

48 THE FAIR MAID OF THE WEST

And split into a thousand pieces. Stay and hear
How many live, how many too are lost
And living, what the dangers, what the cost.

Scene Fourteen

Enter Bess, Roughman and Clem.

BESS.

All is lost!

ROUGHMAN.

Save these ourselves.

CLEM.

For my part, I have not so much left as a clean shirt.

BESS.

This day the mistress of many thousands,
And a beggar now, not worth the clothes I wear.

ROUGHMAN.

At the lowest ebb
The tides still flow; besides, being on the ground,
Lower we cannot fall.

BESS.

Yes; into the ground, the grave.
Roughman, would I were there; till then I never
Shall have true rest. I fain would know
What greater misery heaven can inflict,
I have not yet endur'd:
If there be such, I dare it; let it come.

Enter Captain of Banditties and Others.

BANDIT.

Seize and surprise the prisoners! Thou art mine.

ROUGHMAN.

Villain, hands off! Know'st thou whom thou offendest?

BANDIT.

Bind her fast, and after captive him.

ROUGHMAN.

I will rather die,
Than suffer her sustain least injury.

Roughman is beaten off.

Exit Clem.

BESS.

What's thy purpose?

BANDIT.

In all my travels and my quest of blood,
I ne'er encounter'd such a beauteous prize.
Heavens! If I thought you would accept his thanks,
That trades in deeds of hell, I would acknowledge
Myself in debt to you.

BESS.

What's thy intent,
Bold villain, that thou mak'st this preparation?

BANDIT.

I intend to ravish thee.

BESS.

What! Rape intended?
I had not thought there had been such a mischief
Devis'd for wretched woman. Ravish me!
'Tis beyond shipwreck, poverty, or death:
It is a word invented first in hell,
And by the devils first spew'd upon earth:
Man could not have invented to have given
Such letters sound.

BANDIT.

I trifle hours too long;
And now to my black purpose. – Envious day,
Gaze with thy open eyes on this night's work,
For thus the prologue to my lust begins.

BESS.

Help! Murder! Rape! Murder!

BANDIT.

I'll stop your mouth from bawling.

Enter Joffer and two Guards.

JOFFER.

Hold thy desperate fury, and arm thyself
For my encounter.

BANDIT.

Hell! prevented?

Exit Bandit with Followers.

JOFFER.

Unbind that beauteous lady, and pursue
The ruffian.
He should be captain of those bloody thieves