

THE CHANGELING (BEATRICE)

Thomas Middleton and William Rowley

Enter BEATRICE.

BEATRICE: This fellow has undone me endlessly,
Never was bride so fearfully distress'd;
The more I think upon th' ensuing night
And whom I am to cope with in embraces,
One who's ennobled both in blood and mind,
So clear in understanding,—that's my plague now—
Before whose judgment will my fault appear
Like malefactors' crimes before tribunals;
There is no hiding on't, the more I dive
Into my own distress; how a wise man
Stands for a great calamity! There's no venturing
Into his bed, what course soe'er I light upon,
Without my shame, which may grow up to danger;
He cannot but in justice strangle me
As I lie by him, as a cheater use me;
'Tis a precious craft to play with a false die
Before a cunning gamester. Here's his closet,
The key left in't, and he abroad i'th' park?
Sure 'twas forgot; I'll be so bold as look in't.
(Opens closet.)
Bless me! A right physician's closet 'tis,
Set round with vials, every one her mark too.
Sure he does practise physic for his own use,
Which may be safely call'd your great man's wisdom.
What manuscript lies here? 'The Book of Experiment,
Call'd, Secrets in Nature'; so 'tis, 'tis so;
`How to know whether a woman be with child or no';
I hope I am not yet; if he should try though!
Let me see, folio forty-five. Here 'tis;
The leaf tuck'd down upon't, the place suspicious:
'If you would know whether a woman be with child or
not, give her two spoonfuls of the white water in
glass C'—
Where's that glass C? Oh, yonder, I see't now—
`and. if she be with child she sleeps full twelve hours after; if not, not.'
None of that water comes into my belly.
I'll know you from a hundred; I could break you now,
Or turn you into milk, and so beguile
The master of the mystery, but I'll look to you.

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Hal That which is next is ten times worse:
'How to know whether a woman be a maid or not.'
If that should be apply'd, what would become of me?
Belike he has a strong faith of my purity,
That never yet made proof; but this he calls
'A merry sleight, but true experiment, the author
Antonius Mizaldus. Give the party you suspect the
quantity of a spoonful of the water in the glass M,
which, upon her that is a maid, makes three several
effects: 'twill make her incontinently gape, then fall into
a sudden sneezing, last into a violent laughing;
else dull, heavy, and lumpish.'
Where had I been?
I fear it, yet 'tis seven hours to bedtime.