with her, upon any amends.
R. ROISTER. No, though she make to me never so many friends, Nor if all the world for her would undertake,⁴ No, not God himself neither shall not her peace make. On, therefore, march forward—soft, stay a while yet!
M. MERRY. On!
R. ROISTER. Tarry!
M. MERRY. Forth!
R. ROISTER. Back!
M. MERRY. On!
R. ROISTER. Soft! Now forward set! 40

[Enter Custance.]
C. CUSTANCE. What business have we here? Out! alas, alas! *[Exeat.]*
R. ROISTER. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! Didst thou see that, Merrygreek, how afraid she was? Didst thou see how she fled apace out of my sight? Ah, good sweet Custance, I pity her, by this light.
M. MERRY. That tender heart of yours will mar altogether; Thus will ye be turned with wagging of a feather.
R. ROISTER. On, sirs, keep your ray!
M. MERRY. On, forth, while this gear is hot!
R. ROISTER. Soft, the arms of Calais! I have one thing forgot.
M. MERRY. What lack we now?
R. ROISTER. Retire, or else we be all slain. 50
⁴ Assume responsibility.

¹ Betrothal, promise. ² Trickery. ³ Dishonor.