

The False Crusader

A Forsooth! Replay

What this is

This is a Story Game Replay

A story game is a game wherein the players collaborate to create a new story together. Much like long-form theatre improvisation, the players come up with the story as they go along using the premise and structure provided by the individual game. Different games encourage the creation of different types of story. A 'replay' is a transcript of a session of play.

This game is called *Forsooth!*

Forsooth! is a Shakespeare-themed story game in which the players improvise the bard's greatest lost work. It's a game for 3-6 players and your first step is to decide on the overall themes of your play, then the setting and finally create the cast.

The story proceeds through a series of scenes, much like a theatre play or film. *Forsooth!* provides some guidance, but generally allows the responsibility for beginning each scene to move freely between the players to whomever has an idea for the next one. The game continues until, in true Shakespearean style, all the protagonists are dead or married.

bl This denotes a player (blue in this case) speaking as a player. They may reference their character, but generally in the third person.

bl **Warwick**
This denotes a player (blue again) narrating what their character is doing (in this case Warwick the squire, though players will also speak for minor characters as well). Players generally refer to whatever character they're playing in the first person.

Forsooth! the game was written by Sam Liberty & Kevin Spak and published by Spoiled Flush Games.

The False Crusader

A *Forsooth!* Replay

Cast Creation

Act I¹ Scenes 1, 2, 3, 4

Act II Scenes 5, 6, 7, 8

Act III Scenes 9, 10, 11

Act IV Scenes 12, 13, 14, 15

Act V Scenes 16, 17, 18, 19,
20, 21, 22

The Curtain Call

Players' Thoughts

With thanks to the Players:

rd (Red) James
bl (Blue) Alex
wh (White) w00hoo
yb (Yellow Black) Epistolary Richard

¹ The Act structure and the naming of scenes were added as part of the transcript. *Forsooth!* does not require players to structure the game as they go.

Cast Creation

Each game of Forsooth! begins with the players agreeing on two Themes and one Setting for the play from various lists provided in the game book. We begin with the players having already chosen the following:

Themes: 'Redemption' and 'If you prick us, do we not bleed?'

Setting: A Haunted Castle near a Major Trade Route in Scotland

Depending on the number of players each player may create and own more than one character. With four players, each player creates two characters. Each character is made of up of:

- *Their Name*
- *Two Natures (also from a list in the game book)*
- *Their Motivation (i.e. what drives them on)*
- *Their Oath (i.e. a line they think they're not prepared to cross)*

We join them as they start creating their first characters.

bl The themes suggest to me stories about old grudges. It's set in Scotland, so maybe clans at war?

wh Warring clans would work. 'If you prick us, do we not bleed?' suggests an underclass. Potentially a clan on the rise and one on the decline. They do have secondary clans.

yb In Scotland there's a distinction between highland clans and lowland clans.

rd And you also have the influence of the Norman lords against the highlanders. That's still fairly raw.²

yb What kind of period? That'll have an impact. If we set it in the classic Elizabethan period then you have the highlander/lowlander distinction; you have differences in religion,

² (Red) Not being a historian, I have no idea whether this is actually true to the period, but—as we're about to point out—we're shooting for a Shakespearean-style piece of theatre and potential elements of drama.

Calvinism and Catholicism; you also have a lot of French influence. Alternatively, if you go back to medieval times then you can leave out that religious conflict and you can focus on England v Scotland or highlander/lowlander and we can just talk about the clans without bringing in the wider political scene.

rd I don't think we should focus on the Elizabethan period. I think we should go back a bit further. Edward I, Edward II.

wh Lowlanders/highlanders and fighting the English.

yb And remember that just as Macbeth was horribly historically inaccurate, so too this play will be.

wh That's handy because I don't really know much about medieval Scotland.

rd You probably know more than Shakespeare!

yb Just as he was, we're here to pick out eternal stories rather than worrying about the correct colour of the tartan. Great, that was really useful. Let's go to our characters.³

wh Does it matter if different characters end up with the same Natures?

yb It's absolutely fine.

wh In which case, I have the intention of playing a Thoughtful Rake.⁴

bl I want to play a Villainous Braggart or a Villainous Schemer.

yb I've got a Cowardly Dullard.

rd I think I should go for something a bit honourable because everyone's fairly... not. I'm going to be an Honourable Crusader, given the time period.

bl I don't suppose that has to be a literal crusader...

³ (Yellow Black) I typically start with the character's Natures as the most defining element of the character, then build the character out.

⁴ (White) I like to get thoughts out quickly because it helps everyone if someone has made a start. This doesn't always mean I make the best decisions though!

rd Actually, I thought he would be a crusader coming back to the family home.

yb 12th Century, so actually pre-Edwardian.

wh That or his return journey took him a very long time.

yb Cowardly dullard... I thinking that he needs to have something to him or he's just going to be ignored. He needs to have property... Haunted Castle near a Major Trade Route... I'm thinking a merchant of some kind.

rd You're definitely the person who has the stuff. I think I'm the person who morally ought to have the stuff and the Villainous Schemer is the one who wants to take the stuff and the Thoughtful Rake flits between everyone else.

wh I should warn you that my Shakespeare isn't non-existent, but it isn't what I'd call great.

yb Probably for the best. You either want a group of people who all know Shakespeare well or quite the reverse.

wh My Thoughtful Rake is now called McCullough. At the moment, every character is male?

rd I'm going to name mine Sir William, I think.

bl Ah, damn it, I was just writing William.

rd Were you? Okay.

bl No, you can have Sir William.

yb No, no, no, no, it's great! Mistaken identities!

wh Yes, mistaken identities!

bl It can't be, the crusader and the-

yb The crusader and the villain!

bl Have got the same name?

rd Yeah, let's keep it. So you're a 'sir' as well?

bl Does that make sense? No, that's stupid. Maybe he's a 'sir' in inverted commas.

yb Like 'Sir' Thorne from *Witch*.

bl Okay, cool.

rd Now that shows possibility. You're assuming my identity, you've claimed ownership of my lands, I'm presumed dead on the crusades or—not dead because this villain has come back as me—but a prisoner. This is working! Basically, I've returned to find that you've taken my identity.

bl I'll put my position as usurper.

rd I think that works. You can get all that from just one comment, choosing the same name.

bl If we're playing more than one character each, how are we going to tell our characters apart?

yb You never play two characters at the same time in the same scene. What I've done in the past is use a different prop to denote when you're playing each character, or you can use your voice differently or have a different posture. I tend to stoop over a little when playing subservient characters and sit straighter when playing a dominant character. To be honest, it's clear when you frame which character is in the scene. You can't play two characters in the same scene and most people create characters that are pretty different from each other, I've never found it a problem.

yb I think my merchant is a lowlander—so from the Scottish lowlands—and my motivation is going to be something to do with a trade caravan that has got lost. As part of this major trade route there's been some kind of accident or maybe it's been my own hubris; maybe I've been trying to avoid a toll so I've taken a different route and my guide has taken me completely the wrong way and now I'm lost. I've ended up at this place, the men who were pushing my caravan along these jagged roads have all fled because they think the castle is haunted, so I'm there trying to get men to move my caravan along. I'm Scottish, but I've adopted an English name. My name's going to be Henry Purser.

wh Okay.

yb I'm going to have a little character trait of going like this (*Yellow Black purses his lips*) whenever I don't like something.

rd I've given my crusader the motivation to regain my lands.

bl I've put my usurper's motivation to hang on to my wealth and power and defeat my enemies.

yb It's a bit vague. Hang onto what specifically?

bl Whatever I've stolen from Sir William.

wh Aren't you supposed to name something; don't you need to generate who your enemy is?

rd I think that you should go for killing me.

bl Yes! To kill the true Sir William.

yb My merchant's oath is to never give up the mortgage I own over your lands. So let's create a name for these lands. What are you? A baron?

rd Yeah, a baron.

yb Baron of Peebles? Or not Peebles, but something like that. Something a bit funny.

rd Something funny.

yb No pressure. Something a bit individual, I guess. Shakespeare goes for memorable names.

rd I've always quite liked Dumbarton.

bl Sir William Dumbarton?

yb Great! So my merchant's oath is to never to give up my mortgage over the Barony of Dumbarton.

wh What just came into my head, which is probably instantly not going to work, is the idea that my Thoughtful Rake McCullough may be intending to marry into the next generation of the family

here. But that would require an eligible female who doesn't know that the man posing as her father isn't really her father. Could that work?⁵

rd The mother could die. The usurper returns, claiming to be Sir William, and for whatever reason, perhaps a plague, there aren't enough people around, he either murders or pays off people to assume Sir William's identity and so she grows up in blissful ignorance thinking that he's her father.

wh Okay, so the usurper's been there quite a while.

rd She's only going to be sixteen or thereabouts.

wh Yeah, that's true.

bl So my motivation is to kill the real Sir William Dumbarton and secretly my name is Hamish Tavelock.

wh My rake's motivation is to marry the daughter and become the next in line for the title.

rd I need an oath to stop me going up to Hamish and chopping his head off.

yb 'I will never raise my sword against another man after bloodying it so much in the crusades.'

rd Perfect.

wh My rake's oath is that I will never let down a lady's expectations of me.

bl Do we create a second character?

yb Yeah, we're at that stage now.

wh Yeah, if you're feeling it.

rd Someone has to be the daughter.

yb I'd like to be her; Mallory Dumbarton.

⁵ (White) At this point I have McCullough in my head as a Lesley Phillips type character and am already expecting him to be an ineffectual minor villain type.

rd I think it makes sense for you to be her as the rest of us are going to have scenes with her.

wh Everyone else has to have a conversation with her.

yb So can we just summarise what we've got so far.

bl I've got the false Sir William Dumbarton, secretly Hamish Tavelock, the usurper of the Dumbarton estate, residing in a haunted castle near the trade route. He's motivated to kill the real Sir William so he can hold onto the estate. He's sworn an oath never to pass up an opportunity for personal gain or personal profit.

wh I have McCullough, a Thoughtful Rake. His motivation is to marry Mallory Dumbarton and become the next heir. His oath is that he will never let down a lady's expectations of him.

yb So Hamish has usurped Sir William Dumbarton; what's Hamish's relationship with McCullough? Or what's McCullough's relationship to either of them?

wh What's McCullough's relationship to anybody?⁶

bl Do you live in the castle?

wh Well, McCullough is there to marry the daughter.

yb So he's officially there for that? He's a formal suitor?

wh Yes, I think he's formally turned up to do this. He's nobility of some description.

yb So he's a guest of Hamish Tavelock. McCullough presumably doesn't know the real Sir William Dumbarton at all.

wh No, he'll be older than Mallory, but not necessarily more than in his twenties.

yb So if Henry Purser has the mortgage over the barony then he must have some relationship with the real Sir William.

⁶ (White) At this point I've already worked out that I may not have made a great character but am hoping that the second character can redeem this a little.

rd He presumably paid for the crusade.

wh So is he also aware that the fake Sir William is a fake?

yb I think we can leave it until play. He may have met the real Sir William or may not.

wh He may have done it all by letter.

yb He may well have sent a man instead of coming in person.

wh Equally, there's also the option that if he finds out that there's an imposter that the mortgage may become null and void. He may have a reason to want Sir William back in charge.

yb Great, so I think we've got everyone connected to somebody else and I think they'll tighten up as we create a second character.

bl I want my other character to be a helper of some kind. I don't know whose helper it would be.

rd I would definitely need a squire.

bl Could I be your squire then?

rd Absolutely.

wh And are the two characters sacrosanct to the player? You never hand them off to another player?

yb Those two characters are always yours and no one else's. You can choose to bring in an incidental character, whatever you need for the scene for example if you need the local bailiff to come around-

wh Then someone else can dive in and take them up.

yb Yes. You can never be in a scene with yourself, but aside from that you can bring in a character.

bl I'll be Warwick. Does it matter if an Honourable Crusader has an Honourable Helper? Or should I choose something else?

yb You don't have to be a Helper to be a servant. Servants can be scheming or villainous or loving.

wh It would be interesting if the Honourable Crusader had an equally Honourable Helper. They would be a beacon of righteousness in the middle of everything.

bl My first character's a schemer so I thought having another honourable character—Sir William's loyal man who stands by him—that would be quite good.

wh I'm wondering if, as a second character, we don't need someone else to play off against the merchant Henry Purser.⁷

yb The merchant would have a bodyguard or a guide.

wh Possibly the local guide, that would tie in quite nicely.

yb I quite like the idea of Mallory also being a Crusader, sharing that trait with her father. Just wondering what to match it with.

rd Melancholy.

yb She's sixteen years old.

bl So melancholy's good!

wh She's got everything to be melancholy about.

yb *(as though a petulant teenager)* "Get out of my room!"

wh What does 'knave' mean? How does that translate?

yb A person of ill-repute.

wh I'm thinking that the guide can be Boastful something. I think that fits well with him.

yb For Mallory and especially McCullough to have some tension in their relationship then there does need to be some competition for their love, and we are short of female characters.

rd I was thinking of a female character. I need someone who won't fit into the Sir William plot in any way.

⁷ (White) With my first character not heavily linked in to the others I'm looking for ways I can create a character who is much more integral to what is going on.

wh McCullough kind of needs women about or his oath is a bit pointless.

yb We probably need a woman at a different status to Mallory.

rd I was thinking of a lady in waiting, but probably should be lower than that.

bl Is it too boring if I have Warwick the squire as an Honourable Helper, whose motivation is to serve his master and his oath is to never tolerate deception?

yb Where you have a motivation like that, you add the extent to which you'll follow it. He'll always help his master, but how far?

wh I don't have that in McCullough's motivation either.

yb I haven't specified it for Purser either, but I think he would defend it pretty hard, but not at risk of his life.

bl Can I have 'serve no matter what'?

yb Sure. For Mallory, I've been fighting to be original, but now I'm going to stop fighting and make her a Boastful Crusader.

wh I don't think that McCullough is willing to go very far in his motivation to marry Mallory. So I reckon that his motivation is 'to marry Mallory Dumbarton and become the next heir, but not at the cost of his womanising'.

yb So Mallory is the actual daughter of Sir William, but doesn't recognise him, and she believes she's the daughter of the false Sir William who's actually Hamish Tavelock.

bl This is getting complicated.

yb It gets worse when you have two characters who look identical as well because then you have one player, who already controls two characters, then pretending to be a third character...

rd We did that in our last game where we had the two sisters who looked identical.

yb Oh my god, yes; at least they only swapped identities once.

rd For my second character, I was going to go for something Lover, in the sense that she believes in True Love. Basically a Romantic. A Romantic Fool?

yb Okay, so we definitely have the squire.

bl Squire Warwick.

yb Who's the squire to Sir William.

bl And he's an Honourable Helper, to serve no matter what and never tolerate deception and never tell a lie.

yb Warwick's been serving Sir William the entire time. Sir William's been away fifteen years or so.

bl Warwick's been with him on the crusades.

rd Probably grew up there.

yb How old is Warwick then, thirties?

rd I was thinking younger and that he literally grew up on the crusades.

wh He could have gone to the crusades as young as twelve, and we know that he's not been away any longer than sixteen years because that's how old Mallory is, so that would be twenty-eight.

bl I like that.

yb I'm just trying to factor in whether he's a potential suitor for Mallory.

bl That's what I was thinking as well. Can he be just coincidentally the same age, but then that wouldn't make sense.

rd For my maid, I'm torn between Fool, Helper or Woman of Honour.

yb I really like Fool.

wh I don't know that we necessarily have a Fool, though McCullough might end up being a bit that way.

rd So her motivation, if she's a Romantic Fool, will probably to ensure that her mistress is well-married.

yb Do you have a name yet?

rd Not yet. For my oath, how about I will never interfere with the course of true love?

yb How about we flip that and say I will always aid the course of true love?

rd Okay.

bl Proactive not reactive.

rd For a name, perhaps I should go for Mary.

yb Mary and Mallory?

rd Yeah, I quite like that. Does she need a surname?

yb Dunny.

rd Dunny? Mallory Dumbarton and Mary Dunny.

bl Do the two female characters happen to look identical as well?

rd & yb No!

wh Only in the right light.

bl You'd need to be well in your cups.

wh I have a Boastful Knave named Thomas Grange, who's a guide and I've gone for the motivation to be acknowledged as a master guide and willing to stake his fortune on it.

bl He has a fortune?

wh Well, as far as he's concerned it's a fortune. I then worked out that the oath I was going to put in was identical to the motivation—and there's a note that says to avoid that—so I then considered the

oath of 'I will never let anyone know that I am actually a woman', but I have no idea if that will work in the game.⁸

bl That's fantastic.

yb That's brilliant.

bl The only issue that you won't be able to seduce yourself.

yb That's probably for the best.

wh But Thomas might end up having to seduce Mary.

yb I love that. That's solid. Okay, Mallory's motivation: 'To marry a man who'll take her on crusade'.

rd That's interesting because that creates a dynamic, if she's full of romantic ideas about the crusades while her father-

wh He knows the truth about them.

rd It's possible that he did go on crusade and came back early.

yb He was away fifteen years!

rd No, I mean the false Sir William: Hamish.

wh In my head he'd have never got further than London. He'd have had to announced that he'd been on the crusades, but if anybody started to talk about the desert then he'd be "Yes, it's sandy isn't it." "The thing about the desert is that it's always scorching, day or night." "The sun never sets in the desert." That kind of thing.

yb I love that, Hamish Tavelock telling wild stories of what the crusades were like.

wh Just making it up as he goes along.

yb So is that everybody? Yes, it is. Mallory needs an oath though.

⁸ (White) This was probably partly fuelled by the knowledge of how the gender split was going, but really was just a 'this might be cool' moment and I'm glad the others ran with it. I have a thing for low status characters so Thomas was already taking on the feeling of being my primary character.

rd Can you inadvertently break an oath? Because you can have an oath about never disobeying your father, and then you disobey someone who you didn't know was your father.

wh Because the oaths are kind of a conceit aren't they? Something that the audience knows the character is or isn't doing, but the character doesn't necessarily know in the play.

yb No, the oath is like a moral code for the character. The motivation is their drive; the oath is their moral code. It would be perfectly fine for Mallory to have that oath so long as she obeyed whomever she identified as her father at the time.

rd There could be some conflict retrospectively; there's a soliloquy there.

yb Definitely. Okay. What are the other themes we've got going around?

rd How are we bringing in the Redemption?

bl Yeah, actually.

yb I don't know, do you see any flawed characters in our web that could use redeeming?

rd I supposed that my oath about never raising my sword against my fellow man is all about Redemption.

yb I'll tell you something we don't have: we don't have any haunting in there.

wh We have a Haunted Castle with no haunting.

yb Let's have my oath as something a little bit supernatural. 'I will always protect the family ghosts.'

bl It's a bit late for them, though, isn't it? They're already ghosts. It's a bit shutting the stable door.

wh I presume that we can look to pull in the ghosts as a primary extra.

rd Let's not go full Harry Potter though.

All Nooooo.

wh But with the oath that you've picked, how will that ever be threatened? Do we have anyone who's going to threaten that oath ever?

yb That's a good point. How about 'I will never admit to the existence of ghosts in the castle'?

wh That's quite neat because my thought was that there's maybe the ghost of Sir William's wife hanging around, who would instantly know who was who. If she's coming up and telling Mallory and Mallory has the oath that she can't acknowledge who told her "Well, the ghost in the castle told me that you're not the real Sir William..." then that's quite nice and doesn't need the ghost to appear in too many scenes to drive the conflict.

Once the cast is complete, each player then decides which of their characters is their protagonist. The greatest significance of this is that the play finishes when all protagonists (not all characters) are dead or married.⁹

yb I choose Mallory Dumbarton as my protagonist and Henry Purser the merchant as my secondary.

rd I choose Sir William as my protagonist and Mary the maid as my secondary.

bl I choose the false Sir William, Hamish Tavelock, as my protagonist and Warwick the squire as my secondary.

wh Let's see how this works, I choose Thomas Grange the guide as my protagonist and McCullough the rake as my secondary.¹⁰

Once this is done, the facilitator recapped what players can do when they have a character in the scene and when they don't and then provided some advice.

⁹ (Yellow Black) This rule, more than any other, leads to a lot of games of *Forsooth!* suddenly becoming quite bloody as the story naturally draws to a close and players realise that their protagonists have no available partners. To keep your options open, it's worth selecting a character whom—given the available characters—has the possibility of either resolution as your protagonist.

¹⁰ (White) Once Thomas was fully created, this was probably a foregone conclusion for me, I was quite worried that I was about to break something though.

yb The one problem I always have with *Forsooth!* is that, with two characters for every player and god-knows how many interlinks going on, it can get a bit confusing. So when a new character or aspect of the story I write it on a card and keep it in the middle so that everyone can see what's currently out there. We can start out by writing a card for each character and that should have their name, who's playing them, their motivation and their oath because those are the things we're trying to help with or push against, so it's good to be able to remind everyone what they are.

The players add in a card for each character along with cards for 'ghost of Sir William's wife', 'mortgage over the barony of Dumbarton' and 'Purser's stuck baggage train'.

The game begins with a player framing a scene.

Act I

Scene One: The Gates of the Castle Dumbarton

yb A scene! I have one.¹¹ It is a dark and stormy night. Henry Purser and Thomas Grange have battled through a rainstorm and found their way to the gate of a looming structure. They have yet to knock on the door.¹² Enter Henry Purser.

yb **Purser**
“By all that is holy, this weather is foul. Come here, man, come here!”

wh **Thomas**
“I am with you, my lord, did I not say that there would be shelter not three hours hence from when you requested?”

yb **Purser**
“Damn your eyes, you fobbing elf-skinned flap-dragon! We have been trudging through this rain and hail and horrible Highland mud for half an eternity! You swore an oath to me that this route would get us past the toll-inspectors, but instead my wagons are bogged down and the rascals pushing them have fled because of some ridiculous legends about this place.”

wh **Thomas**
“Pray, sir, have you had to pay money to the toll-inspectors? I believe you have not, and this route has, for sure, circumvented their station. We will overnight here at this fine establishment!”

¹¹ (Yellow Black) When you’ve had a good creative set-up as here, you can often be overwhelmed by all the ideas and then falter with the first scene as you don’t know where to begin. The basic rule by which I work is to imagine you are telling your story to an audience who’ve only just arrived and don’t know anything of your set-up. You need to spend the first couple of scenes simply introducing the characters and the basic premise so that they can then follow along. Fundamentally, it doesn’t matter what’s been said in the set-up, if it’s not brought into the game then it’s not part of the story. Once you’ve spent the time to establish the characters and premise I find the story flows quite naturally from that. This works for almost all story games and not just those with theatrical or filmic premises.

¹² (Yellow Black) Arrivals are a common trope to open stories as they give characters a chance to introduce themselves to others and to the audience at the same time. I put Purser in a particularly bad mood here so that he can browbeat Thomas and bring the audience up to speed at the same time. It’s a more energetic and characterful way of ‘infodumping’ rather than a more measured ‘as you already know’ conversation.

This solid castle, where I am sure we will receive merry hospitality. In the morning, you will see that this dreck weather will have moved on and it will be fine and golden for your easy turn into the final stage of our journey—or my name is not Thomas Grange, Master Guide!”

yb

Purser

“Perchance you are well in your cups already, man, for this looks like the most damnable hovel that I have ever seen. The nobility in England, many of whom have I had the honour to visit, would scarce house their dogs in a ruin such as this. The money I have saved by not paying the toll-inspectors is naught if my entire train is lost or ransacked by whatever savages live hereabouts.”

wh

Thomas

“Be cautious with your tongue, good sir, be cautious, for this is the castle of the Barony of Dumbarton and these Highland men will easily and wilfully cut you down if they hear you talk as such of their fortress seats.”

yb

Purser

“The Barony of Dumbarton?”

wh

Thomas

“Indeed.”

yb

Purser

“That name sounds familiar to me. I can’t remember why now, perhaps later.¹³ Very well, as you speak their feral tongue, you knock on the door and gain us admittance.”

wh

Thomas

“I shall knock on the door for you, good sir, for you.”¹⁴

wh

Thomas Grange goes and grabs the massive metal door knocker and bangs it against the door. The sound rings through the studded oak gate and into the castle.

¹³ (Yellow Black) I didn’t think Purser would launch into the whole ‘mortgage’ explanation in such a situation, leaving me with this—so clumsy it’s almost amusing—flag to the audience of the significance of Dumbarton to Purser.

¹⁴ (Yellow Black) Shakespearean theatre was primarily an aural rather than visual experience (hence why the most expensive seats were above and behind the actors). A little bit of having characters saying what they’re doing adds a little of this atmosphere.

rd Enter a Guard.

bl Carrying a spear.

rd **Guard**
“Who calls there?”

wh **Thomas**
“It is Thomas Grange, guide to the fine merchant-”

yb **Purser**
“He does not care who *you* are. It is Henry Purser, the greatest merchant in Scotland-”¹⁵

wh **Thomas**
“The fine merchant Henry Purser, and I am his guide Thomas Grange. Pleased to be making your acquaintance.”

rd **Guard**
“My lord has retired for the night and cannot bid you welcome. Return in the morning and he will greet you then.”

yb **Purser**
“We will be dead!”

wh **Thomas**
“We have many damp mules, good sir, do you maybe have stabling and a dry bed for the finest Henry Purser, master merchant.”

yb **Purser**
“If this is the hospitality of the Highlands, I assure you it is next door to Hell!”

rd **Guard**
“I warn you, sir, to keep a civil tongue about you. I will go and wake my captain and see if we may allow you entrance.”

¹⁵ (Yellow Black) The Shakespearean genre is full of plays containing characters of radically different social status. My experience with story gaming is that many start with a presumption of character equality. *Forsooth!* is one of the few games I've played where players, unprompted, create master and servant relationships. It's a great relationship to explore from both sides. Normally, I would be hesitant before talking over another player, but with our respective status firmly established I feel more comfortable 'acting up' to my higher status, confident in the trope that foolish masters are always bested by their more intelligent servants.

yb **Purser**
“If my boots were not full of water, I would give you a damn good kicking!”

rd Exit Guard.

bl So how do we proceed?

yb No, no, the scene is still going.

wh We haven’t left yet.¹⁶

yb **Purser**
“What is this? This man has left us out here to drown!”

wh **Thomas**
“He just goes to check with his captain; this is also bandit country, which I have ably navigated us through with no wounds or losses, but they are not the most trustful of men who appear slightly bedraggled in the night.”

yb **Purser**
“We would be, indeed, the soggiest bandits he ever did see, should we be such, and—indeed—the most finely dressed too! Knock again, knock again, he has taken too long.”¹⁷

wh Thomas Grange knocks again and the sound echoes up into the hall.

rd Enter Guard.

rd **Guard**
“I have spoken with my captain and he has allowed you to enter into the outer courtyard. I will open the gates.”

¹⁶ (Yellow Black) As a nod to Elizabethan theatrical realities, Scenes continue in *Forsooth!* until all the characters have left. This doesn’t always work as sometimes it makes more sense to have characters pre-set or because characters physically can’t leave the stage. Here, however, Purser and Thomas’s objective was clear: they had to gain access to the castle for the story to move along and so we were going to stick with the scene until we managed that somehow.

¹⁷ (Yellow Black) While I appreciated the chance to let the scene ‘breathe’ a little, there really wasn’t more I wanted to achieve here. This line was a hint to the other players that I didn’t have anything more to give.

wh **Thomas**
“Then, good sir, if you will head into the warmth, I will tend to our horses and mules and ensure they are all stabled.”

yb **Purser**
“Ensure that I have good clothes. I must present myself to this lord tomorrow and I cannot do so in this state.”

wh **Thomas**
“I will bring your finery, sir.”

wh Thomas exits stage right with mules.

yb Purser exits stage left, dripping.

yb Applause!¹⁸

Each player (including those with a character in the scene) applauds one of the other listed characters in the scene.

yb Two each.

bl Very egalitarian.

yb Another scene.

rd I have a half-formed one.

bl Well, that’s more than nothing.

yb We just need a premise.

¹⁸ (White) I wanted to play up boastful as much as possible here, so made the point to be as grand and optimistic as possible. Thankfully, Yellow Black played the perfect foil for this.

Scene Two: A hill looking upon the castle

rd So, this is Sir William with Warwick the Squire. They're on a hillside. It's morning and they're looking out in the dawn light and taking stock of the castle before them.

rd Sr. William
"Good morning, Warwick."

bl Warwick
"My lord Dumbarton, I trust you slept well."

rd Sr. William
"Indeed, after such a long journey, I slept with great fullness and depth. I have returned home at last to my father's castle where I was raised. Do you remember this place? You were but a young boy when our long expedition began."

bl Warwick
"Very young, my lord, I barely recall it, but there will be a glorious reckoning to be had when you can confront that villain and strike him down!"

rd Sr. William
"I hear your words, but I have seen such war, such death, during our time in the Holy Land that I could never draw my sword against another man. These stories we hear are of great concern, this man who has assumed my name, my identity and my lands, but surely we can exact punishment enough without resorting to taking his life.¹⁹ There must be another course of action open to us."

bl Warwick
"If there is such a plan then I am sure you will find it. You are a gentle man, my lord."

rd Sr. William
"Thank you for your kind words. Have we heard more of my daughter and my wife? What of them?"

¹⁹ (Yellow Black) This is a very neat 'infodump', conveying both the critical information of the basic story premise but also the central dilemma of the character of Sir William at the same time.

- bl* **Warwick**
“Rumour is, I’m sorry to say this, my lord, but your wife is gone, but your daughter lives yet, still within the castle. Kept within the household of that usurper.”
- rd* **Sr. William**
“She must be sixteen now. Has he taken her on? Is she no longer-”
- bl* **Warwick**
“She still remains unwed. To pursue his villain’s deception in claiming your name, he has not been able to make her his wife.”
- rd* **Sr. William**
“This is true. But I feared she is vulnerable while living under his dictatorship, but if he has kept her at the status in which she was born... that is at least something to remember as we revenge upon him. Let us understand this man before we judge him. And...”
- rd* Line?²⁰
- bl* Let us enter the castle in disguise.
- rd* **Sr. William**
“Let us enter the castle in disguise.”
- yb* I love it!
- rd* **Sr. William**
“What role should we take, my squire? We could go as peasants?”
- bl* **Warwick**
“One so noble as you, sir, could not pass as a commoner. Mayhaps a merchant?”
- rd* **Sr. William**
“Good counsel indeed. We have many interesting and great goods from the East brought with us as to repay old debts. It is an

²⁰ (Yellow Black) A very sensible use of the ‘Line’ ability in *Forsooth!* Here, everyone was clear what had to happen, Sir William had to gain entrance to the castle somehow, but Red blanked on how to go about it. He therefore threw it open to the group and in return Blue provided a brilliant piece of inspiration.

easy disguise and perhaps we may catch out the usurper's deception as he has had to claim that he fought in the East and I doubt that he knows enough to separate a truth from a lie about that land."²¹

bl Warwick
"A genius plan, my lord, we will slip in and be entertained by the villain's own hospitality in the guise of eastern merchants."

rd Sr. William
"Go to the caravans and fetch us some disguises. I will ready the horses."

bl Warwick
"At once, sir."

bl Exit Warwick.

rd Exit Sir William.

yb Excellent. That's brilliant. Applause!

*The players applaud.*²²

rd That's one for Sir William and three for Warwick.

yb Another scene.

bl I think we need to have a scene where Hamish Tavelock...

yb Grab the skull!²³

bl Sorry, where Hamish Tavelock—in the guise of Sir William Dumbarton—greets Henry Purser who's staying in his estate. Does anyone else want to jump in on that?

²¹ (Red) With *Forsooth!* it's always a fine balance between not attempting to ape Shakespearian language (which almost always fails) and keeping within the groove of the game. Some of the dialogue can consequently be a bit hokey, but it isn't too bad for something completely improvised.

²² (White) I am rarely comfortable with systems that give instant awards out to the players and that was evident here as well. I'm not sure I'd change the system, but found myself awarding applause very much on a whim and was fairly indifferent to receiving it.

²³ (Yellow Black) *Forsooth!* has you use some kind of object to denote who is the current bard (the framer of the scene). We used a plaster skull.

wh I might bring one of my two in.

yb It'd make sense to bring McCullough in. And I'd like to have a separate scene with Thomas Grange.

wh Cool.

Scene Three: the Grand Hall of Dumbarton Castle

bl We open on the Grand Hall of Dumbarton Castle. It's a fine and beautiful dining hall, albeit in a somewhat dilapidated state like the rest of the castle. Hamish Tavelock, in the guise of Sir William, is present already when Henry Purser enters.

yb Purser
"My good lord, how grateful we are to you to give us such hospitality on such a wretched night as last."

bl Hamish
"I could scarcely believe that my slumber was so rudely interrupted. Your man was banging half the night, I swear."

yb Purser
"Well, he is a man and has a man's urges, I suppose. Do send on word if, a few months hence, there should be a new spawning of babies with his profile."²⁴

bl Hamish
"Vile-tongued merchant. You besmirch the hall of my ancestors."

yb Purser
"Oh, the hall of *your* ancestors?"

bl Hamish
"Why, yes. Do you not recognise me on sight? I am Sir William Dumbarton, master of this estate."

yb Purser
"I have no doubt as to who you are, my lord; it is merely the question of whose hall this is. For I remembered last night the name of Dumbarton. It is back in my papers in Edinburgh. For many years ago when you left on your crusade, I loaned you an advance—a considerable sum of money—that, when you returned, you would repay me. And gave me as collateral mortgage over all

²⁴ (Yellow Black) This sudden attitude from Purser, switching from a grateful and subservient first line to an aggressive and condescending second, just happened in the moment. While I had the idea that Purser was going to try to establish a power position over Hamish, having him taking such an abrasive approach came entirely from the double entendre Blue left with "banging half the night". But letting your own characters surprise you and learning through play (as opposed to deciding everything before play and then trying to force the scene a particular direction) is all part of the fun of story gaming.

these lands. So I think it is not the hall of ancestors, my lord, but rather of mine.”

bl **Hamish**

“Surely you speak too soon, merchant. I was not going to decline repaying these debts; it has merely taken me some time as I have been fighting on a holy crusade.”²⁵

yb **Purser**

“I... am a religious man, as much as you. And I shall allow you to start paying off this mortgage in trade. What I need is twelve strong-backed men to come and help me move my trade caravan back onto the main road. Have you such men?”

bl **Hamish**

“Yes, we have such men in these halls. I will not have you hold this over me, merchant, I will not have you extract your pound of flesh, ounce by ounce. I want to know fully upfront how I am to repay these debts.”

yb **Purser**

“Perhaps I will be able to consider it once my caravan is free; up until then it is my only concern. I will leave you to think on that. Also, I’m afraid your servants made a mistake in placing me in such a small room. I see that there is a far larger one in the east wing and so I have no doubt that you will instruct for my possessions to be taken there.”

wh McCullough enters at this point.

wh **McCullough**

“Good morrow and well met. (*seeing Pursuer*) Ah, good sir.”

yb **Purser**

“Sir.”

wh **McCullough**

“I would have your acquaintance.”

²⁵ (Yellow Black) Blue, as Hamish, could have just shouted for his guards and have Purser dragged away for his impudence. However, rather than being defensive about his character, he’s using the improv technique of ‘always accept’ and allowing the story to flow where it will. At the same time, by portraying Hamish as a man who does not instinctively reach for the sword to solve his problems, Blue is giving us a rounded, human character and not a pantomime villain.

bl **Hamish**
“This is a merchant by name of Henry Purser.”

wh **McCullough**
“A merchant. How nice.”

bl **Hamish**
“This is McCullough, my honoured guest.”

wh **McCullough**
“Indeed.”

yb **Purser**
“McCullough.”

wh **McCullough**
“Yes.”

yb **Purser**
“Oh.”

wh **McCullough**
“Yes.”

yb **Purser**
“Are you related to Lord McCullough of the Hebrides?”²⁶

wh **McCullough**
“Aye, that I am.”

yb **Purser**
“In that case I am double-pleased to make your acquaintance, my lord.”

wh **McCullough**
“And I shall be singly pleased to make yours.”²⁷

²⁶ (White) Well, he is now anyway. I knew the rake side of McCullough, but little else when he walked in to the room. I quickly decided that I would add a class snobbishness to him too, he was destined never to really be likeable so it felt right to make him properly objectionable when I got the chance.

²⁷ (Yellow Black) The speed and wordplay of White’s comebacks and the extent of his vocabulary awed me throughout!

yb **Purser**
“My business here, I’m sure, is well-known. May I ask yours? Are you a particular friend of...”

wh **McCullough**
“Why yes.”

bl **Hamish**
“Yes, of course, McCullough here is a suitor to my daughter, Mallory.”

wh **McCullough**
“I am, indeed, a suitor to the fine daughter of... Sir William.”

yb **Purser**
“How enchanting.”

wh **McCullough**
“She is.”

yb **Purser**
(to Hamish) “Perhaps, my lord, we may be able to discuss financing the wedding.”

bl **Hamish**
“Yes, perhaps we might at that.”

yb **Purser**
“In the mean time, have one of your comelier maids draw me a bath.”

yb Purser exits.

bl **Hamish**
“I will look upon that at once.” *(He sees Purser has left)* Damn that man! That merchant forgets his place.”

wh **McCullough**
“As most merchants do. What has he done to vex you so?”

bl **Hamish**
“Only come to collect on debts of which I knew not.”

wh **McCullough**
“Debts on your manor?”

bl **Hamish**
“He is not a man of noble birth. He is holding this debt above me; he is going to leverage every privilege, everything he can get from me. That man is going to ruin me and my reputation.”

wh **McCullough**
“That is such the way of these Lowlanders.”

bl **Hamish**
“If there was only some way I could be rid of this meddlesome merchant.”²⁸

wh **McCullough**
“Hmmm... I was just moving in the direction of the kitchens to check on possible repast. I will ensure a maid is sent to his chamber.”

wh McCullough exits.

bl Hamish exits.

rd Applause!

The players applaud.

yb Henry Purser, not long for this world I feel.

²⁸ (Yellow Black) Shades of Becket (Thomas) here...

Scene Four: The Stables

yb Right, it is the stables and Mallory Dumbarton, hearing about the visitors, has gone down to the stables to check out the horses, and there she meets Thomas Grange.

wh A comely young man.

yb A comely young man. Smooth cheeks.

wh Very fine bone profile.

bl Isn't he widely acknowledged as a master guide?

wh He would like to be.

yb Thomas Grange is already there, tending to the mules, and Mallory enters.

yb Mallory
"Oh, hello."

wh Thomas
"My lady, good to meet-"

yb Mallory
"Oh, don't bother with any of that. You're one of our guests, aren't you?"

wh Thomas
"Yes. Your father has been fine enough to put me and my master up. We were in some terrible weather last night."

yb Mallory
"Yes, he's some kind of dratted merchant isn't he."

wh Thomas
"My master Henry Purser, he has his er... abilities."

yb Mallory
"He's not a proper man, though, a proper man would go and fight in the East."

wh **Thomas**
“I imagine he should. But not every man can fight. If we all went to fight, who would be left to trade?”

yb **Mallory**
“Hmmm... I suppose. Have you gone to the Crusades?”²⁹

wh **Thomas**
“I’m afraid it is not my calling. I am a mere guide and traveller. I take people through these lands and down to the south.”

yb **Mallory**
“Oh, that’s a shame. I think you would look good with a cross upon your surcoat.”

wh **Thomas**
“I imagine it’s possible, but I really wish to be known as the best of the best for guiding the caravans around.”

yb **Mallory**
“Do you know horses?”

wh **Thomas**
“Yes, yes, naturally. Which is yours?”

wh Thomas points to the finest of the palfreys.

yb **Mallory**
“Yes, that’s Stephanie. I’ve looked after her myself ever since she was seven hands.”

wh **Thomas**
“You have done a wonderful job; she is a very fine mare.”

yb **Mallory**
“I comb her hair a hundred times every night. That’s the only way to make it so shiny. Your hair is very nice too.”³⁰

²⁹ (Yellow Black) Just playing Mallory’s motivation—her desire to marry a man who would take her on crusade—made it easy for me to know how she would act and react to others, venerating the martial and dismissing pretty much everything else. Even though she never actually spells out her motivation, no listener could doubt her obsession. This can be a nice way to play a character’s goal; you don’t have to say it, you just have to play them as seeing the world through the lens of their goal.

wh **Thomas**
“Why... why... what... Thank you, my lady.”

yb **Mallory**
“It needs some washing, though. You’ve been on the road too long. Which room are you staying in?”

wh **Thomas**
“I have lodgings above the stables, my lady, as befits my station.”

yb **Mallory**
“Perhaps we can change you to a room inside the castle.”

wh **Thomas**
“I imagine, as a master guide, that might be most proper.”³¹

yb **Mallory**
“A master guide would be very useful in the East, I’m sure. I shall make arrangements and when you are ensconced in your new room I will send a maid there so that she can wash that dirt out of your otherwise fine hair.”

wh **Thomas**
“Ah... well... yes... possibly... hmmm... yes.... maybe... I believe I hear my master calling!”

yb **Mallory**
“Oh?”

rd Enter Sir William in disguise upon a large horse.³²

yb Mallory gasps at the horse.

³⁰ (Yellow Black) I decided that Mallory would develop an interest in Thomas for a couple of reasons. Firstly, that McCullough’s motivation to marry Mallory would only be interesting if there were other contenders for Mallory’s affections (whether they were true contenders or not) and secondly to help challenge Thomas’s oath to never reveal that she is a woman. An oath that’s never challenged is no fun at all.

³¹ (White) As Thomas quickly ended up in the middle of the relationship tangle, keeping his boastful nature proved difficult and I’m not sure I did it that well. Thankfully, his problems gave him more than enough to deal with.

³² (Yellow Black) This scene was just about to fizzle out, but Red took the opportunity to raise the tension and move the story along by bringing Sir William—Mallory’s real father—into the scene. Suddenly, the scene was about more than just introducing another character, the plot is heading somewhere!

rd **Sr. William**
“Are these the stables?”

yb **Mallory**
“Your eye is keen, sir, if you can spy that these are the stables. I’m surprised you can see them, hidden behind all these horses.”

rd **Sr. William**
“My apologies, madam, I have very old eyes-”

yb **Mallory**
“I am not madam, I am my lady Mallory Dumbarton. Lady of this castle.”

rd **Sr. William**
“Yes, my lady. I am Sarek³³, a merchant of the East.”

yb **Mallory**
“Oh, a merchant. But from the East you say? You have travelled all this way, how long has it taken you? Which route did you take? How many horses did you lose on the way? I have so many questions.”

rd **Sr. William**
“I would be glad to answer them. But I have yet to present myself to your father to ask that I may remain here.”³⁴

yb **Mallory**
“Oh, that will be no trouble at all. We’re letting any old sort stay at the moment.”

wh **Thomas**
“Good sir, I will look to your horse. He has obviously travelled far and is a very fine steed. Thomas Grange, master guide. Your servant.”

bl Take my business card.

³³ (Red) Shakespeare, by way of Star Trek.

³⁴ (Yellow Black) This was a neat side-step by Red of a whole bunch of questions that would have been tedious to answer, which also pointed to a future scene and played appropriately with the customs and courtesy of the time period.

rd **Sr. William**
 (to Mallory) “Your father, I hear, is a great man.”

yb **Mallory**
 “Well, he’s a good father. As to his greatness, well, he went on the Crusades at least.”

rd **Sr. William**
 “Indeed, tell us more. What did he do?”

yb **Mallory**
 “That’s always been a bit frustrating. He went on the Crusades and I’ve asked and asked, but he never talks of them. It’s a terrible shame as I’m sure he has some great stories to tell.”³⁵

rd **Sr. William**
 “Perhaps there was no grandeur in the sights he saw nor the acts he was forced to commit. He went with idealistic reason and but encountered only death, destruction and murder.”

yb **Mallory**
 “Oh no, that can’t be it.”³⁶ I ask you, have you anything of the Saracen? A sword, a helmet, a head even?”

rd **Sr. William**
 “We have many goods from the East. I’m sure we have the odd weapon, but mainly I have brought silks and rare spices.”

yb **Mallory**
 “I have no interest in those things.”

wh **Thomas**
 “I would imagine also your horse, sir. This is the finest steed I’ve ever come across and most strong, though it would appear somewhat battleworn in places.”

³⁵ (Yellow Black) Mallory could have launched into the tall tales Hamish might have told as we alluded to in the set-up, but I felt that it would have been stealing a bit of another player’s thunder. Instead, I deferred it and helped point to a potential future scene.

³⁶ (Yellow Black) Mallory, seeing the world through the lens of her motivation, can’t possibly accept (yet) anything less than glorious about the crusades.

rd **Sr. William**
“I’ve had her for many years. She’s getting old, but she continues as my faithful steed.”

yb **Mallory**
“It’s a good horse. Is it Frankish?”

rd **Sr. William**
“No, it is Arabian.”

yb **Mallory**
“Oh, those are no good at all. Too small. It’s very big for an Arabian.”

rd I don’t know anything about horses.

wh **Thomas**
“It looks to me as possibly a cross. I had heard that some of the crusaders had bred Arabian Frankish cross.”^{37/38}

yb **Mallory**
“A mongrel? No!”

wh **Thomas**
“No, no, my lady, not a mongrel. Designed for the speed and intelligence of the Arabian and yet bred with the longevity and stamina of the Frankish. It adds to its size and makes it much stronger to carry.”

yb **Mallory**
“I cannot judge for myself until I see their teeth.”

rd **Sr. William**
“Be my guest, my lady.”

yb **Mallory**
“It is very old. Too old, but if she has been a faithful mount then we must always honour her. We shall find a stable for her next to Stephanie.”

³⁷ (Yellow Black) White rides to the rescue as we hit a conversational stumbling block.

³⁸ (White) Red had been caught a bit with the horse talk so I thought it best to keep the conversation going by making both of them right. I’ve no idea if there was any truth in it, but you can do a lot by just sticking to your convictions.

rd **Sr. William**
“I am greatly honoured, my lady, now if you will bid me depart-”

yb Stephanie is the name of Mallory’s mother by the way.³⁹

rd **Sr. William**
“I will go and present myself to your father. Good day, my lady.”

yb **Mallory**
“Good day.”

rd Sir William exits.

yb **Mallory**
“Perhaps I shall see him this evening. And perhaps I will see you too, sir, looking rather better.”

wh **Thomas**
“I’m sure we will bump into each other. It is a small but fine castle. Ah, once more I hear my master calling.”

wh Exit Thomas.

yb Exit Mallory. I really hope that was someone’s vision of her.

The players applaud.

yb Another scene!

bl Are we going to do the scene of “Sarek” meeting “Sir William”?
Are we going to do that now or do we want to do another scene first?

yb I think we need another scene first. Who haven’t we seen yet?

rd We haven’t had Mary.

wh I think it’s only Mary we haven’t seen.

rd Well, there’s some sponging that needs to be done.

yb Shall we do that scene?

³⁹ (Yellow Black) This was a bit of a whim of the moment, starting to point towards Mallory’s oath.

wh Mary and Thomas?

rd I was going to say Mary and Mallory. Them plotting.

yb I see what you mean. Grab the skull and pitch it.

Act II

Scene Five: Mallory's chamber

rd This is in Mallory's boudoir and Mary is making the bed and doing her chores. Mallory enters.

yb Just to add a bit more information about her boudoir. It's quite spartan for a girl of her age; there's no finery or drapery or mirrors. There is, however, a... I forget what it's called, it's what the knights use for training. It's a wooden man with a sword and a shield. Mallory is there and she's sparring with this wooden target.

wh I'd like to throw in an extra as well. Alice, a lower maid, is blacking the fireplace.⁴⁰⁴¹

yb Mallory
"Take that! Ah! Take that! Yes! You who defy the word of our Lord! Gah!"

rd Mary
"My lady, you said that you had an errand for me."

yb Mallory
"What? Mary, yes, you are a dear. You know our new visitors?"

rd Mary
"Indeed, my lady."

yb Mallory
"There is a young man who is in a frightful state amongst them. He goes by the name Thomas Grange, though he should really be called Thomas Birdsnest given the state of his hair. Though it is very fine hair, but in a terrible state."

⁴⁰ (Yellow Black) *Forsooth!* allows you to add 'extras' into any scene where one of your characters isn't already involved. They're great tools through which to help other players, while at the same time allowing you to sit back and relax in the scene knowing that you're not the star.

⁴¹ (White) I'm still aware we're shy of women in the game, at least ones who are out as women, and I'm playing a womaniser. So I thought adding in an extra here would be good foreshadowing should another female character make sense later on.

wh Alice
“I think I saw him this morning. Is he the young man with the merchant?”⁴²

yb Mallory
“Yes, he’s exactly that. The young man who came in with the merchant.”

rd Mary
“And is he high-born?”

yb Mallory
“High-born. Well, he is quite tall.”

rd Mary
“Is he handsome?”

yb Mallory
“Mayhaps in a certain light. Mayhaps you should go there and tell me yourself.⁴³ I always have trusted your judgment in these things.”

rd Mary
“Oh, thank you, my lady. I will go there straightaway.”

yb Mallory
“After all, it was you who said that McCullough was a generous and honourable man.”

rd Mary
“Oh, but he is. And so dashing. But you have so many potential suitors. It is such a privilege and an honour. It must be so exciting for you.”

wh Alice
“I’ve heard that McCullough is ever the gentleman. That’s the word down in the sculleries.”

⁴² (Yellow Black) White, having spotted the similarities of the two groups of merchants, is starting to lay the groundwork for the resulting confusion.

⁴³ (Yellow Black) I was unsure as to how to play Mallory here. She is obviously interested in Thomas, but—given that she knows she’s intended for McCullough—I didn’t feel comfortable having her expressing that attraction. As it was, this indecision fitted in neatly with the objective to send Mary to bathe him.

yb **Mallory**
“While a lady may only ever take one meal, there may be plenty of courses in it.”

rd **Mary**
“Indeed, my lady, do you have any special instructions for me?”

yb **Mallory**
“Yes, this young man who came in with the merchant, ensure that you go and bathe him personally and straighten out his hair. I want him looking as best as he can do. Do it personally I say and do not brook any of his objections for he is so bashful as young men often are.”⁴⁴

rd **Mary**
“I shall be careful to look past his modesty.”

yb **Mallory**
“Bathe him thoroughly, I will not have him dragging the stink of the wild into the castle. Daddy will not allow it.”

rd **Mary**
“No, my lady, I will cleanse him thoroughly. If I may take my leave?”

wh **Alice**
“Would you like me to show you to his room? I recall where he was placed.”

rd **Mary**
“Certainly.”

wh **Alice**
“Anything to get out of that room. The way she’s swinging that sword around fair makes me tremble.”

yb Exit everyone.

⁴⁴ (Yellow Black) I was pushing here for a future scene where Mary would try to get Thomas to disrobe (and thereby break her oath) and give Mary some ammunition at the same time to prevent Thomas simply refusing her.

wh Okay, Alice will show Mary to Warwick's room, I believe that he was a young man who came in with a merchant.⁴⁵

rd Do we want to have that scene now?

wh Well, I think that closes the scene we've just done.

The players applaud.

rd I can't applaud for Alice, can I?

wh No, Alice was an extra.

bl I want to know what's going on with McCullough and Henry Purser as well.

wh Yes, because McCullough was going to go and send a chambermaid to bathe Henry Purser.

rd Mallory sent to maid to bathe Thomas, but actually Warwick.

yb I can't believe the bathing! It's gone all over the place.

wh Thomas is going to bathe herself rapidly so that, should anyone appear, she doesn't need anything.⁴⁶

yb Let's start throwing some of these into the centre. 'Someone to bathe Purser'.

rd I think "bathe" should be in inverted commas there. I think all the bathes are like that.

⁴⁵ (White) It may be a bit sneaky, but I've put off Thomas being discovered here. Naturally I want Thomas discovered, (what's a secret if it doesn't come out somewhere along the line?) but not too soon.

⁴⁶ (Yellow Black) White's quite adroitly shifted the threat to Thomas's oath onto another target. In the early stages of a story, it's great to add extra complications and confusion like that, just to help things keep going forward.

Scene Six: The Guest Quarters

yb Another scene. We do need to have Sir William meeting Hamish.

wh Can you frame a scene you're not in?

yb Yes, you can frame what you like.⁴⁷

wh In which case, I would like to see Mary arriving at Warwick's room to follow Mallory's instructions. The scene is that Warwick has just finished putting away his possessions as the assistant to Sarek the merchant and Alice has left Mary at his door.

bl Warwick
(singing to himself) "Onward Christian soldiers marching as to war..."

rd Mary knocks at the door.

rd Mary
"My lord."

bl Warwick
"Hello there. Hadn't expected a maid."

rd Mary
"I have been instructed by my lady to assist you in your ablutions."

bl Warwick
"That's most irregular. I bathed but two days ago."

rd Mary
"Ah, but my lady insists. She likes to ensure that all the young men of the castle are well-scrubbed before they are presented to her father."

⁴⁷ (Yellow Black) I don't actually recall whether *Forsooth!* specifies whether you can frame a scene without your character. I don't have a problem with it so long as it isn't used maliciously to place characters in situations with which their players aren't comfortable.

bl Warwick
“But... while you’re here? Me in front of you? Surely that’s indecent.”

rd Mary
“I can assure you that it’s very common in our part of bonnie Scotland.”

bl Warwick
“It’s not my custom. I’ll have you know that I’m a chaste man.”

rd Mary
“I’m sure you are. But my lady insists. She wants to ensure that your body is as clean as your spirit.”

bl Warwick
“Please, please, girl, get your hands off my surcoat if you would.”⁴⁸

rd Mary
“I should tell you, sir, that my lady has taken quite a shine to you, and I believe that she is smitten.”

bl Warwick
“I’m flattered, of course, but this isn’t the proper thing.”

rd Mary
“All I can say is that we do this all the time, my lady and myself, she wants to ensure that all her suitors are experienced in more than just the ways of courtly love.”

yb Suitors?

bl Line!

yb I suppose if it would be mortal offence, it is better to maintain our cover.

⁴⁸ (Yellow Black) Blue here neatly maintains his refusal as his character, but accepts and escalates the scene as a player all the while maintaining his character’s voice. Suddenly, a ‘blocked’ conversation where neither character wishes to give ground is brought alive because he has painted the picture that Mary is continuing to undress Warwick heedless of his objections.

bl Warwick
“I suppose if it would be mortal offence, it is better to maintain our cover. Even if that should mean I am... uncovered.”

bl Warwick crosses himself.

White knocks on the table.

rd Mary
“Come, my lord.”

wh McCullough
“I say?”⁴⁹

bl Warwick
“Yes?”

wh McCullough
“Ah, someone is present.”

bl Warwick
“Do not enter! Do not enter!”

wh McCullough
“Why forever not? Oh, I see. I have caught you in a state of undress. Mary? Hello.”

rd Mary
“My Lord McCullough.”

wh McCullough
“Good tidings to you and your fine upstanding young gentleman. I salute you, sir.”

rd Mary
“I am merely assisting in his ablutions.”

wh McCullough
“I see, well, I had hoped to discuss some matters of merchanting with you, but I see that you are already engaged. I shall return anon. Good day to you, sir.”

⁴⁹ (Yellow Black) Another fine introduction of another character to escalate a scene.

bl Warwick
 “Good day to you too.”

wh McCullough
 “I doubt as good as yours.”

wh McCullough exits.

rd Mary
 “He too was resistant at first, but I have given him a proper
 scrubbing.”

yb End scene. You can’t carry on after that. Applause!

The players applaud.

Scene Seven: The Grand Hall

- yb* Another scene. Shall we do the big confrontation?
- rd* Okay, Sir William dressed as Sarek the merchant enters the great hall in which Hamish the pretend Sir William is sitting. Shall we put Henry Purser in there as well?
- yb* I think he might enter mid-scene.
- rd* I was going to say that maybe Warwick should be there, but that would be impossible.
- rd* **Sr. William**
I enter, dressed in my splendid robes, looking very grandiose.
- bl* **Hamish**
“Welcome, Sirrit? Sirric?”
- rd* **Sr. William**
“Sarek, my lord.”
- bl* **Hamish**
“Oh yes, welcome Sarek.”
- rd* **Sr. William**
“I bring you greetings from fine Jerusalem, where of course you spent many years yourself.”
- bl* **Hamish**
“Yes, yes, I know Jerusalem incredibly well.”
- rd* **Sr. William**
“Word of Sir William and his great acts of heroism travel throughout the Holy Land.”
- bl* **Hamish**
“Please, please, I don’t like to speak of it.”
- yb* I’d like to play the role of the onlookers, whatever court Hamish has, whatever hangers-on he has around him. This meeting has to be in public.

bl **Hamish**
“My fellows will tell you that I am a modest man and that I do not like to boast of what I’ve achieved.”

rd **Sr. William**
“Surely this is false modesty, my lord, your people have a right to know of your acts of valour, keeping the Christian world safe from the onslaught of the heathen.”

bl **Hamish**
“Yes, it’s true, I’ve killed many heathen. But I’m a different man now. I’ve changed. I have no wish to bore these people.”

yb At this point the mob make known that actually they’d quite like to hear some stories of your heroism, so there are some murmurs of discontent.

bl **Hamish**
“I suppose it would not hurt to regale one tale, perhaps.”

yb **Onlookers**
“Yes! A tale! A tale of heroism!”

bl **Hamish**
“You may have heard of my exploits at the siege of Damascus.”

yb **Onlookers**
“Tell us more!”

bl **Hamish**
“For fourteen days we were camped out on the city walls. The sun never sets in the desert, of course, so we had fourteen days of perfect sunlight with which to despatch the heathens who would throw themselves against the walls, wave after wave. I myself slayed seven... hundred... personally. Yes.”

yb **Onlookers**
“Such exploits!”

rd **Sr. William**
“This is truly grand. In fact, just as recently as five years ago, I heard of your encounter in...” I don’t know anywhere.

wh Don’t worry about it; Hamish doesn’t have a clue either.

yb Antioch.

rd **Sr. William**
“In Antioch.”

bl **Hamish**
“Err... yes. And what did you hear of my exploits in Antioch?”

rd **Sr. William**
“Just that you had liberated it from the cruel oppressor and rescued all the Christians being slaughtered there. And that it was a very bloody battle.”

bl **Hamish**
“Yes, it was one of the bloodiest of the entire crusade.”

rd **Sr. William**
“And yet you managed to return from the East so soon after. Just those five short years ago.”

yb Five years?

wh It would only take about three months to get back, but I think the point is that Hamish has been in place for more than five years.

bl **Hamish**
“You cannot believe every rumour you hear. Your tales are confused for I have been in my seat here for more than ten years now.”

rd **Sr. William**
“It must be my mistake. Perhaps an imposter taking your name.”

yb The mob gasps in outrage. “No!”

bl **Hamish**
“What insane dreams do you babble?”

rd **Sr. William**
“Merely the way rumours begin.”

- bl* **Hamish**
“Such a device is nothing more than a playwright’s fancy! And an implausible one at that!”⁵⁰
- rd* **Sr. William**
“You are, of course, correct. Only a truly dishonourable man would seek to slander such a noble lord as you.”
- yb* **Onlookers**
“Our noble lord! Our noble crusading lord!”
- bl* **Hamish**
“Yes. And such a despicable villain should meet his just end. I will not brook deception in this house.”
- rd* **Sr. William**
“I would do the same. I am merely here in passing, I have brought with me silks and great riches from the East. I would seek to sell these fine wares across the north. A caravan of great wealth. More than you could imagine.”
- bl* **Hamish**
“Please, you forget to whom you speak. You do not need to lecture me of the wealth of the East.”
- rd* **Sr. William**
“Of course, my words were merely meant to say that there is wealth here that might, for instance, settle all debts. That would set a man up until the end of days. I am keen to have the opportunity to settle my wealth.”
- bl* **Hamish**
“Ah, Sarek. I think we may be able to do business together. Ensure your wagons are brought into the courtyard and are well-secured. I would hate to see any acts of further villainy.”
- yb* **Onlookers**
“Further villainy?”
- bl* **Hamish**
“I mean, villainy.”

⁵⁰ (Yellow Black) Oh, the lampshading...

rd **Sr. William**
“I will, my lord. I will ensure that they are stabled and secured in the courtyard. You will not mind if I retain my guard? Especially with this other merchant I hear of?”

bl **Hamish**
“Don’t you trust a word that Purser says to you. That man is not men like us. He is not a man of good-standing. He is not a man of any integrity. I understand that the merchant’s profession is often slandered, but he is one deserving of it all. Do not tell him I told you this, but he is not one to be trusted, Sarek. I would not trust him in any fair dealing. And do not, under any circumstances, believe a word that he tells you about me.”

rd **Sr. William**
“I shall respect you in all things. You are playing as clear and honest a part as I am myself. I would not wish to hear the name of Sir William Dumbarton taken any further in vain. With your leave, I shall bring my caravan into the castle’s walls. Good day.”

rd Sir William exits.

bl Hamish exits.

wh Scene then.

The players applaud.

At this point, the players recapped the story so far and identified two main plot strands: Mallory’s marriage and the ownership of the barony of Dumbarton.⁵¹

yb For the ownership of the barony, Purser has the mortgage, Hamish actually has occupation, and Sir William has the right.

rd And the money to pay off the mortgage.

yb So, for Mallory’s marriage: we have McCullough as her suitor, but she’s taken a fancy to Thomas Grange, and Warwick—

⁵¹ (Yellow Black) I find it very helpful, especially in games with so many characters flying around as *Forsooth!* to have the occasional recap and also to talk about what ‘future’ scenes have been previously established. Having clear markers to work towards helps focus players towards stuff they want their characters to do before and what can wait until after.

mistakenly—has been told that she’s wants him as a suitor as well. And there is a dinner coming up.⁵²

bl How many characters can we get around the dinner table? And how awkward is it going to be?

rd Well, there are two ends to the table. We can have a separate scene at each end of the table.

bl Oh, could we do that? A high table with all the noble born characters and a low table for the rest?

yb How would that work? The low table would be...

wh Thomas, Warwick, Purser, Sarek.

yb Does that work?

wh Yeah. And on high table you have McCullough, Hamish, Mallory.

rd And Mary can serve them.

wh I have a scene I want to put in before dinner.

yb Great. So we’re heading towards a dinner as part of the marriage thread. For the ownership of the barony, what I can see coming for Purser is that he’s aghast that there’s another merchant and we need Sir William to start putting together some plan of action. Does Hamish know he’s under threat?

bl The big threat that Hamish knows about at the moment is the mortgage.

wh It sounds like he’s trying to kill Sarek to get the money to pay off Purser. Or just kill Purser.

yb There’s got to be a reason why he can’t just do that.⁵³

⁵² (Yellow Black) I originally alluded to the dinner as Mallory as an excuse to get someone to wash Thomas, but the scene ended up being the centrepiece of the middle of our story.

⁵³ (Yellow Black) A note for Purser’s next scene. Offing Purser would be a fair plot development, but too convenient for Hamish unless there was a price attached.

rd To kill... or to kill someone else?

wh I may well soliloquise the death of Purser as McCullough the next time I'm in the scene.

rd Of course, there's nothing wrong with having both the mortgage and the money.

bl It's win-win for Hamish.

yb Right, another scene.

Scene Eight: The Stables

wh I'm proposing a scene in the stables. It will have Sarek, Thomas and Warwick in it. A clean and polished Thomas and a clean and polished Warwick. I'm suggesting that initially they're discussing just how weird the castle is. They're all visitors. They're all merchant-linked. Purser may or may not turn up. Partly this is a chance for Warwick to say 'You'll never believe what happened to me last night'.

bl That was exactly what I was going to start with.

wh Great, so if you want to kick off with that with Sarek and I'll bring Thomas in at an appropriate point.

yb I'm actually going to use an incidental character in this one.

wh Cool.

bl **Warwick**
"My lord, you'll never guess what happened to me last night. There was this girl, Mary, she came to my chambers. Well, can I say, I am no longer a chaste man."

rd **Sr. William**
"I should be outraged and disgusted, but we have seen so much battle, so much death, all I can do is take happiness from your joy. You are like a son to me."

bl **Warwick**
"My lord, she did things I could never have before imagined, it was every unimaginable perversion, it was... it was... it was rather pleasant actually."

rd **Sr. William**
"I hope you do not think that I was chaste my entire time in the East. It would be remiss of me to judge you too harshly."

yb At that point, there is a chill wind that blows through the stables, billowing the silks of your caravan.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ (Yellow Black) In my brain, naming Mallory's horse Stephanie after her dead mother associated the mother with the stables. When we returned there it reminded me to bring her back in. Red's lines gave me the perfect opportunity to bring her in.

rd Uh oh... it's the wife.

rd **Sr. William**
“Did you feel that?”

wh Thomas, unbeknownst to you, has been grooming a horse nearby and now joins you.

wh **Thomas**
“It’s definitely the strangest of places I have ever been. Only yesterday, the lady of the house fair propositioned me and talked of having me bathed.”

bl **Warwick**
“You as well? Do you think they extend this hospitality to everyone who comes through their doors?”

wh **Thomas**
“To hear what happened to you, fair worries me to the core.”

rd **Sr. William**
“Are you besmirching the lady of this house? Are you alleging that she propositioned you?!”

wh **Thomas**
“Perhaps I shouldn’t say as far as propositioned, but yes she did! It’s amazing! I really was speechless. I fair think that, had I not invented reason to depart in haste, then she might have jumped my bones right on this very spot.”

rd **Sr. William**
“I warn you to hold your tongue.”

wh **Thomas**
“For why?”

yb At this point, Stephanie the horse brays very loudly at this besmirching of Mallory’s honour.

rd **Sr. William**
“Fair Mallory is known throughout the land as nothing but a chaste and noble lady.”

wh **Thomas**
“The lady I saw yesterday was chasing not chaste (*chay-sed*).”⁵⁵

rd I slap you across the face.

wh I let out a slight squeal.

rd **Sr. William**
“How dare you, man? I will not have you speak against this fair maiden in such a way.”

wh **Thomas**
“Good merchant, I only speak of what happened. Please. There is no need to strike me. For sure I will speak of this no more if words of this lady’s passions offend you.”

rd **Sr. William**
“Speak no more these foul lies.”

wh **Thomas**
“I assure you that the words stuck in my mouth and I took my leave. I did not know. Are you considering her yourself?”⁵⁶

yb At that point, all the horses cry “Naaaaaaay!”

bl “Naaaaaaay!”

yb “Naaaaaaay!”

rd **Sr. William**
“I am aghast at you, man. How can you have such a fine visage and so foul a heart?”

wh **Thomas**
“Please, please, sir, do not misrepresent me. She is the lady of the house and high-born.”

bl **Warwick**
“Do you not know to whom you speak? Why this is-!” Warwick smacks his hand over his own mouth to prevent him saying more.

⁵⁵ (White) I have decided that Thomas needs to make sure he's seen as 'one of the lads' and so some macho banter would make sense. The fact that I can push the secret identity of William at the same time was too good an opportunity not to take.

⁵⁶ (Yellow Black) White turns it up to eleven on Sir William.

wh **Thomas**
“To Sarek the merchant I believe? I heard that you men of the East are all for...”

bl **Warwick**
“This is not a man of the East. This is not Sarek the merchant. Why this... this...”

rd **Sr. William**
“Speak mindfully, my squire.”

bl **Warwick**
“But, my lord.”

rd **Sr. William**
“I will have no more of this. I am to prepare myself for this evening. I shall leave.”

rd Exit Sir William.

wh **Thomas**
“Your master is the strangest of merchants I have ever encountered. My current master, Henry Purser, if my lady were to offer herself to him, he would not only take her with both hands and foul thrust, but he would then tell everyone of it.”

bl **Warwick**
“No, no, I cannot have it.”

wh **Thomas**
“Few merchants have I guided who would not do the same. Is it to do with his religion?”

bl **Warwick**
“No, no, he’s not a merchant. He’s Sir William Dumbarton!”

wh **Thomas**
“But... but...”

bl **Warwick**
“And you speak of his daughter! Think how you offended him, man.”

wh **Thomas**
“If that, as you say, is true then surely I must go and broker apologies. I did not realise... I have seen Sir William and he looks nothing like this gentleman.”

bl **Warwick**
“It is a necessary deception. True that in most wars that we fight with chivalry and honour, facing our enemy, straight on, in a truthful way. But there are times when discretion is necessary.”

wh **Thomas**
“Lies.”

bl **Warwick**
“Not lies, no. Not lies as such.”

wh **Thomas**
“Untruths, misdirection.”

bl **Warwick**
“Tactics, perhaps...”

wh **Thomas**
“Deception and villainy.”

bl **Warwick**
“No! No! Never those. Never those at all.”

wh **Thomas**
“I’m sorry; I have a day for misunderstanding.”⁵⁷

bl **Warwick**
“In truth, it vexes me. While it seemed opportune to enter the castle in disguise, I find this veil that we have pulled over ourselves—while it has had some benefits—it is most displeasing to my honour. My lord and I were honourable knights and this has placed us in such a bizarre predicament that I do not know what to do. Would you swear to me that you won’t reveal this to any other?”

⁵⁷ (White) To follow this up by pushing Warwick’s oath was fantastic. Back in the set-up the idea of two honest characters supporting each other felt very ripe for story and it was great to see that coming out.

wh **Thomas**
“I will do my best to always keep it a secret. I will not say to any other, but I will apologise to your master... discreetly.”

bl **Warwick**
“You seem like a good man, a man with nothing to hide, a trustworthy sort if I am any judge of character.”

wh **Thomas**
“Yes, yes, that I am. A good man with nothing to hide. Absolutely nothing.”

yb Enter Mallory at that point.

yb **Mallory**
“Stephanie? Stephanie! Oh, what’s happened to all the horses? What have you two done?”

wh **Thomas**
“My lady, we have done nothing. They were a-fear’d by a foul wind; we did what we could to calm them.”

yb **Mallory**
“A what?”

wh **Thomas**
“It was most strange as, to a horse, they all took unrest at the same moment. I have only seen such a thing once before on a blighted heath I dare not speak of.”

yb **Mallory**
“A foul wind? But there is no wind today.”

wh **Thomas**
“No, indeed.”

bl **Warwick**
“I saw it too, my lady, it was a most curious thing.”

yb **Mallory**
“Oh, well, perhaps we should speak no more of it.⁵⁸ You! Master

⁵⁸ (Yellow Black) Protecting Mallory’s oath not to reveal the ghosts, I desperately cast around for a way to change the subject and found one...

Thomas Grange, what happened to your face? You have been struck, man!”

wh **Thomas**
“Well, yes, for something I unwittingly said.”

yb **Mallory**
“Who struck you? Tell me true.”

wh **Thomas**
“I was... having a... slight altercation over the keeping of the horses with this gentleman here. But everything is well now.”

yb **Mallory**
“This gentleman here struck you?”

bl Warwick’s words are caught in his throat as he is torn between protecting his lord and the truth.

yb **Mallory**
“Confirm it, sir, or I shall have you cast out of this house as one who stands mute!”

Blue crosses out Warwick’s oath never to tell a lie.

bl **Warwick**
“I cannot tell a lie, lady, it was me. I struck him, yes.”³⁹

yb **Mallory**
“Ah, condemned by your own mouth. Sir, you are no longer welcome.”

wh **Thomas**
“No, no, please, my lady, please. I spoke out of turn, not realising what I was saying. I was justly struck and it is of no importance.”

yb **Mallory**
“Thomas, you are too good. *(to Warwick)* You be gone, sir. Be gone.”

³⁹ (Yellow Black) Oaths are there to be challenged and sometimes broken. There’s a reason *Forsooth!* has two characters win, one whose oath held and one whose was broken, so that no player ever puts defending their oath above the story. Here, Blue lets his oath go and improved the story by it.

bl Warwick
“Yes, my lady.”

bl Exit Warwick.

yb Mallory
“Now, Thomas, I have made it my duty to put aside such ointments and unguents as befitting any man struck in anger. You will come with me at once to my chamber and I will anoint you.”

wh Thomas
“Yes, my lady.”

yb Exit Mallory.

wh Exit Thomas.

The players applaud.

yb Three for Warwick there.

wh Thomas couldn't let her know that it was Sir William and he had to say someone did it.

yb Yeah! It was beautiful. So Warwick reveals Sir William's identity to Thomas. Warwick lies to Mallory to protect his master and is banished from the castle.

wh Though still in his guise as the merchant's helper, because I assume that you're not calling yourself Warwick.

bl He probably is actually. This guy.

wh “We should go in disguise, my lord, you as Sarek and I... as Warwick.”

rd It's a common name.

yb It's probably fine. He left at age twelve and presumably Hamish has been quite thorough about getting rid of anyone who was around back then. Okay, another scene.

wh We haven't seen Henry for a while.

yb That's okay, though. Henry's next step is to go to Hamish and demand that he impound Sarek's wagons. Do we want that as a scene or do we want to have something else first?

rd I was just thinking that it was probably time for a soliloquy.

wh Do you need to be in a scene before you can soliloquise?

yb No, you can just pick up the skull and say "I'm doing a soliloquy."

rd I was thinking it would be immediately after that last scene. Sir William is going to go back and start brushing down Stephanie.

rd **Sr. William**

"Oh, what a situation I find myself in. Haunted by the sins of my past, by the streams of blood in which I killed so many. At the time, I thought it honourable and now I regret... I cannot even look at a weapon. If there was one thing that the crusades taught me it is whether you are high or low born, you bleed just the same. Surely the false divisions between us is nothing but a deception, as grand and deep a deception as my villainous usurper is engaging in. What can I do to remove him? Without violence, without force, how can I remove him? There must be an honourable. Then when I see my daughter, so fair a maiden, I worry if she herself has become corrupted under the misguided stewardship of my usurper. Should I admit to her who I am? Would she believe me? I am nothing but a damned man. I can see no way through this. Even having forsworn violence, all I can see is death and destruction ahead. I can see no honourable way of ending this great evil in the land of my fathers."

yb Sounds like the end of an act.

wh Can I suggest that, as Sir William finishes his thoughts, he sees the gap in the stables where Warwick's horse was.

rd Okay, he then reacts. He looks shocked and walks in the opposite direction than he was.

The players applaud.

yb Tick your soliloquy off and mechanically...?

rd I was foreshadowing the death of Sir William. Can I do that?

yb Yeah, certainly. You can kill yourself at any time, but here you're opening yourself up...

rd I'm making it easier for someone else to murder me. It's a bit risky.

yb That's an understatement.

rd I've got to advance the plot before I'm murdered.

yb I see what you mean. Another scene.

wh Is there a need for Purser to push Hamish before dinner?

yb Yes, so let's do that one.

Act III

Scene Nine: The Grand Hall

wh In which case can we start that scene with Hamish talking to McCullough. Just so we can give McCullough a chance to foreshadow Purser's death.

bl Or I can use Hamish's soliloquy to do it.

wh I'm fine to do it.

wh McCullough
"Sir William, the castle is so full with two sets of merchants here. One can barely walk the corridors without being overseen."

bl Hamish
"I wonder if we're running a manor house or a market place."

wh McCullough
"It is so gauche. Do you have any idea when these lowborn will be likely to leave us to our normal pursuits?"

bl Hamish
"Oh, mark my words, McCullough. I'm pretty sure that they will be soon on their way. In fact, I have a certainty that one of them will be dispatched fairly soon."

wh McCullough
"You have interesting plans afoot?"

bl Hamish
"This morning I woke vexed from the rapping on my portal and now I find that the day has progressed well. Things are moving smoothly; you are ready to marry my daughter?"

wh McCullough
"Well, indeed, yes."

bl Hamish
"And now what was the threat of a vile merchant could resolve itself quite nicely."

wh **McCullough**
“I think you look upon the fine wealth that the Moor has brought.”

bl **Hamish**
“Indeed I do. Sarek—deprived of his wealth—is a man lost on foreign shores and easily rid of. Not a threat at all. There is only one other merchant in the way and if that merchant could be removed in some manner then I would take all.”

wh **McCullough**
(gesturing to his blade) “In this manner perhaps.”

yb Purser enters, dressed for dinner.

yb **Purser**
“My lord Sir William, I have urgent business with you.”

bl **Hamish**
“Really, Purser? What is it you require now?”

yb **Purser**
“I have heard from a reliable source that there is a second group of merchants in the castle at this very moment.”

bl **Hamish**
“Yes.”

yb **Purser**
“Merchants from the Levant. Merchants who are carrying exotic materials.”

bl **Hamish**
“Feeling threatened, Purser?”

yb **Purser**
“All I can say is that this hitherto decrepit and ruined castle can be nothing less than a second Rome, for all roads seem to lead here!”

wh At this point, McCullough will soliloquise. The spotlight goes on him as he speaks his thoughts to the audience.

- wh* **McCullough**
“Verily this lowborn is the most vapid and verminous of men. He appears and is upset by the simplest of things coming, like the arrival of a wealthy merchant. He is quite easy for me to dispatch with sword or dagger and I can see that, at some time, either may need to be bloodied.”
- wh* Lights come up.
- yb* Tick off your soliloquy, I’ll shade in the box showing that Purser’s death has been foreshadowed.
- yb* **Purser**
“I will have your word—as further payment on my mortgage—that this man’s cargo is locked here until my merchant train gets at least two days head start on him.”
- bl* **Hamish**
“Really, Purser? But I thought that you merchants were so interested in good, honest trade. A bit of healthy competition, Purser?”
- wh* **McCullough**
“I have always heard that the merchants when they do deign to come to our court mention competition as being a most important thing for them. Whenever they are scurrying around asking for favour.”
- yb* **Purser**
“Competition is good in its place, but I say you must impound this man’s caravan not for me... but for our country. Scotland. For it is important that the wealth of mercantilism stay with Scottish merchants and not flow out to the East.”
- bl* **Hamish**
“For once in your life, Purser, you speak with a grain of sense.”
- yb* **Purser**
“Oh?”
- wh* **McCullough**
“I believe it has to happen occasionally.”

bl **Hamish**
“Sarek is indeed a foreign merchant and I should indeed impound his goods... in the name of Scotland.”

wh **McCullough**
“As requested by the fine merchant, Henry Purser.”

bl **Hamish**
“Yes.”

wh **McCullough**
“Indeed. I will quite happily witness that.”

yb **Purser**
“Excellent. It is done then.”

wh **McCullough**
“As good as.”

yb Can Purser have a private word with Hamish?

wh **McCullough**
“I believe people will be arriving at top table, I will see if your daughter is already there.”

wh McCullough exits.

yb **Purser**
“One final thought for you, my good lord. It occurs to me, as it may well have occurred to you, that if you may impound one merchant’s goods then you may as easily impound another’s. And that here in your domain more evils may befall than necessary and that all our goods may be taken.”

bl **Hamish**
“Oh, Purser, spare me your petty worries. Sarek is a foreigner and it would be my national duty to impound his goods. I’m not going to withhold the trading rights of a respected man of this nation.”

yb **Purser**
“Well, think not. If such a thought, heaven forbid, should occur... be sure that—if I do not return from these lands—then the mortgage on your estate will be automatically exercised. And it

will not be merchants who will come to exercise it, it will be the King of Scotland, for whom do you think he owes money to? Just a thought for you to consider if you wish to keep your realm long if you attempt to extinguish your mortgage through blood. A thought. And now to dinner. I look forward to what you have had prepared for us.”

bl **Hamish**
“Yes. Skewered pig, I think.”

yb Exit Purser.

bl Exit Hamish.

The players applaud.

Scene Ten: The corridor outside Mallory's chamber

- rd* I have a scene. Sir William confronts Mallory. This is in a corridor, where he catches her before dinner.
- wh* Do we need a scene where Thomas apologies to Sir William or can we take it as read?
- rd* I was taking it as read.
- yb* Or we could alternatively have Thomas extracting himself from Mallory's chamber.⁶⁰
- rd* Okay, let's start the scene with Mallory and Thomas entering the corridor together.
- yb* My thought would be that whatever anointing has happened and that Thomas is desperately escaping from her boudoir.
- rd* Sir William could be coming along the corridor to see Mallory just as Thomas leaves.
- yb* Okay.
- yb* **Mallory**
"No, I must insist. I must inspect you for wounds!"
- wh* **Thomas**
"My lady, I beg, you have anointed everywhere that you can see. I was not struck anywhere else. Honestly, I really could not..."
- yb* **Mallory**
"The health of a man's chest is really most important. Allow me."
Mallory attempts again to remove Thomas's shirt.
- rd* Sir William enters.
- wh* **Thomas**
"Honestly... I... I... I... oh, good sir, you save me. I am utterly indebted and give you my heartfelt and total apologies. If you will,

⁶⁰ (White) This suggestion helped me a lot, the idea that Thomas could have apologised to Sir William in the background seemed like it would rob him of some important story.

my lady, I really must thank you for the ointment where I was struck and more for not feeling the need to put it anywhere else.”

wh Thomas closes the door on Mallory.

wh Thomas
“I bid you farewell and good favour, sir.”

rd Sr. William
“I would have a word with you, man. If I had not taken a vow against violence I would strike you down!”

wh Thomas
“Good sir, knowing who you are, truly, I can do nothing but apologise. Believe me there was nothing meant but idle merchant banter and, had I realised, in no way would I have ever have attempted to besmirch...”

rd Sr. William
“You are aware of the truth of my situation?”

wh Thomas
“Ere he was banished by your daughter your squire gave explanation.”

rd Sr. William
“Banished? For what reason?”

wh Thomas
“Your daughter saw that I had been struck and queried of what had happened. I allowed that I had been struck in an altercation and she forced me to say who it was. My only option, knowing who you were and knowing that I could not put her against you, was to place it upon Warwick as he indicated that I should. While I protested, she nevertheless has banished him from the castle for the act. I am honestly the innocent party in this, good sir.”

rd Sr. William
“Be gone and leave me with my thoughts.”

wh Thomas
“I will.”

wh Thomas exits.

rd **Sr. William**
“Oh, to have brought this upon a young man who is like a son to me. To have struggled with his own honour to heap lie upon lie. This has gone on long enough. I cannot let it escalate any further.”

rd Sir William goes over to Mallory’s door and knocks.

yb Mallory is straight there and she opens the door with her dress hanging off her.

yb **Mallory**
“I knew you would return! Oh, it’s you.”

rd **Sr. William**
“My lady.”

yb **Mallory**
“Spockik, isn’t it?”

rd I see what you did there.

rd **Sr. William**
“No, my lady, it has gone on for too long. I wish to have word with you about my servant whom you have banished.”

yb **Mallory**
“It is not becoming for a man such as yourself, and certainly a man of your class, to be alone with a lady. Let me call my maid. Alice?”

wh **Alice**
“Yes, my lady?”

yb **Mallory**
“Alice, you will be our chaperone.”

wh **Alice**
“As you wish, my lady.”

- rd* **Sr. William**
“My lady, would that I could speak to you alone? If I were to show you this seal perhaps it would persuade you.”
- rd* Sir William uses his aside “When she sees this she will realise that I am her father, for only her father could own the true seal of Dumbarton.”
- yb* Mallory looks upon the seal and, as she does so, she hears in her mind a thunder and great rushing of wind. She realises that this wind has not rushed into her, but into Alice. She looks at Alice and there, in Alice’s eyes, she sees the eyes of her mother.

Yellow Black crosses out Mallory’s oath never to admit to the existence of ghosts in the castle.

- wh* **Alice/Lady. Stephanie**
“Finally, you decide to return to your home.”^{61 62}
- yb* **Mallory**
“No, you cannot appear before strangers.”
- wh* **Alice/Lady. Stephanie**
“This is no stranger, my daughter. Do you not understand? What has he shown you? Look closer.”
- yb* **Mallory**
“It is... my word... I remember, it is the seal of your father. It is the seal of my grandfather.”

⁶¹ (White) I’m a great believer in living for the moment in games like this, both with introducing Alice in the first place and the switch to her being Lady Stephanie. We could have spent time outside the scene working out how to do it, but by jumping in and just playing them it allows the story to flow. If it doesn’t work, we can always address that, but more often than not it’s successful.

⁶² (Yellow Black) I knew going into the scene I wanted Mallory to be convinced that Sir William was who he said he was (otherwise Sir William truly would be isolated in the castle and unable to progress with his motivation). However, I knew that it would take some persuading to convince her that the ‘father’ she’d known for ten years was a fraud and so deliberately brought Alice into the scene so that she could be possessed by Stephanie. Red was also working on a means to convince her through the addition of the family seal. Rather than causing problems though, it was simple to incorporate both separate solutions into the scene. White dealt very well both with being suddenly brought into the scene and then suddenly having their character switched to another!

wh Alice/Lady.Stephanie
“It is the seal of our lands. This is not conversation for the passageway, invite him in.”

yb Mallory
“Come in, please, do. Whoever you are.”

rd We walk into Mallory’s boudoir.

rd Sr.William
“I must now reveal myself.”

rd Sir William pulls his Saracen clothes aside.

rd Sr.William
“I am your true father. For many years I was lost in the East, battling my way back. It took me many years and far greater turmoil than I ever imagined. But now I have returned, and with great wealth, only to find that this usurper has taken my place and stolen my name. Only the blood of my blood could see that her true father has returned.”

yb Mallory
“Methinks you are mad to come to a daughter’s chamber and tell her that her father, whom she has known for these last ten years, is not the man she thinks he is but in fact is you! And yet, my mother appears...”

wh Alice/Lady.Stephanie
“He speaks the truth, daughter.”

yb Mallory
“And I have no doubts as to her identity. So what you say must be the truth. But the truth you speak means that such a greater lie has been expounded.”

rd Sr.William
“Indeed. My squire, Warwick, was merely defending my honour when he pretended to have struck your—surprisingly effeminate—friend. So now I have come to you with the truth. I fear that we have a difficult task ahead. How can I regain my seat and my name and throw out this great villain?”

- wh* Alice/Lady.Stephanie
“And murderer.”
- rd* Sr.William
“And murderer.”
- yb* Mallory
“You ask me for a way to usurp my father? No, to usurp this usurper? But... what have you brought? Your man has been sent away, your guard is pitiful. You are surrounded by his guards, their halberds at your neck, your caravan is in his forecourt.”
- rd* Sr.William
“I have no choice. I cannot take a sword against another man any longer. I can only hope that the truth will out and that this usurper will be undone through his own villainy. We must believe that God himself will see justice done.”
- wh* Alice/Lady.Stephanie
“My husband stands before me, but I see that he is a hollow man. He has left his fire back in the Holy Land.”
- rd* Sr.William
“I fear that is true. I have seen so much death, I cannot see another.”
- yb* Mallory
“If you are truly my father and you have spent the last fifteen years fighting the infidel then you know that it is a glorious fight. One of great honour and faith. Where the soldiers of Christ are crushing His enemies and will be ultimately triumphant.”
- rd* Sr.William
“If only it were that simple. I have seen honourable men fight for the infidel and villains and the most lowly scoundrels fight for the Church of Rome. It is a true sign that Rome is the wrong Church!” He says, speaking to the audience. “And that one day a new Church will arise for a more virtuous age!”⁶³

⁶³ (White) This overlap, the idea of the actor talking to an Elizabethan audience, while the character he plays talks within the play (while we're all just playing a game) was a huge surprise to me and a fantastic moment. It exemplified the point of the game for me.

- yb* **Mallory**
“I am without words. To have my dreams of so many years shattered before me, and by a man whose return I had so longed for and thought had been brought back. But now I know the true reason why he has not spoken of his time there. Is it really not true that in the desert the sun never sets?”
- rd* **Sr. William**
“The nights in the desert are as cold as the bitter wind of the Highlands.”
- yb* **Mallory**
“And did you not kill seven hundred of the infidel at the siege of Antioch?”
- rd* **Sr. William**
“I certainly killed, but no knight killed so many, only the horsemen famine and pestilence.”
- yb* **Mallory**
“Then I must give up this dream of my father as a hero and accept that he is just a man.”
- rd* **Sr. William**
“An empty, hollow man. But we must decide how can we bring this foul usurper down and confront him with the truth?”
- yb* **Mallory**
“My mother, you see all that happens in this castle. If this man—what e’er his name be—has some weakness then you must seek it out.”⁶⁴
- wh* **Alice/Lady. Stephanie**
“As yet he schemes and worries over money. The merchant Purser holds sway over him, but he is not unwilling to kill those who are in the way of his wishes. As I well know.”
- rd* **Sr. William**
“We must go to Purser and persuade him to join our banner. I

⁶⁴ (Yellow Black) I had no idea what approach we might use against Hamish Tavelock. Rather than halt the scene and chat about it as players, we kept it in character, asking each other for help and suggesting as to why other characters might know better. This quickly gave us a thread to follow without halting the story.

have wealth enough in the caravan to pay him off. And this man of his, is he..."

yb **Mallory**
"I know him very well."

rd **Sr. William**
"Perhaps he can be persuaded to aid us and sway Purser to our cause."

yb **Mallory**
"I shall send for him directly!"

rd **Sr. William**
"For the first time since I returned to Scotland my hope has been restored. This gives me great joy. I am so delighted to be reunited with my daughter and my wife... after a fashion. I shall return and fetch back Warwick for we shall need the strength of his arm in the hours to come."

yb **Mallory**
"Go, bring him. Mother, please stay and counsel me."

rd Exit William.

yb Exit Mallory to be counselled.

wh And Alice follows.

The players applaud.

yb We're heading towards the dinner. I would like a soliloquy to change Mallory's motivation as to marry a man who'll take her on crusade seems a bit moot. Not sure what the new motivation would be. I'd like a different scene and then we can come back to her.

bl Do you want to do McCullough going after Purser? Or is he going to survive until dinner?

wh What makes most story sense?

yb McCullough's not going to kill him before dinner.

wh That would be impolite. He'd kill him during the night.

yb Who else haven't we seen recently?

wh You've seen both of mine. Mary hasn't done much of late.

rd We could have a Warwick and Mary scene.

bl I like the image of Warwick strolling across the hills outside the castle with Mary running after him.

yb I also want to know more about McCullough. He's just there as Hamish's guided missile. He's gentry, he's there to marry Mallory, and yet Mallory's affections are obviously up for grabs and so I wonder if he isn't playing a double game himself. Whether there's a reason why he hasn't committed yet. Mary's a way for some of that content to come out.

rd So, a scene with Mary and McCullough? Another bath?

Scene Eleven: McCullough's chamber

yb Him dressing for dinner? Scene: McCullough dressing for dinner—specifically he's arming himself in some discreet manner to perform the grisly business that evening—and Mary is attending him.

rd Mary
“My lord, will you be wearing your purple robes this evening?”

wh McCullough
“The red, I think, may be more appropriate for the night's work. The dark red.”

rd Mary
“Yes, of course. I remember the first evening you wore this, my lord.”

wh McCullough
“Naturally, so do I.”

rd Mary
“I have such warm memories. It promises to be an exciting evening, with everyone out in their finery.”

wh McCullough
“It will be an evening of pleasure and, for some, pain.”

rd Mary
“My lord, what pain is that?”

wh McCullough
“Oh Mary, I realise that you go about the castle with a fog within your pretty little head, but some of our guests are so dashed impolite to his lordship and causing him trouble. It has to be said that anyone who causes trouble for the Dumbarton family causes trouble for my plans for the Dumbarton family. He has work that needs doing and, while I damnably hate work, there's some that I can bring myself to stomach.”

rd Mary
“And is this part of your plan to make an honest and honourable woman of my lady.”

wh **McCullough**
“I’m not sure that anyone can make her truly honest and honourable, but I certainly intend to make her my wife. She’s a very fine sort and I’m sure, given her proclivities, that she will have no problem with my proclivities, which is definitely a good start on things. The lands do look very, very fecund. Sooner or later, our lord will find one too many persons to whom he causes grief and then they will be ripe to be plucked.”

rd **Mary**
“Oh yes, and you pluck so well, my lord.”

wh **McCullough**
“I’ve had so much practice, Mary.”

rd **Mary**
“I can barely wait for the date when you will become the lord and master of...”

wh **McCullough**
“This fine barony! Sir William has always hidden out here on the edge of his estates, with good cause, but I can travel freely and take up residence in the wealthy houses closer to civilisation while your lady, I am certain, will be far happier remaining here. You and I, we shall do fine things together.”

rd **Mary**
“You will always have a place for your Mary, I’m sure.”⁶⁵

wh **McCullough**
“Oh, I will always have a position for you.”

rd **Mary**
“I can barely wait for the day.”

wh **McCullough**
“Nor can I, but fortunately dinner is twenty minutes away...”

⁶⁵ (Yellow Black) This scene is a fascinating example of how our concept of a character can change—almost by accident—during a game. Mary is included here largely because a) we haven’t seen her in a while, and b) McCullough needs someone to talk at. Red could have had her ignore or not hear McCullough’s expounding, but instead chooses to allow fresh light to be thrown upon Mary’s character. She started the game as the true-love believing romantic fool and—while there was mention of her liaison with McCullough dropped in an early scene—suddenly here she establishes herself as utterly complicit in his schemes.

wh I'm happy to call scene at that point. Does that give him more depth?

rd I'm not sure depth is the right word.

yb I want to applaud both, but I'll give my clap to Mary.

rd You wouldn't be the first.

The players applaud.

yb Did we specify what McCullough's plans were?

wh His plans are to wed the daughter, dispose of the threats to the barony and expect at some point for "the baron" to be killed off at which point he inherits everything. He's happy to marry the daughter because, as far as he's concerned, she's bedding anything male and so he can bed anything else and neither will mind.

yb Another scene. Dinner?

wh I think it's probably time for dinner.

bl Yes. Shall we do the high-born or the low-born first?

wh I'm tempted to start with the low-born.

rd Did you want to do Mallory's soliloquy first?

wh Do you have a motivation for Mallory yet?

yb Only to aid my true father in defeating the usurper, but that feels a bit vague.

Act IV

Scene Twelve: The Grand Hall at dinner

wh Let's do the low-born table first, because we know that Mallory's still going to be around when we do the high-born, that'll give you a bit more time. The low-born table is Thomas, Warwick...

bl I'm assuming Warwick's returned at this point.

wh Yes. Sarek and Purser.

rd So it's the two factions.

yb The two merchants and their respective aide facing each other over the table.

wh Thomas
"Good sirs, I was surprised to learn that your goods have been seized by his lordship."

yb Purser
"It is terrible how the nobility treat the mercantile class."

rd Sr. William
"He is a curious fellow, don't you agree? He seems strangely bestial and dishonourable, such as I would never have expected from a knight of his background."

wh Thomas
"For a nobleman, his eyes are the closest set that I have ever seen."

yb Purser
"His eyes are, I grant, close-set but perhaps that is only the better to see with."⁶⁶

⁶⁶ (Yellow Black) It can be difficult sometimes to jump between characters, especially as the plot lines develop. I had to remind myself here that Purser saw Sarek as a rival and was favourably inclined to "Sir William" for impounding his goods and would therefore spin any old drivel to favour the current lord.

rd **Sr. William**
“True, but his behaviour surprises me given his years in the Levant. I would have thought he may have greater understanding and respect for my people.”

yb **Purser**
“The Levant, yes. I know nothing of that, but then that would be your speciality, wouldn’t it.”

rd **Sr. William**
“Indeed.”

yb **Purser**
“I am so intrigued by the possibility of new trade routes. Tell me, all your fine silks and spices, and herbs and lotions, I am surprised that you did not sell them in London rather than dragging them all the way up here to this poor barony.”

rd **Sr. William**
“You may think that, but this was the first port that most come to and I thought I would seek out new opportunities in the north.”

yb Purser laughs at this.⁶⁷

yb **Purser**
“The first port, he says. The first port, he says!”

wh **Thomas**
“Possibly he had a very poor guide, not of my capabilities.”

bl **Warwick**
“Why are you laughing at my master?”

yb **Purser**
“Oh, his trusty dog returns and jumps to his defence. Tell me, before I am mauled by your Rottweiler, what is the price of silk in London?”

rd **Sr. William**
“More than you can afford, I warrant.”

⁶⁷ (Yellow Black) I actually laughed out loud at the ridiculousness of the answer and so decided to include it in the character. In this scene, I knew Sir William and Warwick were out to recruit me and so I was looking to push their lack of trader knowledge to get them to reveal their identities so that Purser would then be swayed to join them.

yb **Purser**
“I have assets squirreled away. There are many places that have me in their debt.”

rd **Sr. William**
“As I say, I know not London. My place is in the East... perhaps we could do a trade, enter business together, and you could get a fair price for us both.”

wh **Thomas**
“My master knows London very well and has travelled there on many occasions.”

yb **Purser**
“Yes. I can tell you the price of silk in London; it is a penny for ten yards. I would be happy to purchase your entire shipment at—let us give you a fair price and allow me a meagre profit in return—say a penny for fifteen?”

rd **Sr. William**
“But alas my goods have been impounded. This is a moot point. Let us not discuss more of such lowly mercantile matters. We surely have more noble matters to discuss.”

bl **Warwick**
“Yes.”

yb That sounds a good place to break and skip to the high table.

The players applaud.

yb His eyes are so close-set. I loved it.

wh Thomas knows he’s a usurper now but he’s got no way of telling it!

yb Everyone at the table knows it, except Purser. And Purser suspects that Sarek is somebody else! You look like no merchant that I’ve ever seen! So high table is Mary, Mallory, Hamish and McCullough.

rd Mary is flitting between you all with a jug of wine.

yb Mallory is not eating.

- bl* **Hamish**
“Daughter dearest, is there something wrong with your appetite?”
- yb* **Mallory**
“Fath- ... my lord, I find the food does not agree with me this evening.”
- bl* **Hamish**
“But it is a fine piece of meat you have there, Mallory. You should eat up; a young woman like you will need her strength if you are going to be a good wife for McCullough.”
- wh* **McCullough**
“Yes, I would hate to see you waste away. Is there something on your mind causing you to ail from your food?”
- yb* **Mallory**
“You know that girls of my age have nothing upon their mind apart from horses and dresses.”
- bl* **Hamish**
“How true, my dear, how true.”
- yb* **Mallory**
“Some of the silks from that new merchant would look very good on Stephanie.”
- bl* **Hamish**
“But, of course. Anything my beautiful daughter wants I can provide.”
- wh* **McCullough**
“Maybe Mary could find you something more to your palette. Is there something else you would like on your tongue?”
- rd* **Mary**
“I’m happy to proffer anything you desire.”
- yb* Line!⁶⁸

⁶⁸ (Yellow Black) I had only really mentioned Mallory’s behaviour as a bit of background colour to represent her distress. It was quickly latched upon, however, and I found myself in a similar position to her and desperately trying to divert the conversation in another direction.

wh At present, I couldn't even stomach sweetmeats.

yb Mallory
"At present, I couldn't even stomach sweetmeats."

bl Hamish
"Why then you are troubled, my dear, because I know you always have a fine appetite for sweetmeats. Now come on, tell your father what troubles you, Mallory."

yb Mallory
"In truth, nothing; see how I eat now."

bl Hamish
"No, no, it's too late for that. There's something up with you, there's something not right and I demand to know what it is."

wh McCullough
"Please, answer your father."

yb Mallory
"It is only... that I am still a girl and not a woman. For I am not wed. You keep a suitor here to marry me and yet the plans for wedding have not moved forwards."

bl Hamish
"Maybe I have had too much wine tonight, but we have a wagon-load of fineries from the East, I'm sure our cooks could create the banquet and that McCullough has only a few minor duties to perform..."

wh McCullough
"Why, of course, yes."

bl Hamish
"And when you have completed those we could proceed at once. Why delay the happy event?"

yb Mallory
"So, tomorrow?"

bl Hamish
(*to McCullough*) "Do you think you could be ready by then?"

wh **McCullough**
“I am sure I shall have all executed by then.”

yb **Mallory**
“That would be perfect, my lord. Just grant me one thing.”

bl **Hamish**
“Whatever for my lovely daughter.”

yb **Mallory**
“You know how I wish so much that when I marry it will be to a real man, a proper knight. It would be my deepest wish to ensure that my husband-to-be would, on the night before our wedding, stand vigil as knights do. He should kneel and pray to our Lord for our marriage and for me, and I shall kneel and pray for him—in my room, obviously, we should not be together—but he should be in the chapel all evening.”

wh **McCullough**
“Why naturally I can spend the whole evening in the chapel. I shall have the doors closed with a guard outside to ensure that we’re not disturbed.”

bl **Hamish**
“That’s perfectly reasonable.”

yb **Mallory**
“And then I can ensure that he shall enter our marriage with the same purity I do.”

wh **McCullough**
“Why, of course.”

The players applaud.

yb Shall we go back to the low table?

rd I was thinking of a specific scene between Sir William and Warwick, but probably not on the table.

yb We can have a moment with Purser and Thomas off the table.

rd So, a scene: Sir William and Warwick.

rd **Sr. William**
“I will have your ear. It is good to have you returned. I know it has troubled you, but your assumption of my rashness with the youth Thomas was a most noble act on your part. I hope you have not been ill-treated.”

bl **Warwick**
“It was but a minor inconvenience, I would endure so much more for you, just give me the word. When are we striking; when are we making our move?”

rd **Sr. William**
“I fear we must hold back for now. We must allow for justice and truth to prevail and not brute force. Will you pledge one thing for me?”

bl **Warwick**
“Name it, my lord.”

rd **Sr. William**
“You are a religious man. Will you pray for our endeavour this night? Go to the chapel and stand a vigil, pray for us. A man of your godliness and purity can find the way through this darkness.”

bl **Warwick**
“Would that you have asked me tenfold this thing I would have done it in a heartbeat. If this is how best I can aid you then I will do it. If you need any more of me, then send word and I will do whatever it takes to restore you to your rightful place.”

rd **Sr. William**
“I shall, but I fear I will not need you this night.”

The players applaud.

yb I have a scene. Purser and Thomas have moved off the table as well.

yb **Purser**
“Thomas.”

wh **Thomas**
“Good sir, yes?”

yb **Purser**
“There are strange currents afoot.”

wh **Thomas**
“You do not know the half of it, sir.”

yb **Purser**
“What? That is my point. I do not know the half of it! The man who sits across from me is no merchant. And both he and you put grave intimations upon our host.”

wh **Thomas**
“Would that I could tell you what I know, but I have sworn an oath.”

yb **Purser**
“You have sworn an oath? An oath to whom? You have sworn an oath to me!”

wh **Thomas**
“To guide you through, yes, and I am naturally the finest guide you will ever find and I will get you through, no tolls, no nothing, you will quite happily see Edinburgh come the end of this journey. On matters other than that, I have been in conversation with the man and truthfully have given my word to his squire that I can say nothing about it.”

yb **Purser**
“His squire?”⁶⁹

wh **Thomas**
“Servant! His servant.”

yb **Purser**
“His squire? For him to be a squire, he must have a knight. A knight who has returned from the East—”

wh **Thomas**
“I have said too much.”

⁶⁹ (Yellow Black) I have no idea if White dropped the ‘squire’ reference in there deliberately, but—as I previously detailed—I was looking for a way for Purser to find out Sir William’s identity and so leapt upon the scrap.

yb **Purser**
“-must know Sir William if he has journeyed here, for surely there is no other reason, but why enter in disguise? Why enter in disguise if he should know Sir William already unless...”

wh **Thomas**
“Yes?”

yb **Purser**
“He should already be Sir William!”

yb Purser is no longer Cowardly Dullard, I’ve just completely played him against his Nature. Oh well.

bl That’s cool though.

wh **Thomas**
“Sir, I have sworn an oath not to tell you these things and so have no way to confirm to you whether these things you say are true.”

yb **Purser**
“This matter greatly disturbs me. The mortgage upon this estate is signed by Sir William Dumbarton. If there are now two Sir William Dumbartons over whom do I hold my claim?”

wh **Thomas**
“What is to be done, good sir, for the returned is he.”

yb **Purser**
“The most important thing is my money.”

wh **Thomas**
“But naturally as a good merchant what else would it be?”

yb **Purser**
“Exactly. You shall make a fair merchant yourself one day, should you ever turn your hand to it; obviously guiding is not your thing (let that be my guidance to you haha). There is no measure in having a mortgage over a man who will not pay it. If he fights to defend his lands, it will cost me more to seize his lands than the interest I have accrued. No, we must give it to a man who has money himself, and who has money? This other merchant who is Sir William in disguise.”

wh **Thomas**
“He may be no merchant, but he does own the wares with which he travels.”

yb **Purser**
“Yes. Yes. But if he is a man of honour then he will not admit any such deception and yet we must let him know that we know without letting him know that we know.”

wh **Thomas**
“I could talk to his... servant and I could let him know that I suspect you know, but that I’m not aware that you know for certain, and then he can speak of his suspicions to his master and then you will both be aware while no honour will be broken because neither of you will show awareness of your awareness.”

yb **Purser**
“You baffle me, man. Let us return to the table and I will show you how it will be done.”

wh **Thomas**
“I will watch with breath abated.”

The players applaud.

yb Pursuer and Thomas go and rejoin Sir William and Warwick at the table.

yb **Purser**
“This wine is very fine is it not, Sarek of the East?”

bl A master of deception.

rd **Sr. William**
“Very fine, though of course, though not of a variety with which we are accustomed in the East.”

yb **Purser**
“No, no, French wine, I believe, is rare in the East. The ships that go to the East are laden with soldiers rather than with bottles.”

rd **Sr. William**
“They bring bottles, unfortunately they drink them.”

yb **Purser**
“The crusades are a great opportunity for our traders, but they are also a curse for they rob us of so many of our customers.”

rd **Sr. William**
“Indeed, our young men and all those of honour.”

yb **Purser**
“You speak as one who knows the crusades well.”

rd **Sr. William**
“They are something I have to negotiate as a humble trader between both sides.”

yb **Purser**
“I should say, as a trader myself, we belong to a fraternity do we not? We are human, and yet we are often considered as merely bags of coin to be raided and ravished by what marauders and reaver knights should choose. We are a brethren, are we not. United, albeit sometime in competition, but always with the same pursuit.”

rd **Sr. William**
“I agree, and there is honour amongst us. Of a sort.”

yb **Purser**
“Indeed, and it is with that sense of honour I say to you that you are not safe in this castle. I do believe that your host means to seize your goods and kill you.”

rd **Sr. William**
“He has indeed done the first of those already.”

yb **Purser**
“You know therefore I speak the truth for the first part of my statement is already confirmed.”

rd **Sr. William**
“I have faith that he will not make his move against me. That our Lord will not allow such an atrocity to arise. I put my faith in God and, if you so believe, put your faith in God as well.”

yb **Purser**
“I am reminded of the parable of the three servants... but I shall

not repeat it now. Needless to say, the Good Book tells us the Lord expects those entrusted with coin to generate further coin and not rely on his benefaction. I merely wish to say that, as part of an endeavour to protect your interests by defending yourself from rapacious looting from an abominable reaver as “Sir William”, then I shall be at your side protecting your interests as though they were my own.”

yb I’m going to use Purser’s aside. “And hopefully they soon will be.”

rd **Sr. William**
“I thank you, my noble friend. We shall see and hope that, before the end of another day, the truth will out and justice shall prevail. At that, I bid you good night.”

yb Purser takes Thomas aside.

yb **Purser**
“There! Everything is completely clear between us.”

wh **Thomas**
“I understand how this works now.”

bl Sir William and Warwick as they depart.

bl **Warwick**
“My lord, did you understand what that merchant was saying?”

rd **Sr. William**
“He believes he has an entitlement to the wealth, some of which is true.”

bl **Warwick**
“You do not think he may suspect you are Sir William?”

rd **Sr. William**
“I am sure of it. But give him no thought; he will come undone through his own villainy. The truth will out.”

bl **Warwick**
“Would that you were a more vengeful man, my lord, I would strike him down as a knave. It must be his man, Thomas, who let slip the secret. Perhaps I should have words with him.”

rd

Sr. William

“No, I would seek instead to recruit that Thomas. I see he has no great loyalty to Purser and he’s treated abominably. I would have word with Thomas and bring him to our side. You, though, must adjourn to the chapel.”

bl

Warwick

“Of course, my lord. I shall take my leave.”

rd

Sr. William

“Good night.”

The players applaud.

Scene Thirteen: Mallory's chamber

yb I now have Mallory's soliloquy. Mallory's in her room, she's being watched by Alice as her mother. She's notionally talking to her, but really she's expounding her own thoughts.

yb Mallory
"I hope I have done the right thing, mother. I hope by pushing for this wedding to take place tomorrow it will bring these matters to a head. For in truth I cannot live with a lengthy plot. Whatever must be done, must be done quickly. This man who has returned, you tell me he is my father. And it must be so. And yet he is not the father I have known for these last ten years and so he is as much a stranger to me as if he were not my father at all. So I am to turn my back on a man who I know as a father for a man whose claims are just? What such a man is he? But then what such a man do I now call my father? For I know that his accomplice McCullough has designs on murder. Mary can keep no such secret from me, I know his kind, I know how she speaks of what McCullough is capable of, and of how he treats her even though she allows it. That is why I pushed to have him stand vigil on this night so my father, my true father, and all the innocent men in this castle might see another dawn. But then what is to be done after tonight if matters are not brought to a head? I cannot remain a daughter to a false father and I cannot be a wife to a murderous husband. I have only one avenue before me and that is to dishonour myself to ensure I cannot be married to such a man. If I have no value in his eyes, he will not take me and then at least I shall be free.⁷⁰ But how to do it?"

yb Her mother whispers in her ear.

yb Mallory
"Yes, that is the way."

yb Lights down.

⁷⁰ (Yellow Black) A soliloquy allows you to change your motivation or oath, to foreshadow a character's death (as Red and White had already done) or to advance the play's themes. I had pondered Mallory's new motivation for some time. Simply assisting Sir William was obvious and acceptable, but felt uninspired. I wasn't adding anything new to the story as I was essentially subordinating my motivation to Sir William's. Instead, I went back to the motivations and oaths of the other characters and was inspired by one of those as to effect I wanted to have. Then it was a matter of working back to find the motivation that would naturally lead me to that effect.

The players applaud.

yb She's changed her motivation to 'dishonour herself before the wedding'.

bl Shall we do...

wh Chapel?

Scene Fourteen: The Chapel

bl Yeah, chapel. McCullough and Warwick meeting in the chapel for the all night vigil.

wh Warwick's already there and McCullough approaches talking to a guard.

wh McCullough
"So, what's going to happen is: I'm going to go in there for a little bit, you're going to stand guard and then," McCullough hands him some coin and gives him a knowing look "you're going to watch very carefully to make sure I never leave."

rd Guard
"I understand, sir."

wh McCullough
"Good man." McCullough enters. "I say, it's going to be dashed horrid in here. I should have brought some bedding or something." He sees Warwick. "Oh!"

bl Warwick
"Oh, I'm sorry. Let me move over and make some more room."

wh McCullough
"Errr... yes, ah..."

bl Warwick
"Don't be alarmed, sir, I met many pious men and I am not embarrassed by outward displays of faith."

wh McCullough
"Yes... I, um, I kind of expected to be um... alone."

bl Warwick
"Please, I promise I will not disrupt you in any way. I will be here, on this side of the altar and you may have the rest of the chapel. I promise I will not disturb you."

wh McCullough
"Is there not, mayhap, perhaps, possibly somewhere else you could be doing this?"

bl Warwick
“This is the chapel, is it not.”

wh McCullough
“Well, yes.”

bl Warwick
“Where else would we honour our Lord?”

wh McCullough
“But in the chapel, yes... Yes, yes, I suppose... ah... I had...
hmmm...”

bl Warwick
“Perhaps we could pray together. If you’re afeared; if it’s been a
while since you’ve spoke to our Lord?”

wh McCullough makes an aside “Cur.”

bl My oath is totally broken now; I’ve been telling lies.

yb You’ve been telling lies all game! But you’ve been sticking with
your motivation, that’s the main thing.

wh McCullough
“You go and say your things.” McCullough lets Warwick mutter
on for about twenty minutes. “Sorry to important, I should
probably should have... before I came. So if you’ll just excuse
me.”

bl Warwick
“Is this not the night before your wedding? Are you not standing
a vigil?”

wh McCullough
“I am indeed and it would be terrible for my betrothed to know
that there was any reason at all that I had to hop out.”

bl Warwick
“I cannot let you do this.”

wh McCullough
“Yes, you can.”

bl **Warwick**
“I can’t. I know that you’re a man of great bearing but please accept my humble faith; I cannot in good conscience allow you to leave your vigil. Let me help you through this. I’ll be here to support you.”

wh **McCullough**
“I would be more than happy to but the Lord has taken it in his thing to press down upon my bladder and I feel I must partake to depart. I’m sure I shall be no time at all and if you could give me your word that you say unto my betrothed that I was here all night then I would be more than grateful, generously grateful in fact.”

bl What do you reckon, guys? Line?

yb We’ve kind of reached it here.

wh He’s broken his oath once, does that mean it’s gone for good or does it mean that he’s done it once but he ought to continue?

rd I think he ought to keep it.

yb Depends how you want to play it. There’s no rule behind it.

rd Sir, I must insist that on the honour of your sword that you remain.

bl **Warwick**
“Sir, I must insist that on the honour of your sword that you remain. Do not ask me again. We are in place of God. I have lied many times and I swore an oath once that I would not do such things and now to add further deception, to add sin to sin, I already have so much for which I must atone.”

wh I’m not sure how to proceed here.

yb I’d quite like McCullough trapped in the chapel rather than roaming free.

bl Don’t we want to get him out so he can try and-

yb I’d get him out at the last minute, just before the wedding. It’s like the anti-stag night of the stag desperately trying to get to his wedding on time, instead McCullough is desperately trying to get

to murder somebody. And then it can all come to a head at the wedding.

wh Yeah. Yeah.

wh McCullough

“Then naturally I will share devotion with you and just hope that both of us have the stamina to stay awake throughout the night.”

bl I was expecting McCullough to just kill him.

wh You’re not foreshadowed so he can’t.

yb You can.

wh Oh, he could, but then they’d both die.

yb Or he can be wounded and run away or he can just accept it.

wh Yeah. It doesn’t really work. If he’s worried about being given up for walking out, then he might be worried about being given up for slaying the only other guy in the chapel.

bl Yeah.

wh He is supposed to be quite thoughtful and so not instantly murdering.

yb And we’re going for a lighter tone then a sudden stabbing in the back in the chapel...

wh Fair enough. McCullough hopes that Warwick will go to sleep, which is never going to happen.

yb I think that’s nice.⁷¹

⁷¹ (White) There was a lot of out of character discussion here. On my part I knew McCullough had been forced in to a corner with Warwick and I was happy to play with it, but equally McCullough had a single goal which was blocked. I was fixated on seeing it through for a bit, but when it became obvious that Warwick wasn't going to just let McCullough go the only option was to give in and accept failure. Until the suggestion of killing Warwick came up it had never crossed my mind. I had McCullough as capable of killing a merchant or wife, but not a real fighter.

Scene Fifteen: The Guest Quarters

yb A scene. It is the room that Mallory assigned to Thomas. Thomas hears a scratching, not a knocking, at the door.

wh Thomas gets up, wearing a big concealing night-gown and tentatively opens the door.

yb As soon as the door opens a crack, Mallory bursts in and quickly closes the door behind her.

wh **Thomas**
“My lady, my lady, in my chamber at night? This is unseemly!”

yb **Mallory**
“Thomas, Thomas, please, please, I ask nothing from you. Please allow me this. Allow me to spend the night here in your chamber. I shall sleep anywhere, on the floor, at the foot of your bed, in the corner. Wherever. Just allow me to stay in this room tonight.”

wh **Thomas**
“But what would your father think if he was aware?”

yb **Mallory**
“My father is not all that he seems. And to keep me safe from him you must allow me this.”

wh **Thomas**
“What do you mean that he is not all that he seems? You bemuse me.”

yb **Mallory**
“I cannot say more for I have sworn an oath not to reveal what I know.”

wh **Thomas**
Aside. “I am confused. Is the father she speaks of the father that truly birthed her or is the father she speaks of the father that now stands and says he is the father in actual fact when he is just an usurper and not really a father at all and yet I cannot make her talk. Do I allow her to stay here, in which case I am helping her stop the usurper, or do I worry that she is going against the goodness of her true father and is farther gone with her false

father and sees him as by far the true father of her heart. I am...
unsure.”

rd That sounds more like a soliloquy.

yb Mallory falls to her knees before you.

wh Thomas takes a step back.

yb **Mallory**
She grabs your hips to hold you close. “Please, though I have never done such things before, if you wish me to do things for you this evening as payment, I shall.”

wh **Thomas**
“My lady, no!”

yb **Mallory**
“I apologise for besmirching your honour; it was only a sign of my desperation. Please save my life by allowing me this small favour.”

wh **Thomas**
“May God and mayhap your father forgive me, I shall allow you.”

yb **Mallory**
“Thank you, thank you.”

wh **Thomas**
“Take the bed; I shall sleep by the door.”

yb **Mallory**
Mallory makes her aside. “Such a good and noble and beautiful young man; it pains me such that I will have to betray him.”

bl Oooooo.

yb End scene.

The players applaud.

Act V

Scene Sixteen: The Grand Hall

bl Can I have a soliloquy for Hamish? In his chambers, late at night, Hamish-in true villain style-is talking to himself about his master plan.

bl **Hamish**
“The pieces begin to fall into place. One by one. Tomorrow, Dumbarton’s daughter will be married to McCullough, who will be obliged to me by allowing this union. I have seized the eastern merchant’s silks and have the means to pay off the mortgage, but that in itself should not be a problem. For even now I know McCullough moves to extinguish both that debt and its holder. Tonight it falls into place.”

bl I’m trying to think what I want out of it. Sorry.

yb Expand the play’s themes, I would say: ‘redemption’ and ‘if you prick us do we not bleed’.

rd And that ups your rank.

bl So Hamish would go to rank 6. How would I invoke those themes?

yb This is how you redeem yourself?

bl **Hamish**
“When I first met Sir William all those years ago, and he was headstrong, running off to fight his holy war, he told me then that I was not worthy, not capable of carrying out God’s plan. He cast me aside and now I shall show him who is worthy. I shall sit in his place and I shall be the baron of these lands truly. And do I not deserve them? Have I not suffered in tending these lands? And now he seeks to take them back from me as if I were the robber?”

yb Hamish goes up to rank 6.

bl Level up!

The players applaud.

yb Another scene. Are we at the wedding yet?

wh I suppose McCullough may be in a scene with Hamish to let him know.

yb Or Hamish can learn when Purser walks in at breakfast and complains about something.

wh So are we having a scene at breakfast or is the castle in such a hubbub that the next time anyone truly sees each other is the wedding?

Scene Seventeen: The Grand Hall the next morning

yb I think it's a really early wedding. There's such a commotion and Hamish has had to get a whole wedding together in the course of ten hours.

wh Rush in the priest.

bl But even though he's rushed off his feet, ordering the servants around, he's a bit smug with himself. This is his moment of redemption.

bl **Hamish**
"Hang those streamers up! Move that table over there! Start bringing the food through now! Come on, everything must be right for this most glorious of days."

yb Enter Henry Purser.

yb **Purser**
"My lord, I have some business with you. There is something wrong with the bed in your chamber, for I awoke this morning with a terrible pain in my back. A terrible stabbing pain. It stabs right here."

bl **Hamish**
"But... but..." Aside "Oft have I heard the legends of the haunting of this castle, is this a ghost I see before me?"

yb **Purser**
"I would have you send one of your maids with linaments and ointments. There is little time before the wedding, but I can stand to one side and she can rub it in me."

bl **Hamish**
"I will get one of the maids to attend to that at once. If you'll excuse me I must talk to the happy groom."

yb **Purser**
"Of course, and one more thing. I shall be providing you with a gift on your happy occasion and hope that you will also shortly be offering me a gift to make this occasion as happy for me."

bl **Hamish**
 “McCullough!”

bl Exit Hamish in search of McCullough.

yb Okay, do you want to bring more people in to get a bit of momentum going? Henry Purser is there trying all sorts of bizarre exercises in order to work out the terrible stabbing pain in his back.

yb **Purser**
 “Boy? Boy? Where is that Thomas?”

rd Mary enters.

rd **Mary**
 “My lord, I have been summoned to help you with your ailments.”

yb **Purser**
 “Have you brought linaments and unguents?”

rd **Mary**
 “L... er.... have. I have many notions with which to release you.”

yb **Purser**
 “Very well. But I must in haste have a gift. I need my man, Thomas Grange. He’s probably got lost on the way back from the dunny.”

yb Which is, of course, your surname.

rd **Mary**
 “I swear, my lord, I haven’t seen him all night.”

yb **Purser**
 “What? Thomas? Thomas?”

wh **Thomas**
 “Sir? Sir? My apologies, I rested very badly. The bed was unnaturally hard.”

yb **Purser**
 “You should have had my bed.”

wh **Thomas**
“Indeed, I could have.”

yb **Purser**
“You look terrible. You look like you’ve seen a ghost.”

wh **Thomas**
“A ghost? A ghost? Where would I have seen such a thing?”

yb **Purser**
“It’s an expression, man. It is not literal!”

wh **Thomas**
“Ah, yes. It was merely a bad night. What may I do for you?”

yb **Purser**
“I need to provide a gift. This wedding has been brought on at such unseemly haste that now, being a guest in this man’s house and his daughter being wed, I must provide a gift.”

wh **Thomas**
“What do we have in the baggage cart that you desire to grant?”

yb **Purser**
“Well... we have those bales of wool?”

wh **Thomas**
“I’m not sure... bales of wool... the lady’s very fond of good horseflesh, your riding horse is fine.”

yb **Purser**
“My riding horse? How will I get out of here? I would as soon as mount you and ride you out of here than clamber on the back of some mule like a peasant farmer.”

wh **Thomas**
“My apologies, of course.”

yb **Purser**
“I know, I know, we have that lumber. That would a good present to the groom. Every man likes a good piece of wood.”

wh **Thomas**
“I have heard from some of the servants that McCullough does, sir, yes.”

yb **Purser**
“Or does he have wood enough, do you think?”

rd **Mary**
“Wood is very popular in this castle.”

wh **Thomas**
“Maybe we should pass on wood and go back to sheep.”⁷²

yb **Purser**
“Curses, every man in Scotland, it appears, has more wood than he can handle. We can we have that would be appropriate? If it is not wool and it is not wood.”

yb Line!

wh Maybe I should just give him money.

bl No.

yb **Purser**
“Maybe I should just give him money⁷³, these nobles are all the same.”

wh **Thomas**
“If it would please you, sir, I saw in your cart that you had some very fine vases that you have brought from Shropshire. They were very fine.”

yb **Purser**
“They would be ideal, and incredibly cheap. They look fine indeed. Thomas, do you remember the vases?”

wh **Thomas**
“Ye-”

⁷² (White) And so we have Settlers of Catan...

⁷³ (Yellow Black) I didn't care for this line, but the rule is that you must accept the first suggestion. It's better to deal with the occasional dud you receive than break the flow of the story by spending minutes discussing and dissecting the appropriate response.

yb **Purser**
“No! Of course not. Couldn’t find his arse with both elbows.
Mary, if you have seen them then you have my dispensation.”

rd **Mary**
“Yes, sir, I shall leave forthwith.”

rd Exit Mary.

yb **Purser**
“Oh, but wait, now I must find another to help me with my
back.”

yb Exit Purser.

bl I was going to have Warwick wake up McCullough, but let’s skip
that and have Hamish meet McCullough.

wh Let’s call this a new scene.

yb But the same venue.

The players applaud.

*Hamish and McCullough speak over each other. Hamish in a fury.
McCullough protesting.*

bl **Hamish**
“McCullough! Damn you, man, I asked you...”

wh **McCullough**
“I actually had to spend the whole night in prayer.”

bl **Hamish**
“Oh, that must have been appalling.”

wh **McCullough**
“It was truly...”

bl **Hamish**
“My heart bleeds for you.”

wh **McCullough**
“As it should.”

bl **Hamish**
“I cannot understand the hardship you have endured this night.”

wh **McCullough**
“You would not believe the stupid, pious servant...”

bl **Hamish**
“McCullough, you listen to me. I asked you one thing. I’ve given you the hand of my daughter in exchange for one simple task! To remove me of my creditor. To remove this man who vexes me so.”

wh **McCullough**
“And I shall do that!”

bl **Hamish**
“How did you fail in this?”

wh **McCullough**
“I’ll see to it the first thing on my honeymoon.”

bl **Hamish**
“Before the wedding, McCullough! Before the wedding.”

McCullough goes silent.

bl **Hamish**
“That was the arrangement. I don’t know why you have not allowed yourself appropriate time to carry out this task and it must be done in haste.”

McCullough tries to interrupt but fails.

bl **Hamish**
“It must be done before the wedding. No ifs, no buts. I will hear no excuses from you.”

wh **McCullough**
“Do you know where he is now?”

bl **Hamish**
“He’s wandering the castle like a buffoon searching for some petty stupid request.”

wh **McCullough**
“And my betrothed?”

bl **Hamish**
“In her bedroom, I presume. Where else would she be?”

wh **McCullough**
“That is true. Then I have a plan that I will execute. That stupid Warwick servant was in the chapel, I could not get away. Had I gotten away and done the deed as I had planned then it would be...”

bl **Hamish**
“Excuses, McCullough, excuses. I do not wish to hear them. Even if you must forgo deception and do it in haste, at least then it is done.”

wh **McCullough**
“It will be done in haste and I have an idea what to do.”

bl **Hamish**
“Then make it happen.”

The players applaud.

Scene Eighteen: The corridor outside Mallory's chamber

wh Okay. Mallory's bedchamber.

yb She is not there.

rd Who is?

wh McCullough

"Mary! Your lady, your charge, where is she? I was told by her father that she would be here."

rd Mary

"I know not, my lord. She must have left early this morning to go riding before the wedding."

wh McCullough

"Then find her, god damn it. Help me find her now! Do you not realise the importance of this? I can't have you just blathering away at me."

rd Mary

"But, but, what ails you? You mustn't see your bride before your wedding."

wh McCullough

"I have need of word with her, that is all. Now, come, we must find her."

rd Mary

"But..."

wh McCullough

"The stables, come. Haste!"

rd Mary

"I can't possibly..."

wh McCullough

"Hasten, I say. Come, woman, we need to find her."

rd Mary

"But I can't possibly let you see her before the wedding."

wh McCullough
“You don’t even know where she is! Come! Stop me bumping into her by mistake.”

rd Mary
“But... I must ask you to return to your rooms in quiet contemplation. We mustn’t risk you seeing your betrothed before the wedding, it would disrupt the course of true love and romance. It would be so inauspicious.”

wh McCullough
“On any other day, Mary, I would do exactly as you ask. But this day, with everything that bears upon me, it cannot be done. I must see her; I must see her now. If you do not know where she is then I will find someone who does.”

wh And McCullough breaks his oath.

White crosses out McCullough’s oath to never let down a lady’s expectations.

rd Mary
“I fear you, my lord, for the first time. The look in your eyes... would you do me great harm?”

wh McCullough
“For whatever is of me, no. That I would not do to a woman, nor to any woman. However, there is great weight upon me at this moment; there are tasks of import I must accomplish that mean I cannot acquiesce to your request. Now, tell me, where did she go last night? She is your mistress; you must know.”

rd Mary
“She... I know not where she went... but I know that she stole away late at night.”

wh McCullough
“If you know not her location, then do you know her intent?”

rd Mary
“Only that she was distressed and seen to be conflicted.”

wh McCullough
“And who would she go to for succour if not to yourself? Someone she has had her eye upon?”

rd Mary
“To Purser’s man.”

wh McCullough
“Then take me to his room. Now.”

rd Mary
“Of course, my lord.”

Scene Nineteen: The Guest Quarters

wh McCullough smashes open Thomas's door, doesn't even bother to knock.

rd But you are Thomas, and so Thomas is not there.

wh Thomas is not there, but who is there?

yb I think you find Mallory there.

rd Yes, indeed. Mary scurries in behind McCullough.

rd Mary
"Oh! My lady! What are you doing here?"

yb Mallory
"What are you doing bursting into a private chamber? Especially you, my husband to be."

wh McCullough
"I am bursting into the chamber of a knave and what do I find but my betrothed. What has happened here?"

yb Mallory
"What do you think? It does not matter; whatever you think, all that you can think, yes it has happened here. I am no longer a maid!"

wh McCullough
"Then this is the excuse I need for the death that shall happen."

wh McCullough storms out.

The players applaud.

bl Could I have a quick scene with Warwick and Mary?

rd I think Mary's forsworn now. I think it's fair to say that she didn't really aid the course of true love.

bl So as Mary is leaving Thomas's chambers and running back down the stairs, Warwick comes up the stairs from the chapel and they bump into each other.

bl Warwick
“Mary!”

rd Mary
“Oh!”

bl Warwick
“You look in a terrible state.”

rd Mary
“It is terrible. It’s my lady; she has dishonoured herself... the night before her wedding!”

bl Warwick
“That is terrible indeed. But there are other words I must say to you, Mary. I stood a vigil in the chapel all of last night alongside the groom, I asked our Lord how I may gain forgiveness of my sins. I have committed many sins of late. The answer came to me in a vision. Mary, I’d like to make an honest woman of you.”

rd Mary
“Of me?”

bl Warwick
“I know I am merely a squire, but I could take you away from here, Mary, and give you an honest life. Please, think of your future.”

rd Mary
“But... I am... I accept. Of course I do.”

bl Warwick
“Ah! Oh, Mary, you’ve made me so happy. We can make today a double wedding. Oh, Mary, I love you so.”

rd Mary
“And I love you too. For I have many times met so many dishonest men, but now I see a true man before me. And it was happenstance that brought us together.”

bl Warwick
“The Lord does work in mysterious ways, but something beautiful should come of this after all. Come, Mary, let us to the chapel at once.”

rd Mary
 “Indeed, yes, let us hie there!”

The players applaud.

yb Who is Mallory supposed to marry now?! I’ve got to marry!

rd You don’t have to marry.

yb I do, I’m a protagonist! It’s that or die.

wh You can still marry Thomas.

yb I can’t, he’s a woman! That’s what it’s all leading towards. Thomas is going to be forced to make an honest woman of her. Remember, nothing is off-limits in Shakespeare. At the end of *As You Like It*, a messenger comes in and says that the big villain has suddenly converted his faith and is now a good guy! That’s how spurious William Shakespeare was with some of his endings.

Scene Twenty: The Grand Hall

yb Okay, that kind of scuppers who I thought could marry Mallory. The scene I want to do is Thomas being brought before Hamish and McCullough with Mallory there, no, wait, McCullough can't be there...

wh In my head, McCullough is currently going to have a showdown with Purser, who he's going to kill based on the fact that his servant besmirched his bride and the sins of the servant becoming the responsibility of the master. In McCullough's eyes, he's fairly desperate for a good enough reason and that one just about makes the grade.

yb Okay, so I want a scene with Mallory, Thomas, Hamish and someone appropriate.

rd It'd have to be Sir William.

yb Yeah. Where this whole Thomas thing will come out.

wh Are you going to force Thomas to break his oath? Sorry, her oath.

yb Yes, this is what I've been building to for my last three scenes.

wh I'm protecting Thomas's oath like her virginity. I did come close to soliloquise and changing the oath so that she could let someone true know.

yb While I had the whole thing with never admitting to the ghosts in the castle kind of blown up for the story's sake because we needed to confirm Sir William's identity.

bl Did that marriage proposal really screw you over?

wh Mallory's run out of men.

yb When Mallory starts out she has the improper suitor, McCullough; she has the false suitor, Thomas, false because 'he' is in fact a woman; and so the natural progression is that she ends up with a true suitor, who's Warwick.

wh But Warwick has just proposed to Mary.

rd I say let them marry.

yb Yes, this is all part of the fun. Let's see how it rolls. The scene is: the castle is in uproar because they have learnt that Mallory's honour has been besmirched. While McCullough is running down Purser, Mallory has made it very clear to Hamish what she has done and Hamish has ordered that Thomas be brought to him.

wh So Thomas has been dragged there.

yb Sir William is also there in his merchant guise. So Hamish knows that this wedding has been potentially scuppered by the actions of Thomas because Mallory is saying that... sorry, let me put it in the scene.⁷⁴

yb **Mallory**
"Yes, it is all true, father. I will have you all know that I spent the night in this man's chambers. If you should ask my maid or the groom they will tell you so. And look, here the man is brought before you. He will confirm it as well."

wh **Thomas**
"I know not what I am being dragged here for!"

bl **Hamish**
"Speak the truth, lad. It will bring you no good to speak lies here. Did you spend the night with my daughter?"

yb **Mallory**
"Yes, and he made me a woman."

bl **Hamish**
"Tell me. Tell me this is some girlish fancy. That this is some nerves about her wedding and she speaks lies to escape it. Tell me this."

wh **Thomas**
"Um..." Thomas looks to Sir William. "Sir?"

rd Er... line?

⁷⁴ (Yellow Black) A fine example of getting carried away and starting to play before we played (i.e. deciding what would happen before actually getting into the scene). Fortunately, we stopped.

yb Prithee, why do you look to me?

rd Sr. William
“Prithee, why do you look to me?”

wh Thomas
“Put what you do to me.”

yb Mallory
Mallory grabs Thomas. She embraces him and whispers in his ear. “Please forgive me, but this was the only way.” And then she releases him and turns back to Hamish. “See how happy we are! We shall be married at once, shan’t we father!”

bl Hamish
Hamish seethes. “On the eve of her wedding night. Are you so vile a creature that you could not contain yourself.”

wh Thomas
“I do not know what I have done, sir.”

yb Mallory
“He made a woman of me. And if any man can prove he did not then let him step forward.”

rd Sr. William
“If I may...”

bl Hamish
“Daughter, daughter, you cannot marry this wretch. You cannot.”

rd Sr. William
“If I may say, sir...”

yb Mallory
“Why should I not, for he is the most masterful guide in the world!”

bl Hamish
“A guide? A guide? This is the man that you would marry? The legacy that you would leave me? McCullough is a man of breeding. He’s a man of noble birth.”

yb **Mallory**
“McCullough is no man at all. He is a monster. His veins drip with poison.”

rd **Sr. William**
“If I may have a word, sir.”

bl **Hamish**
“Anything!”

yb **Mallory**
“We know that McCullough killed my mother!”

rd Sir William gasps.

yb **Mallory**
“Your every look tells me that it is true.”

rd **Sr. William**
“I think you cannot come between these two now that they have consummated on this holy night.”

wh **Thomas**
“Sir, I cannot, in all faith, I cannot marry this lady.”

bl **Hamish**
“Why not? You’re capable of doing everything else, man!”

wh **Thomas**
“Would that I were not calling you a liar, but I am calling you a liar. I am not capable of doing everything else. My wish to become the best guide that there was has blinded me and I have been living ten years a lie, I am no man at all.”

bl **Hamish**
“You barely count as one, yes.”

wh **Thomas**
“No, sir, you misunderstand, I am no man at all. I could not make her a woman, for I am one.”

wh Thomas unveils herself as a woman in some manner.

yb Mallory gasps, her plot failed.

bl **Hamish**
Hamish is overjoyed. “Well, well, well.”

wh **Thomas**
“Everything that you asked of me, I would have done for thee but that I could not do.”

yb **Mallory**
“My plan, unravelled!”

wh **Thomas**
“And now I am undone and ruined.”

bl **Hamish**
“Good news, Mallory! Your honour is intact and therefore the wedding may continue. Everything can proceed as planned!”

yb **Mallory**
“My honour is intact, but I wish my life be forfeit.”

bl **Hamish**
Hamish steps up close to Mallory. “What McCullough may have done in his past you have to understand. He will take care of you; he will take care of this land. It is what I wish and you will do as I say for I am your father.”

rd **Sr. William**
“I fear that is not the case.”

rd Sir William reveals his face from his Saracen robes.

rd **Sr. William**
“Now I am close to you who you truly are, Hamish Tavelock. It is I, Sir William. I have returned from many years away. And now I see what you are reduced to, threatening women, threatening my daughter and this poor creature. And I hear now that you are responsible for the murder of my own wife? What kind of disgraceful cur are you?”

yb At this point, the whole castle is alive; the wind races through the halls, the horses are braying in the stables, it is not one man accusing you it is the very stones beneath your feet that tremble with rage.

bl **Hamish**
“Some of us are not born to privilege. Some of us have to make their way in this world and I have cared for your lands, I cared for them as though they were my own. In a just world, they would be mine.”

rd **Sr. William**
“For that I would spare your life. For that I am willing to allow you to live out the rest of your days in peace. I command you now to leave this place, leave us to happier times.”

bl **Hamish**
“No, I will not walk from this place, not after all I have done, all I have endured. This place is as much mine by right of blood than it ever was yours by right of heritage.”

bl Hamish draws his sword.

rd **Sr. William**
“What do you know of blood? I have seen more blood than you could dream from here in pomp and comfort. I was the one drenched in blood, fighting a war without faith or justice. I beseech you, in the grace of God, for the love of this land, begone in peace.”

The players paused here to discuss the different ways in which the story might play out and how they might meet the game-end conditions that all the protagonists (Sir William, Hamish, Thomas and Mallory) are dead or married. They agreed to let the game play out and see where it went and—as it happens—none of the possible conclusions they discussed was the one that ultimately resulted.

One of the common misconceptions in Forsooth! is that all the characters need to be dead or married (which is partly what drove Blue to have Warwick to propose to Mary). In fact, it's only the protagonists.

rd **Sr. William**
“One last chance, leave in peace.”

bl **Hamish**
“No, I will not sacrificed what I have worked for. You want redemption? Pray to God for forgiveness!”

bl Hamish stabs Sir William through the chest.

rd **Sr. William**
“I am undone! My daughter, I beg you, we have one last chance to save your honour. My friend Sir Richard is on his way. You must speak with him. If I am to have an heir it would be him. Please welcome him when he arrives here. Go in peace.”

yb **Mallory**
“My father, my father, only now in death do I see that I am truly your daughter. While I am not a woman, you have made me a man.” Mallory grabs Sir William’s sword, which he left sheathed, and stabs it at her fake father, Hamish Tavelock, in her rage.⁷⁵

bl Oh.

yb So you can die, you can escape wounded or you can kill me in return.

bl Don’t know. What’s going to work, guys? Oh, I’m just going to die.

wh I think just dying works.

bl Just die.

rd Just die.

bl Right, so Hamish is standing over the body of his fallen foe. He hears the dying words of Sir William. He’s so shocked when Mallory picks up the sword and ugh, just looks down as he’s run through.

bl **Hamish**
“Why? By a woman no less.”

⁷⁵ (Yellow Black) There’s a subtle difference in how the players introduced the two deaths here. In the second, I narrate the action (Mallory stabbing the sword at Hamish) and Blue narrates the result (Hamish being run through). In the first, Blue narrates both the action and the result. While this is absolutely fine on this occasion (as Red had already marked Sir William for death), in other circumstances it is generally good story gaming practice to narrate your own actions and allow the ‘victim’ to narrate the result. This makes violent acts between characters a more collaborative experience, and can often result in far more interesting results than the attacker originally expected.

yb **Mallory**
“A sword that I would only raise against my enemies. It turns out that my enemies were closer than I could ever think. A false father who has killed the true one. And now what is there for me?” Mallory turns to look at Thomas, the only surviving member of this scene.

wh Thomas is agog at all the blood.

yb **Mallory**
“Thomas. For all that has happened it is to you who I owe the greatest debt. I have wronged you so badly. Please do not judge yourself accountable for anything that has happened here. I have every hope for your interests. But wait!”

yb No, actually wait, does Mallory know that McCullough is off to kill Purser?

wh Why not?

yb **Mallory**
“Now my false father is dead, what of his creature? What of McCullough? Where is he abouts?”

wh **Thomas**
“He is about the castle to kill Purser for the dishonour that I am to have done to you. I heard the guards talk of it as they dragged me here.”

yb **Mallory**
“But now it is known that you have done me no dishonour at all; if Purser is killed here without just cause then the mortgage he holds will be exercised, and all we have here lost.”

bl True.

wh **Thomas**
“Then I would do one last thing for you and help stop this.”

yb **Mallory**
“Please, you are so good and so loyal. Let us go and try to save your master’s life.”

wh

Thomas

“You search the parapets and I’ll such the dungeon for if I find McCullough then we cross the streams and the game dies.”

bl

But then neither of you can find McCullough, because McCullough is going to find Purser.

Scene Twenty One: The Parapets

wh No wait, McCullough is on the parapets, looking for Purser, and still can't find him. So the scene is: Mallory arrives at the top of the battlements, McCullough is raging across them with his sword and currently shouting at nothing in particular.

wh **McCullough**
“Will this fat oaf of a merchant never show his face? I have never seen anyone waddle so fast from nook to cranny to hole. Will he not just appear so that I can run through his cowardly hide and leave him dead as his wit and his body as foetid as his breath?”

rd I'd suggest at this point Warwick could enter?

yb I want Mary there.

rd You want Mary there?

bl Go for it.

rd Okay, enter Mary.

yb Enter Mallory.

wh **McCullough**
So Mallory and Mary appear on the parapet as McCullough rages on. He turns and he levels his sword at Mary. “You! Have you seen the cur?”

rd **Mary**
“I have not seen the merchant, but I must tell you, my lord. I am now a married woman.”

wh **McCullough**
“And this interests me how precisely?”

rd **Mary**
“For you promised me a life together, but Warwick came to me and he so was kind and I could not help but accept him.”

yb Interesting priorities. I thought you were going to share the news that his master was dead.

bl Yeah, side note: your master's dead; we're all screwed.

wh Here are some pretty dresses, lots of people are dead, I think they were called William, but have you seen my ring?!

wh **McCullough**
"I give you every blessing for your bed."

yb **Mallory**
Mallory appears behind him on the parapet. "Save your blessings for yourself, McCullough."

wh **McCullough**
"What is it, my wife-to-be?"

yb **Mallory**
"To be? Or not to be! You talk of us being unified in life, but actually we will united in death. Your master, my false father, is dead by my hand. And now you run after a man whose death will be the ruin of this estate."

wh **McCullough**
"I am after the man whose servant besmirched my betrothed who I will marry this day and the two of us will run this barony together."

yb **Mallory**
"I am still a maid. Your target's man is no man at all, but a woman. I was deeply mistaken in that."

wh **McCullough**
"Then you say that there is no impediment to our marriage? You father who would have had me kill this merchant is dead and I am freed of that oath. We should rejoice!"

yb **Mallory**
"Yes, let us rejoice, my betrothed. Let us embrace as husband and wife."

wh McCullough sheaths his sword as he moves towards her.

yb **Mallory**
"Give me a kiss before we away."

wh McCullough acquiesces.

yb As he leans forward...

wh With avarice in his eyes...

yb Mallory leans heavily back and flips them both off the parapet. As they fall together, she twists in the air so that when they hit the ground with a sickening crunch. Mallory lands on top of him.

bl So it's just Thomas and Purser we have to worry about.

yb No, we don't have to worry about Purser, he's not a protagonist.

wh The only protagonist left is Thomas.

yb Wait, Mallory's not dead.

wh Oh, Mallory's not dead?

yb No. I have a solution.

wh Okay, I am happy for you to have killed McCullough and not Mallory.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ (Yellow Black) Under the *Forsooth!* duelling rules, it was most definitely not within my purview to declare unilaterally that Mallory survived. White here graciously allows McCullough to be killed while Mallory lives.

Scene Twenty Two: The bottom of the Parapets

yb The scene is the bottom of the battlements. Mallory is there, she sees McCullough's lifeless eyes beneath her and Thomas runs over.

wh Thomas
Thomas runs over to them. "Oh, my lord!"

yb Mallory
"Thomas, help me to my feet please."

wh Thomas helps her up.

yb Mallory
"What a state I have left us in. I foresee that once word of all of this and my unmarried state spreads there will be nothing but ruin for myself and ruin for this barony."

wh Thomas
"Purser will take it all."

yb Mallory
"He will take it all and even perhaps myself, unless I am protected by a man. Or at least someone he believes to be a man."

yb Mallory
She looks at Thomas. "I cannot dare ask you this, you have done me so much already, but I find I have to so as to save all that we have. Thomas, will you be my husband? Those who have seen past your pretence, they are all liege to this barony and do not wish to be cast out into the hills by merchant vultures. You may continue as you were, you can become the greatest guide in all the world. We can go together, for you know I have always longed to travel! And yes, we will not be husband and wife under God, but we will have safety and such a happy life together."

wh Thomas
"My lady, it was true what I said before your father: anything I could have done for you I would do for you. If this is your wish then I will do it and there shall be a wedding today."

yb **Mallory**
“Everything of mine is yours. You shall be my husband and master. Praise God for you, Thomas!”

bl And there’s a double wedding.

yb We do have a double wedding!

bl After all! Got there!

rd Warwick and Mary get to look after the castle.

wh Thomas and Mallory go off on more adventures.

rd Exactly.

bl There’s a whole series of spin-off plays about these two bad-ass women running around the world, fighting evil.

yb Great! So, ending the game.

The game continues until all the protagonists are either married or dead. After the scene where the last protagonist dies or is wed, the players bring out their characters for their bows. Depending on events during the play, each player also has special extra applause tokens to give out to other players’ characters.

The Curtain Call

yb Henry Purser, honest merchant traveller, who was merely looking to protect his interest. He had a hell of time in his couple of nights, but ultimately I think things ended up well for him. Let's give Henry Purser a round of applause.

bl I cannot believe he survived.

yb Another character.

bl Hamish Tavelock. He had a master plan, he was scheming, he was villainous and it just kept going wrong for him all the way through. Was he justified? Of course he wasn't; he was a monster. The false Sir William.

wh I throw a token to him because he was the perfect villain. He did exactly what a villain should do: he died at the right time and did all the villainy things.

rd I'll give him a token as well.

wh McCullough. He was, in my head at least, the lothario who wandered around doing his Leslie Phillips impersonations. Got his innuendos in when he could.

yb I really liked McCullough.

bl I'd like to give him a token.

yb Me as well. For the first half of the play he really was nothing to me and then suddenly he came good and became such an instrumental part of the plot's conclusion.

rd Sir William. He was the tragic lord, he had a very tragic death but he got to make a lot of cheap political points about the Roman church.

yb Sir William was sold to me at the line "We will enter in disguise as merchants." From that point on, the whole plot hung.

rd That was Blue's idea.

yb Yes, that was a 'line', but your character ended up saying it.

bl I did love that.

yb Mallory Dumbarton. What can we say? The daughter who started off brushing her horse's mane a hundred times every night, a horse she named after her dead mother, maybe that was a bit of a clue, along with her having an army dummy in her bedchamber. And she ends up killing more people than every other character put together.

wh I will definitely throw one her way.

rd Mary. Poor old Mary, a bit of a patsy I think it's fair to say. A bit of a stock character, but I feel she ended up with her own dignity by the end.

yb She had an honest marriage. After everything she'd done, she found a good man.

wh Thomas Grange. While initially her nature was boastful knave, boasting away at every opportunity, at heart possibly one of the most honourable characters in the play.

bl True.

wh Was largely just screwed over on everything except actually being screwed over as she desperately attempted to do the right thing.

yb I really liked Thomas, obviously really grateful to her for providing the out at the end. But also once you started finding out all these secrets and then leveraged that into these little comments that came through all the time. Such a great Shakespearean character.

bl Warwick. What can I say about Warwick?

rd Alas, poor Warwick.

yb Oh dear lord.

rd I was holding onto that one for a long time. I didn't make a single John Thomas joke either.

bl I'm glad that he got to marry Mary at the end. He had to do that.

The players then count up the applause for each character. There are two winners: one who was forsworn (broke their oath) and one who wasn't.

wh McCullough was the forsworn winner with 16 applause.⁷⁷

rd Sir William was the not forsworn winner with 17 applause.

yb A final round of applause for our winners! Thank you all.

Players' Thoughts

bl I absolutely loved it. I loved the play as a format. A lot of roleplaying games copy books or films, by saying that we're doing a play, it puts you in the right mind-set to bring the characters. I liked the fact that it was rules-light, but I didn't get the victory conditions. I don't know why it has to end that way, because surely it should just go where the story takes you. But I can also understand why the designers put that in as a trope of Shakespeare.

wh I've been studiously avoiding playing *Forsooth!* as it's come up because it's got Shakespeare in it and I was concerned about lots of cod-Elizabethan dialogue and so I'm glad I forced myself into this as lots of people have said that it's great. I really enjoyed it. I liked the construction of characters. I agree about the victory conditions and how they can screw the game over. I think with experience, on your second and third games maybe, you're better informed when you're creating your characters and choosing your protagonist with a mind to marriage or death, but I'm not certain that that will create a better game. I would be interested in playing this without every character being 'owned' by a single player (as in *Remember Tomorrow* and *Intrepid*) because—as we reached the end—the fact that Thomas and McCullough couldn't appear in the same scene might have killed the game. Personally, I wouldn't

⁷⁷ (White) McCullough winning the applause just stunned me. I hadn't realised that he'd made such an impact in the scenes he'd been in. I'd basically been using him as an excuse to make veiled jokes at the other characters expense and be a mean, closed minded C plot villain. So I guess that was a positive feedback from the applause system.

have minded handing off McCullough to another player to play for that scene.

rd I agree from a game point of view, but I think the game rationale goes back to the concept of a being a single company of actors, who are doubling up parts. So I can see why they do it.

yb The multiple characters per player does lead to some difficulties, but I think it's rather to cater for the concept that Shakespearean plays did have a lot of characters in them, almost certainly more than you're ever going to get around a table. Shakespeare does it by running multiple sub-plots like in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* where you have a pretty good separation between the Lovers, the Fairies and the Mechanicals. And then the protagonist rule is in there to give everyone some kind of idea about whom the story should revolve as not every character can be equally important. I enjoy it because it allows you to play a smaller character like Purser, who's petty and venal, but know that he's not the only character you'll be playing. You can get that by having players pick up whichever character for the scene, but you lose some consistency of how that character is portrayed and it can also get a little confusing, just around the table, of who is playing who at any one moment.

wh The scoring by applause also makes less sense if you don't have character 'ownership'.

yb I really like the applause. I'm not so keen on the dead or wed ending as I find it pushes towards tragedy far more than comedy. The rules allow, when you're doing a cycle of plays (aka multiple sessions), you can also have one character end because their life has significantly changed. That's another possible ending to introduce for single sessions.

bl It would be a really odd ending if everyone got married.

wh It's just the protagonists remember, so it'd only have to be four people get married.

rd Double marriages, triple marriages are very common in the comedies. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is three marriages. *Much Ado About Nothing* has two, *Twelfth Night* has three, *As You Like It* has four!

- wh* So surprisingly common!
- yb* And as soon as you go above five players then you only have one character each, so you shouldn't have more than ten characters. In a previous game I've played, it started off as a nice comedy, but then we started coming towards the end and we couldn't manage the marriages and so five characters killed themselves one after the other until we were left with only a single token marriage at the end and it felt really disappointing.
- bl* I actually want to put it up on the stage and start acting it out.
- rd* What I liked about the set-up, going right back to the beginning, was that we got an entire plot out of myself and Blue picking the same name for our character. The entire plot pretty much rolled out of that. I loved that something so small just set it all off. That's when the story came alive for me, when we made that connection.