

**Act I:**

Sc. 12

**S. Antiph.:**

*They say this town is full of cozenage,  
As nimble jugglers that deceive the eye,  
Dark-working sorcerers that change the mind,  
Soul-killing witches that deform the body,  
Disguised cheaters, prating mountebanks,  
And many suchlike liberties of sin.*

**S. Antiph.:**

*They say this town is full of deception,  
As clever thieves that are full of trickery,  
Evil-doing charlatans that cheat a man,  
Faithless loose women full of disease,<sup>1</sup>  
Disguised cheaters, Fast-talking frauds,  
And all of these sinful, pleasurable excesses.*

Sc. 22:

*Father Time “bald” references => these are plays on being bald (as in no hair), bald (as in to speak plainly), and bald (as a symptom of syphilis):*

**S. Dromio:**

*The plainer dealer sooner lost. Yet he loseth it in a kind of jollity.*

*Dromio is saying that it [the hair] is lost the quickest through vd, but the guy who goes bald this way at least has fun [while getting infected].*

Sc. 31:

*Joseph and I discussed this scene early on, and we determined that the two Dromios are talking about farting:*

**DROMIO OF EPHESUS**

*A man may break a word with you, sir, and words are but wind,  
Ay, and break it in your face, so he break it not behind.*

**DROMIO OF SYRACUSE [Within]**

*It seems thou want'st breaking: out upon thee, hind!*

**DROMIO OF EPHESUS**

*Here's too much 'out upon thee!' I pray thee, let me in.*

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<sup>1</sup> STDs

The key here is that Luciana views (as would the Elizabethan audience) S. Antipholus's sexual advances as incest; the husband and wife become "one flesh" making S. Antiph. Luciana's brother, so she is doubly appalled that 1) He is seemingly unfaithful to her sister and 2) that her 'brother' wants to have sex with her:

**LUCIANA:**

*And may it be that you have quite forgot  
A husband's office? shall, Antipholus.  
Even in the spring of love, thy love-springs rot?  
Shall love, in building, grow so ruinous?  
If you did wed my sister for her wealth,  
Then for her wealth's sake use her with more kindness:  
Or if you like elsewhere, do it by stealth;  
Muffle your false love with some show of blindness:  
Let not my sister read it in your eye;  
Be not thy tongue thy own shame's orator;  
Look sweet, be fair, become disloyalty;  
Apparel vice like virtue's harbinger;  
Bear a fair presence, though your heart be tainted;  
Teach sin the carriage of a holy saint;  
Be secret-false: what need she be acquainted?  
What simple thief brags of his own attainment?  
'Tis double wrong, to truant with your bed  
And let her read it in thy looks at board:  
Shame hath a bastard fame, well managed;  
Ill deeds are doubled with an evil word.  
Alas, poor women! make us but believe,  
Being compact of credit, that you love us;  
Though others have the arm, show us the sleeve;  
We in your motion turn and you may move us.  
Then, gentle brother, get you in again;  
Comfort my sister, cheer her, call her wife:  
'Tis holy sport to be a little vain,  
When the sweet breath of flattery conquers strife.*

**Luciana:**

And perhaps you have forgotten what to do as a husband? Shall even early in your marriage your feelings of love decay? Shall your love, even as it is supposed to grow fall apart? If you married my sister for her money, then you should at least treat her well: Or if you choose to cheat on her, at least hide it; cover your cheating ways so my sister can't see it in your expressions; don't tell her you are cheating; Be kind, be caring, hide your unfaithfulness; make your cheating look like you are being faithful, at least look true, even if your heart is false; make your sin of adultery look like you are faithful; hide your infidelity: Why does she need to know? What cheater brags about his crime? It's twice as wrong to not only sleep with someone else but to also let her know about it when you are with her. If you hide your shame well, you can have a little honor. Poor women! You could at least lie and make us believe you love us; though you sleep with someone else,

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let us at least have the appearance; We are influence by your emotions. Then, dear brother, go inside; Comfort my sister, make her happy, call her wife: What does this little lie matter if it makes her happy?

**‘Nell scene’:**

S. Dromio: “swart” = swarthy: dark-skinned; tanned; olive complexion

“ell”= a unit of measurement; approx. the length of a man’s arm from the elbow [bent] to the tip of the middle finger (approx. 18”), so Dromio is saying that Nell is wider than 31.5” across. However, ells varied from country to country. Until 1800, an English ell was about 45”:

***DROMIO OF SYRACUSE***

*Nell, sir; but her name and three quarters, that's an ell and three quarters, will not measure her from hip to hip.*

***ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE***

*In what part of her body stands Ireland?*

***DROMIO OF SYRACUSE***

*Marry, in her buttocks: I found it out by the bogs.*

Dromio is saying that Nell has a flabby butt. Also, “bogs” is a crude reference to poop as well as the peat bogs that are common to the actual country, so Ireland is in her bum because it is the place of the poop/peat bog.

***ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE***

*Where Scotland?*

***DROMIO OF SYRACUSE***

*I found it by the barrenness; hard in the palm of the hand.*

This is most likely a reference to how rocky and hard the Scottish Highlands are; also perhaps an allusion to how everyone beats Dromio (including Nell)

***ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE***

*Where France?*

***DROMIO OF SYRACUSE***

*In her forehead; armed and reverted, making war against her heir.*

An allusion to the French pox (aka syphilis – see the earlier note on balding). Word play: ‘heir’ with ‘hair’

***ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE***

*Where England?*

***DROMIO OF SYRACUSE***

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*I looked for the chalky cliffs, but I could find no  
whiteness in them; but I guess it stood in her chin,  
by the salt rheum that ran between France and it.*

The “chalky cliffs” refer to Dover; Dromio finds England on Nell’s chin between “France” (her forehead) and her chin. The “salt rheum” is most likely referring to dried snot that has dripped from her nose to her chin leaving a trail.

**ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE**

*Where Spain?*

**DROMIO OF SYRACUSE**

*Faith, I saw it not; but I felt it hot in her breath.*

Nell has a hot, dry breath

**ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE**

*Where America, the Indies?*

**DROMIO OF SYRACUSE**

*Oh, sir, upon her nose all o'er embellished with  
rubies, carbuncles, sapphires, declining their rich  
aspect to the hot breath of Spain; who sent whole  
armadoes of caracks to be ballast at her nose.*

America and the Indies were thought at this time to be rich with mineral wealth (gold, jewels, etc). However, in reference to Nell, Dromio means that her nose is covered with pustules, boils, etc that are so large as to partially cover her mouth. Also refers to current (Elizabethan) hostilities between Spain and England, as well as the Spanish explorers in the New World.

**ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE**

*Where stood Belgia, the Netherlands?*

**DROMIO OF SYRACUSE**

*Oh, sir, I did not look so low.*

Here Netherlands refers to her genitals, or ‘nether regions’ – Belgium is referred to as “low lands,” hence the pun.

**ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE**

*There's none but witches do inhabit here;  
And therefore 'tis high time that I were hence.  
She that doth call me husband, even my soul  
Doth for a wife abhor. But her fair sister,  
Possess'd with such a gentle sovereign grace,  
Of such enchanting presence and discourse,  
Hath almost made me traitor to myself:*

**S. Antiph.:**

All of the people here are cheats and whores;  
And therefore, it's past time I left.  
I hate the idea of being husband to the woman who  
Thinks she's my wife. But her sister, who is so elegant  
And who has such an enchanting way of moving and speaking,  
Makes me want to stay;  
But, lest I betray myself,  
I'll keep myself from being tempted by her ways and wiles.

**Act II:**

- Love the street performers' sense of schadenfreude!

Sc. 41:

Dromio: "aqua vitae" = lit. "water of life": most likely brandy or whiskey

Sc. 42:

Adriana: "sere" = dry, dessicated, withered

***DROMIO OF SYRACUSE***

*No, no, the bell: 'tis time that I were gone:  
It was two ere I left him, and now the clock  
strikes one.*

***ADRIANA***

*The hours come back! that did I never hear.*

The book indicates that Dromio may have been saying "on" but that Adriana hears "one"; I recommend listening to the video posed on the Dramaturgy page of the website that is about OP (Original Pronunciation) as they indicate that much of the humor found in Shakespeare gets lost in modern (contemporary) English (American or British) pronunciation, but can be heard in the Shakespearean OP.

Sc. 43:

***DROMIO OF SYRACUSE***

*Nay, she is worse, she is the devil's dam; and here  
she comes in the habit of a light wench: and thereof  
comes that the wenches say 'God damn me;' that's as  
much to say 'God make me a light wench.' It is  
written, they appear to men like angels of light:  
light is an effect of fire, and fire will burn;  
ergo, light wenches will burn. Come not near her.*

**S. Dromio:**

No, she is worse, she is the devil's mother; and here she comes in the clothes of a whore: and when whores say 'God damn me;' that's like saying 'God make me a whore.' It is written, that they [whores] appear like angles of light: fires give off light, and fire burn; therefore, whores will burn. Don't go near her.

This is also a play on words: Not only is whoring "sinful," but whores can spread venereal disease, so there is a double meaning of "burn" = burn in hell, and burn with VD

***DROMIO OF SYRACUSE***

*Master, if you do, expect spoon-meat; or bespeak a long spoon.*

***ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE***

*Why, Dromio?*

***DROMIO OF SYRACUSE***

*Marry, he must have a long spoon that must eat with the devil.*

**Allusion to parable of the spoons:**

"A holy man was having a conversation with the Lord one day and said, "Lord, I would like to know what Heaven and Hell are like. "The Lord led the holy man to two doors.

He opened one of the doors and the holy man looked in. In the middle of the room was a large round table. In the middle of the table was a large pot of stew which smelled delicious and made the holy man's mouth water.

The people sitting around the table were thin and sickly. They appeared to be famished. They were holding spoons with very long handles and each found it possible to reach into the pot of stew and take a spoonful, but because the handle was longer than their arms, they could not get the spoons back into their mouths. The holy man shuddered at the sight of their misery and suffering. The Lord said, "You have seen Hell."

They went to the next room and opened the door. It was exactly the same as the first one. There was the large round table with the large pot of stew which made the holy man's mouth water. The people were equipped with the same long-handled spoons, but here the people were well nourished and plump, laughing and talking.

The holy man said, "I don't understand." "It is simple" said the Lord, "it requires but one skill. You see, they have learned to feed each other. While the greedy think only of themselves."

Sc. 44:

***E. Dromio:*** ". . . Nay I bear it on my shoulders as a beggar wont her brat."

**E. Dromio:** “. . . No I’ll take on the load the way a beggar carries her child.”

**E. Antiph.:** “Peace, doting wizard<sup>2</sup>, peace.”

**E. Antiph.:** “Calm down, old fraud, calm down.”

Sc. 44:

**Officer Nestor**

*He is my prisoner: if I let him go,  
The debt he owes will be required of me.*

**Officer Nestor**

*He is my prisoner: if I let him go,  
I will have to pay his debt.*

Sc. 51:

**Adriana:** “assemblies” = social gatherings i.e. out in public

She is telling the Abbess that he has berated E. Antiph. both in private and in public.

**DROMIO OF SYRACUSE**

*We’ll draw cuts for the senior: till then lead thou first.*

S. Dromio is saying that they will draw straws (“cuts” = cuts of straw) to determine which is the elder. They are **not** cutting each other.

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<sup>2</sup> “Wizard” in the context of the play means more like “charlatan,” “quack,” “cheat,” “fraud” than a practitioner of magic. Less like Harry Potter and more like the Wizard of OZ.