

THE REVENGER'S TRAGEDY

Thomas Middleton

Enter VINDICI [with a skull]; the DUKE, DUCHESS, LUSSURIOSO [his] son, SPURIO the bastard, with a train pass over the stage with torchlight.

VINDICI: Duke, royal lecher, go, grey-hair'd adultery;
And thou his son, as impious steep'd as he;
And thou his bastard, true-begot in evil;
And thou his duchess that will do with [the] devil:
Four ex'lent characters. Oh, that marrowless age
Would stuff the hollow bones with damn'd desires,
And 'stead of heat kindle infernal fires
Within the spendthrift veins of a dry duke,
A parch'd and juiceless luxur! Oh God, one
That has scarce blood enough to live upon!
And he to riot it like a son and heir?
Oh, the thought of that
Turns my abused heartstrings into fret!
Thou sallow picture of my poisoned love,
My study's ornament, thou shell of death,
Once the bright face of my betrothed lady,
When life and beauty naturally fill'd out
These ragged imperfections,
When two heaven-pointed diamonds were set
In those unsightly rings: then 'twas a face
So far beyond the artificial shine
Of any woman's bought complexion
That the uprightest man, if such there be,
That sin but seven times a day, broke custom
And made up eight with looking after her.
Oh, she was able to ha' made a usurer's son
Melt all his patrimony in a kiss,
And what his father fifty years told
To have consum'd, and yet his suit been cold!
But oh, accursed palace!
Thee, when thou wert apparell'd in thy flesh,
The old duke poison'd,
Because thy purer part would not consent
Unto his palsy-lust, for old men lustful
Do show like young men angry, eager-violent,
Outbid like their limited performances.
Oh, 'ware an old man hot and vicious!

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"Age, as in gold, in lust is covetous."
Vengeance, thou murder's quit-rent, and whereby
Thou shouldst thyself tenant to tragedy,
Oh, keep thy day, hour, minute, I beseech,
For those thou hast determin'd! Hum: whoe'er knew
Murder unpaid? Faith, give revenge her due:
She's kept touch hitherto. Be merry, merry;
Advance thee, O thou terror to fat folks,
To have their costly three-piled flesh worn off
As bare as this: for banquets, ease, and laughter
Can make great men, as greatness goes by clay,
But wise men little are more great than they.