

“The Comedy of Errors”
by William Shakespeare

The lady abbess, having drawn this full confession from the jealous Adriana, said, “Therefore comes it that your husband is mad. The venomous clamor of a jealous woman is a more deadly poison than a mad dog’s tooth. It seems his sleep was hindered by your railing; no wonder that his head is light. His meat was sauced with your upbraidings; unquiet meals make ill digestions. That has thrown him into this fever. You say his sports were disturbed by your brawls. Being debarred from the enjoyment of society and recreation, what could ensue but dull melancholy and comfortless despair? The consequence is that your jealousy has made your husband mad.”

Luciana would have excused her sister, saying she always reprehended her husband mildly. Instead she said, “Why hear these rebukes without answering?”

The abbess had made her plainly perceive her fault. She answered, “She has betrayed me to my own reproof.”

Adriana, though ashamed of her own conduct, insisted on having her husband delivered to her. The abbess would suffer no person to enter her house nor would she deliver this unhappy man to the care of the jealous wife, determining herself to use gentle means for his recovery. She retired into her house again, and ordered her gates to be shut against them.

During the course of this eventful day, in which so many errors had happened

from the likeness the twin brothers bore to each other, old Aegeon's day of grace was passing away, it being near sunset. At sunset he was doomed to die if he could not pay the money.

The place of his execution was near this convent. Here he arrived just as the abbess retired into the convent. The duke attended in person so that he might be present to pardon him if any offered to pay the money.

Adriana stopped this melancholy procession and cried out to the duke for justice, telling him that the abbess had refused to deliver up her lunatic husband to her care. While she was speaking, her real husband and his servant Dromio, who had got loose, came before the duke to demand justice. He complained that

his wife had confined him on a false charge of lunacy and told in what manner he had broken his bands and eluded his keepers' vigilance. Adriana was strangely surprised to see her husband who had been in the convent.

Aegeon, seeing his son, concluded this was the son who had left him to seek his mother and brother. He felt secure that this dear son would readily pay the ransom money. He spoke to Antipholus in words of fatherly affection with joyful hope that he should now be released. To his utter astonishment, his son denied all knowledge of him, as well he might, for this Antipholus had never seen his father since they were separated in the storm in his infancy.