

The Song of Drums

A Historic Comedy in
a Prologue and Three Acts

Contemporary British
Dramatists,
Volume XLII

Ashley Duke
1926

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Contemporary British Dramatists,
Volume XLII:

THE SONG OF DRUMS

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THE SONG OF DRUMS

A HEROIC COMEDY
IN A PROLOGUE AND THREE ACTS

BY ASHLEY DUKES

LONDON: ERNEST BENN LIMITED
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AUTHOR'S NOTE

In general outline the drama is suggested by Charles de Coster's "Légende d'Ulenspiegel" (Brussels, 1867), and some of the incidents are based upon the "joyous and heroical adventures" therein set forth. The pranks of Tyl Ulenspiegel, or Eulenspiegel, the legendary hero of the Low Countries, are related in German chapbooks of a very early date. De Coster's romance transferred them to the time of the Spanish Inquisition in the Netherlands, which is likewise the period of this play. For the narrative of the legend of Ulenspiegel, readers may be referred to the admirable English version of Mr. F. M. Atkinson (London, Heinemann, 1922).

PERSONS IN THE PROLOGUE

A HERALD

NICHOLAS *Father of TYL*

MOLL *His wife*

KATHELINE *A midwife*

PETER GOEDZAK *Friend to NICHOLAS*

JOSSE GRYPSTRUIVER *Dean of the fishmongers*

TYL and NELE *As children (silent)*

A SHERIFF, Constables and Neighbours.

PERSONS IN THE COMEDY

TYL ULENSPIEGEL

NELE *Daughter of* KATHELINE

LAMME GOEDZAK *Friend to* TYL

AH OSTESS

AC OUNT

AN IMAGE-BREAKER

AB AILIFF

AH OST

AB LACKSMITH

CALLEKEN *Wife of* LAMME

GILLINE

AL IEUTENANT

TOWNSMEN and PASSERS-BY.

In performance, the parts of NICHOLAS and TYL, MOLL and NELE, PPETER and LLAMME, and JOSSE and the IMAGE-BREAKER may be doubled. The smaller speaking parts can be represented by three or four actors, and the whole company need number less than twenty persons, including supernumeraries.

The action passes in the sixteenth century, in Flanders. The Prologue is supposed to cover a period of nine or ten years, and fifteen years elapse between the Prologue and the beginning of the comedy.

THE PROLOGUE—*A Peasant's Cottage.*

THE COMEDY—*Act I: A Market Square.*

Acts II and III: An Inn.

THE PROLOGUE

[A HERALD *comes before the curtain.*

THE HERALD:

The lark awakens, and a man is born.
The whitethorn glimmers in the mist. The sun,
Red as the wounds of Christ, salutes the plain
And summons all the towers to harmony.
O son of man, be true as he is clear,
Be brotherly as he is warm, be gay
As he is joyous! See, the poplar trees,
Like sentinels, are stirring in the wind
That blows from England. Son of man, be just
As they are upright; let the sap of life
Distil through secret channels of the boughs
That are uplifted to the stormy skies
And stoop to rise again! The first cock crows;
Be proud as he is stately, tread the world
With confidence; your dunghill is a throne
And beggars may be choosers of their fate!
The last owl flutters to the barn to seek
The fleeting darkness, as a woman seeks
Her beauty in a mirror. Son of man,
Be wise as he is stealthy, and profound
As he is silent; let your passing be
As gentle as his flight; and yet beware
The swoop of cruel claws! This night-bird slays
To feed his young, but in the dawn may lie
Outstretched on fields, dead soldiers in the sun,
Outstretched on cobbles, murdered men and boys,
Outstretched in doorways, ravished wives and maids,
And all to line the nest of tyranny
That kings and peoples build to serve their brood.
Shame not the owl by darkening the morn!
The grasshopper makes merry. Son of man,
Make merry too; let laughter be the flute

For leaping limbs; let shaken dew-drops peal
On sunlit blades that quiver for a day!

As softly as a mother lends her breast
To her new-born, a flower is openéd
To greet the morning. Ulenspiegel lives!

[The curtain opens to discover the cottage of NICHOLAS and his wife MOLL. Their son TYL lies unseen in a cradle by the window. KATHELINE, the young midwife, is wrapping him in swaddling-clothes. MOLL, the young mother, lies on the bed. NICHOLAS, a bearded peasant of thirty, is binding faggots.]

KATHELINE: See, Master Nicholas, the babe has a caul on his head. That brings good luck.

NICHOLAS: They say it is worth fifty florins in the market.

KATHELINE: What father would sell his son's good fortune?

NICHOLAS: Fishermen reckon a caul to be proof against drowning. (*He looks into the cradle.*) Do you hear, Moll? Our boy will never drown. There's comfort for Flemish folk with a dyke at their door.

MOLL: I hear the song of birds. Open the windows, my love.

KATHELINE: See, there's a black mole on his shoulder! Alack, it must be Satan's finger-print!

NICHOLAS: Master Satan was early astir this morning, if he had time to lay hands on my son.

KATHELINE: The devil's bedtime is now, at the hour of dawn.

NICHOLAS (*opening the window*): Boy with a caul, here comes my lord the sun to walk upon the earth of Flanders.

MOLL: The boy grows thirsty; bring him to my bed.

[NICHOLAS *brings the cradle.*

Drink, my son.

[MOLL *suckles the babe. The room grows brighter. KATHELINE goes out.*

NICHOLAS: Wife, have you made provision of good milk this joyful morning?

MOLL: The pitchers are full, but I fear there is not one farthing in our wallet that hangs on the wall.

[NICHOLAS *shakes the leathern wallet.*

NICHOLAS: Empty. But we have a slice of beef that will make three days' milk at least, and a sack of kidney beans, and a regiment of apples in the loft. Not to speak of our jolly cask of ale, in which a babe could swim.

MOLL: At the christening we must have two farthings for the priest and a florin for the neighbours' supper.

NICHOLAS (*throwing money on the table*): Here are two florins for you.

MOLL: Where did you find them?

NICHOLAS: In the bellies of a carp and some eels.

MOLL: Husband, why do you not go fishing every day?

NICHOLAS: For fear of being taken in the Spanish nets.

MOLL: Truly the times are dangerous.

[*Re-enter KATHELINE carrying herbs.*]

KATHELINE: To the child with a caul I bring the herb angelica, which preserves men from lewdness.

NICHOLAS: A herb for husbands in these parts.

KATHELINE: And fennel, which drives away Satan.

NICHOLAS: That should be for wives. But have you plucked the herb that brings florins to our purse?

KATHELINE: Not yet.

NICHOLAS: Then I must needs fish for it in the canal.

KATHELINE: Master Nicholas, heard you the crier who went past your door last night?

NICHOLAS: I heard him croaking like an old raven, but what he croaked I have forgotten.

MOLL: He bade us pray for the Emperor Charles's wife, that she should be delivered soon.

NICHOLAS: The empress who lies labouring in Spain. Well, God save all mothers, say I—even Spanish mothers.

KATHELINE: While you slept, I looked from these windows.

NICHOLAS: And what did you see?

KATHELINE: I saw a red star brighter than the rest, that hung above the towers of Bruges. I saw the fields by moonlight, and there were ghosts a-mowing men as haymakers mow grass, and hangmen dancing on the graves of living maids.

NICHOLAS: God save us, Katheline! What tale is this?

KATHELINE: To-day the great stone at the cross-roads, that sweated blood these nine months past, stands cleft in the middle.

MOLL: That must be an evil omen for the land of Flanders!

NICHOLAS: Aye, surely.

KATHELINE (*as if in a dream*): In this night two babes were born; the one in Spain, who is the prince Philip, and the other in Flanders, who is the son of Nicholas and shall be surnamed Ulenspiegel. Philip will be a butcher of men, since he is bred of Charles the oppressor of our people. Tyl Ulenspiegel will be a gamecock full of mettle, but good of heart, since he is bred of Master Nicholas the honest labourer, and of Molly whom he kissed beside the plough. King Philip will ride through the world in dust and battle-smoke, leaving death behind him, but Ulenspiegel will run on springy heels, hither and thither, and he will be clown and scholar, prince and jester in one man. Master Nicholas is your brawny arm, O Flemish people, and Molly is your womb, but Ulenspiegel is your spirit. And a maid that runs with him shall be your heart. And in their palaces will sit the drones, but in the fields will swarm the working bees, and in the sky will bleed the hands of Christ.

NICHOLAS: Is this woman a witch?

MOLL: She is our neighbour Katheline and our friend.

KATHELINE: What I speak will come to pass.

NICHOLAS: How should you know the Empress is delivered? It is a fortnight's journey to Spain.

KATHELINE: In a fortnight will come horsemen, bearing news.

NICHOLAS: Easily said, for by then your tale will be forgotten.

KATHELINE: You shall see, Master Nicholas. When the child is suckled, let the mother sleep. (*She goes out.*)

NICHOLAS: She will be burned for a witch if the Spaniards pass this way; and we shall be jailed for harbouring her.

MOLL: Husband, if I had borne you two babes instead of one, would you scold me for it?

NICHOLAS: One is enough for to-day. We are poor folk, and the times are bad.

MOLL: Katheline too will be a mother.

NICHOLAS: Katheline! When?

MOLL: To-day perhaps. This month surely.

NICHOLAS: Who is the father?

MOLL: She will not say.

NICHOLAS: Let me find the man who has wronged her! He shall feel the weight of this arm.

MOLL: She may feel the weight of many arms, for the Spaniards will flog her in the market-place.

NICHOLAS: Then the father must marry her.

MOLL: Not all fathers are like you, my Nicholas. Better be whipped at the post than married to some I know.

NICHOLAS: What would you have me do?

MOLL: I would have you take this babe of Katheline's, and bring it up with our own.

NICHOLAS: Is harbouring witches not enough? Must we house their brats as well?

MOLL: Yesterday I would have spoken so. But now I think the children call to one another—mine and hers.

NICHOLAS: We are hard put to it to feed our own.

MOLL: Katheline and I between us have four pitchers of sweet milk. She can bring us her babe when it is born, and no one will say it is not ours.

NICHOLAS: A woman lies with a child at her breast and cries for more. This is the very madness of motherhood.

MOLL: We are poor and she is poor, we are rich and she is rich. A joy has come to us; let it be doubled.

NICHOLAS: Well, so it shall be. I will take Katheline's child, and nourish it as if it were my own.

MOLL: Even though its mother be a witch?

NICHOLAS: I think there are no witches, but only women. Katheline need not fear the Spanish sergeants and their whips. Let her bring me a daughter to run with Tyl in the woods, and I will take both upon my knee when they run home again.

MOLL: Then I will call her. Katheline!

[Re-enter KATHELINE.]

KATHELINE: Who calls?

MOLL: Your babe shall be ours, and Nicholas will be its father.

KATHELINE: O house of goodness! Master Nicholas, I see a light upon your brow.

NICHOLAS: My lord the sun is risen. Farewell. I go a-fishing for the florin-herb.

MOLL: See that the sergeant's back be turned. The nets are spread for poor fishermen.

NICHOLAS (*going out*): Am I not rich, good mothers both?

CURTAIN.

The same scene a fortnight later. In two cradles near the window are TYL and NELE, returned from their christening. KATHELINE tends the children, while MOLL prepares the neighbours' feast at a table.

MOLL: My man should be home by now. As we came out of the church he spied the tavern they call the "Rosary of Bottles," over the way. He cried out, "Good neighbours, our Flemish way of drying wet skins is to light a fire in the belly." The men went in together, and I think the taps are running yet.

KATHELINE: Let them drink their fill. There are worse faults in men.

MOLL: But our poor florins run out of the tap.

KATHELINE: Christening day comes but once a lifetime. Tell me how it passed.

MOLL: O my poor Tyl, three times baptized! First, while we were on the road, fell a spouting shower.

KATHELINE: That was Heaven's christening. I saw a torn cloud that seemed to brush the poplars.

MOLL: Then a mason on the roof of the church spilled a bucket of water through a gap, so that it splashed upon us at the font.

KATHELINE: That was a layman's blessing.

MOLL: And when the priest came at last, it was all I could do to hold the boy; so he was given salt liquor to calm him, and named Thylbert after the patron of dancing.

KATHELINE: If he kicked the priest hard enough, he should be a good churchman. But what of Nele?

MOLL: She lay still as a pool in thunder weather. I think she slept.

KATHELINE: My Nele!

MOLL: O Katheline, if you could have been there!

KATHELINE: Church is no place for me. The people whisper and say, "There goes the witch!"

MOLL: I would have had you godmother to Tyl.

KATHELINE: You are mother to Nele, and godmother too.

MOLL: See how softly he is sleeping!

KATHELINE: See how she stretches out a hand towards him! But listen, the men are coming now.

[*A drinking song is heard.*]

SONG

When Master Moon is up
And Madam Sea is down,
The dame will brew a cup
Of wine and nutmeg brown.

And Moon and she that day
Will sup on kisses red,
Till comes the hour to lay
His worship in her bed.

When Master Sun comes round
And dawn is breaking yellow,
Together will be found
Two heads upon one pillow.

When Master Moon is up
And Madam Sea is down, *etc.*

[*Enter* NICHOLAS, PETER, JOSSE *and* NEIGHBOURS.

NICHOLAS: Come in, Peter. Come in, Josse. Neighbours, we have a cask of ale and a pair of bonny brats to show you.

MOLL: Brats, indeed!

NICHOLAS: For a christening gift, I have brought my Tyl a rattle hung with bells. (*Bending over* TYL.) Wear bells in your cap, little man of mine, for the kingdom of the sun belongeth to fools.

JOSSE (*maliciously*): And what have you brought your daughter, Nicholas?

NICHOLAS: My daughter?

JOSSE: Aye, your daughter there.

NICHOLAS: A father's kiss, and may she one day find a wakeful husband.

MOLL: For shame on you!

JOSSE (*looking into NELE'S cradle*): The girl is wonderful like you, Master Nicholas.

NICHOLAS: I think she favours her mother.

JOSSE: Aye, she favours her mother, too.

PETER: They are a fine pair of babes, surely. My throat tells me I could drink their health.

NICHOLAS (*filling tankards*): You shall, Peter, you shall.

PETER: Tyl and Nele, born to Nicholas our friend!

NEIGHBOURS (*drinking*): Tyl and Nele!

PETER: Flemish seed for Flemish soil!

NEIGHBOURS: Flemish seed for Flemish soil!

PETER: Oak for the ships of freedom. Steel for the heart of Spain!

NEIGHBOURS: Steel for the heart of Spain!

JOSSE (*standing apart*): I drink no lawless toasts in any man's house.

NICHOLAS: We are all friends here. I could drink to Martin Luther himself, and to Master Wycliff and the rest whose names were cursed this morning by the emperor's command.

PETER: Truly, when Charles's herald curses a man I straightway feel a fondness for him. I could shake this Luther by the hand, saving the Pope's presence.

JOSSE: And would you break a statue of the Virgin or the blessed saints, when the emperor forbids it?

PETER: No, for I am a roadmender, and break stones enough in the way of trade.

JOSSE: Will you compare your flints with the holy images?

PETER: No, but I will compare your image-breakers with informers.

JOSSE: Informers?

PETER: An ugly word. Do you know it, Master Fishmonger?

JOSSE: I know that we have heretics among us, and witches too, and men who harbour them.

PETER: Who then? Will you name me, or Nicholas here—or the babes in the cradle?

JOSSE: I name no names. But there are women with the second sight in our midst, and children that spring from the devil knows where.

NICHOLAS: An old wives' tale!

JOSSE: There are spells upon our cattle at this hour. There was a woman with simples who cured an ox and three sheep of Michael Speelman's, but she killed a cow of Jan Bloom's by whispering curses in its ear.

PETER: That cow!

NICHOLAS: Why, it was Katheline here who cured the cattle!

JOSSE (*maliciously*): Mistress Katheline, was it? I ask your pardon, good Mistress Katheline. Maybe the cow died of another sickness.

NICHOLAS: Can a beast not die like a man? I saw Jan Bloom's cow; it was withered and half blind.

JOSSE: It may have been so.

PETER: May have been! You starveling cur, will you run your snout into a christening feast to spoil the sport?

NICHOLAS: We are all friends, Peter.

MOLL: Come, eat and drink.

[A fanfare is heard in the distance.]

NICHOLAS: I heard a trumpeter.

[A silence falls. The fanfare is heard again, and then a man's voice making proclamation.]

JOSSE: It is the crier, and a herald with him. That should be news from Spain!

NEIGHBOURS: News from Spain!

PETER: Well, all news from Spain is bad news. I am for good victuals instead.

JOSSE (*going out*): And I am for hearing what he says.

[The CRIER comes nearer and the NEIGHBOURS crowd toward the windows.]

NICHOLAS (*ruefully*): Now Spanish Charles was never bidden to our christening.

MOLL: O husband, I am afraid!

[JOSSE enters breathless.]

JOSSE: He cries that the empress is delivered.

NICHOLAS: The empress, did you say?

PETER (*drinking*): God save the mother, and may the babe be better than his sire!

[The CRIER'S voice grows fainter.]

JOSSE: The emperor proclaims that all men shall hold festival.

PETER: And so we do, like loyal subjects.

JOSSE: At their own charge, the crier says.

PETER (*drinking*): At the charge of Master Nicholas.

JOSSE: That every house display the emblems of the court; that wealthy citizens scatter silver for the poor upon the market-place.

PETER: I am of the poor on such an occasion. O bountiful monarch!

JOSSE: That the fountains shall spout wine, and the booths be laden with baked meats.

PETER: I am for those!

JOSSE: At the town charge.

PETER: Oho! But tell me, Master Josse, was any mention made of bonfires and illuminations?

JOSSE: Bonfires?

PETER: Such as a plentiful roasting of heretics and witches—a fire at which good men can warm their hands these cold spring evenings?

JOSSE: I heard no word of that.

PETER: Nor of dancing either?

JOSSE: Dancing?

PETER: A pretty reel at the rope's end for such as cannot read, but keep forbidden books in their coffers?

JOSSE: He said no more.

PETER (*drinking*): That crier must be short of breath. No matter, he will come his rounds again.

NICHOLAS: Tell me, Josse, is this babe of the empress a boy or a girl?

JOSSE: A boy.

NICHOLAS: And his name—did you hear his name?

JOSSE: He is to be called Prince Philip, so the crier said.

NICHOLAS: Philip!

[*He looks at KATHELINE, who stands motionless by the cradle of TYL.*]

PETER: Why, Nicholas, what's amiss?

NICHOLAS: It is no matter, good neighbours. (*To JOSSE.*) When was he born?

JOSSE: A fortnight since, in the Spanish city they call Valladolid. The horseman brought the news.

NICHOLAS (*staring before him*): A fortnight!

PETER: Spain is far away, and that's the best I ever heard of it.

NICHOLAS (*catching up a tankard*): Neighbours, our house is garnished already!
Drink with me to my son, who is called Tyl!

NEIGHBOURS (*turning to the cradle*): Tyl!

NICHOLAS: And shall be surnamed Ulenspiegel.

[*Murmuring among the NEIGHBOURS.*]

JOSSE: What does he say?

PETER: Ulenspiegel?

NICHOLAS: Clown and scholar, prince and jester!

[*A fanfare sounds.*]

KATHELINE: The hour is come. (*Bending over NELE'S cradle.*) My babe, farewell.
(*She goes out.*)

NICHOLAS: I heard the trumpeter again.

PETER: Aye, aye, he comes his rounds.

JOSSE: But this time there is a sheriff with him, and a pair of Spanish soldiers.

NEIGHBOURS: Spanish soldiers!

JOSSE: They are seeking Katheline the witch.

NICHOLAS: Our Katheline!

PETER: Fishmonger, have you done this?

JOSSE: She is a witch, I say. A cattle-poisoner and a sorceress. She walks into the soldiers' arms. They bind her fast. They turn about—the sheriff leads the way. To gaol—to the stake with her!

NICHOLAS: By the saints, they shall not have that woman!

[*PETER holds him back. JOSSE and the NEIGHBOURS run out to see the arrest.*]

MOLL: I can see her carried to the cart. O Katheline, O Nele!

NICHOLAS: Are we men, Peter, to stand and see this done?

PETER: We are men, friend Nicholas, and we bide our time.

[*MOLL weeps.*]

NICHOLAS: Tyl, the fires are lighted at your christening, but in our hearts and not our bellies, son of mine!

MOLL: Nele, motherless babe!

CURTAIN.

The Scene as before. Nine years have passed. NICHOLAS and MOLL sit together at the table, finishing their midday meal.

NICHOLAS (*pushing back his chair*): The hare was good. Never did he run faster than from your saucepan into my throat. I bless the neighbour who gave me his crossbow last winter for a sack of firewood.

MOLL: Yes, indeed you are a marksman now.

NICHOLAS: A man who cannot shoot a hare sitting at twelve paces is no man at all. We are not of the gentry who hunt for sport. Though, God be praised, we are no longer poor folk either, since my brother left us his fortune. (*Seeing her put one of the platters by the fire.*) What is the dish you set aside?

MOLL: It is a plate for Tyl and Nele, in case they should come.

NICHOLAS: Tyl has been wandering this week past, like a homeless dog of the highway.

MOLL: He may be hungry at this very hour.

NICHOLAS: Then let him return, and he shall fare as we do. Heaven was cruel to give us such a son. I thought to teach him some honest trade by this time, but away he runs, a vagabond and a drone.

MOLL: The boy is but nine years old; that is the high noon of folly. Is he not like the trees, that must shoot many buds before the coming of the full leaves? He laughs always, but faces should never be sour before they ripen. And if he passes weeks together on the high roads, he knows nothing of the grief he brings us, for his heart is joyous.

NICHOLAS: A strange mother, to wish her son away from home!

MOLL: O Nicholas, my heart dances to hear the step of some lad come down the road, and then I see it is not Tyl, and I could weep! If I would have him run free, it is not from lack of longing for him.

NICHOLAS: What will he see by the roads of Flanders? Heads on pikes, men stretched naked on the wheel, and women cast into the pit! Thirty Lutherans were burned at Louvain on one pile, lighted with gunpowder. The walls of Ghent drip blood. Are these sights fit for a growing lad?

MOLL: What will he see at home? Remember Katheline our midwife, who is called the Madwife since the sheriffs put her on the torture-bench. Can Nele call such a woman mother?

NICHOLAS: No, poor creature!

MOLL: Better let the children run from fair to fair, to see the merrymaking, than brood on such miseries in darkened streets.

NICHOLAS: It seems but a year since I danced Tyl on my hand, and set him paddling in his first dish of beans like a sparrow in a heap of corn. Well, there's a field to be ploughed before evening. Where are my wooden shoes?

MOLL: In the chimney-corner.

[NICHOLAS reaches for the shoes, and pulls them on.]

NICHOLAS: One of them fits well enough, but the other pinches. Why, here's a stick in it, and the sole bored through.

MOLL: Tyl was making a ship of it, and that was to be his mainmast.

NICHOLAS: I'll mainmast him across the rump, so I will! (*Standing up.*) Now they fit better.

MOLL (*embracing him*): O Nicholas, I miss the boy!

[*A knock at the door. Enter PETER.*]

PETER: God save all neighbours! Nicholas, a word with you.

MOLL: Is anything amiss?

NICHOLAS: Go milk the goats.

MOLL: I must know what Peter wants with you. They say the inquisitors are in the town.

NICHOLAS: Is there a heretic or a rebel among us? And if there be, shall he burn for it? I have an indulgence for ten thousand years, bought for a florin from the friars who stood this Sabbath in the churchyard porch. (*Pulling out a parchment.*) Ten thousand years! We are safe for this world and the next!

MOLL (*taking the parchment*): But do you believe what is written here?

NICHOLAS: Believe! Ask a good churchman if he believes!

MOLL: Oh, my heart misgives me! (*She goes out.*)

NICHOLAS: Well, Peter?

PETER: 'Tis about that same indulgence.

NICHOLAS: Why, will you have a slice of it, old sinner? You shall. Never let a friend burn for lack of a pennorth of parchment.

PETER: Nicholas, I am not a sober man.

NICHOLAS: That you are not.

PETER: Indeed I eat and drink more than is good for me.

NICHOLAS: Have you come here to make confession? To the priest, old tunbelly, to the priest.

PETER: Yet I think in my cups I am wiser than you.

NICHOLAS: Oho! Who will measure wisdom by the tankard?

PETER: Do you remember last night?

NICHOLAS: A pair of legs carried me to bed, and I hope they were my own.

PETER: You sat all evening in the "Rosary of Bottles," drinking winter ale.

NICHOLAS: I did, God be praised. There were friends around the table.

PETER: Friends, and others beside.

NICHOLAS: What! You, my Peter, and Jan of Roosebeke, and Josse, the dean of the fishmongers!

PETER: That same Josse is a scurvy wretch, nourished on red herrings that bring him nothing but a thirst.

NICHOLAS: A thirst is a treasure. Say what you will of fishmongers, but never disparage a thirst.

PETER: A thirst for blood breeds maggots, and a thirst for silver is never slaked.

NICHOLAS: Ha, ha! Does Josse thirst for my seven hundred crowns, my brother's inheritance, that are hidden under the hearthstone there?

PETER: He does, as he thirsted for the blood of poor Katheline, your neighbour.

NICHOLAS: Let him open his mouth never so wide, he shall not swallow them. The crowns are for Tyl my son, who shall be made a scholar by their aid.

PETER: Listen, Nicholas. Last night you boasted that you came of an ancient aldermanic family, with a coat of arms bearing four pewter pots on a ground of ale.

NICHOLAS: We are all exalted in our cups.

PETER: And that angered the fishmonger, who has hopes of being an alderman himself.

NICHOLAS: Since he thirsts, I will confer upon him a shrimp rampant on a ground of sand.

PETER: Then you spoke of your brother, who died upon the rack near Aix for bearing arms as a heretic.

NICHOLAS: If I spoke of him it was lovingly, as a brother should. God rest his soul!

PETER: And of his fortune that should have been confiscate, but lies under your

hearthstone waiting for Tyl to be grown.

NICHOLAS: Did I speak of the hiding-place?

PETER: You did, and Josse pricked up his ears.

NICHOLAS: The ale must have been heady indeed.

PETER: Then you pulled out your parchment and cried: "Come, friends, you burn in hell but a single day for every gallon of liquor, and I have ten thousand years of indulgence. Who will take a hundred years of it, and drown his belly with a good heart?"

NICHOLAS: It was spoken in jest.

PETER: But do you remember Josse with his sour face asking you the price of an indulgence for a week?

NICHOLAS: Yes, and I told him we had no scissors fine enough to cut off such a miserly strip of absolution.

PETER: He took it very ill, for to-day he goes about saying that you claim an indulgence for all crimes.

NICHOLAS: All crimes!

PETER: Even the sin of unlawfully desiring the Blessed Virgin herself.

NICHOLAS: God forbid! Besides, that one cost nine florins by the friars' tariff.

PETER: He says you boast of it.

NICHOLAS: Then he lies in his throat!

PETER: And he cries out upon you for a heretic like your brother, and vows his fortune was sent you out of Germany to bring up a son in the Lutheran heresy.

NICHOLAS: It was sent out of Germany, indeed.

PETER: I am troubled for you, friend Nicholas. At the time of Katheline's trial you escaped the nets, for then you were poor, and it was no man's interest to inform against you. But this silver in the house is a mighty lodestone for greed, and I fear me an information is laid.

NICHOLAS: An information? Shall I saddle the ass and flee with my wife into Brabant? No, for vengeance would fall upon Tyl at his homecoming.

PETER: And the Spanish troopers would overtake your ass. You must stand fast here. Come boldly with me and put a merry face on the business. If you can laugh Master Josse out of countenance you may yet go free.

NICHOLAS: Can the sun melt stones? But I will go with you, Peter, and thank you for your friendly word.

[MOLL *returns.*

MOLL: Where are you going?

NICHOLAS: To drown last night's memory in a quart of ale.

[NICHOLAS and PETER *go out.* MOLL *gazes after them, then busies herself at the table and afterwards goes to the window.*

MOLL: O Tyl, my Tyl, if you were home again! (*She goes out by the other door.*)

[*The scene remains empty for an instant, then the lid of a coffer is seen rising, and TYL, a boy of nine, peeps out. At some sound in the house he closes the lid, but presently he lifts it again and jumps on to the floor. All his movements have the character of dancing. He runs to the two doors in turn and listens. Then he runs to the hearth, takes a fire-iron, prizes up the hearthstone, and pulls out a jingling bag of money. He replaces the stone, dances round the room with the bag in his hand, and runs to the coffer, where he conceals himself as KATHELINE enters. She is half-blind, and hobbles on a stick.*

KATHELINE (*coming in backwards*): There stood an ox by the garden gate. Drive him away, sweet Hanske, sweet devil mine. It was because of oxen that they put the fiery cap on me, devil dear. Sweet Hanske, 'tis your widow Katheline calling. Is any one at home? See, devil darling, my poor feet are wounds. See what they did to thy dear. Do you hear the knocking in my head? It is the soul knocking at the door to fly away. If Hanske comes, I will bid him make a hole in my head. Take a knife, devil dear, take a knife. (*She comes to the middle, and raps on the table.*) God save all here. Aye, you, Master Nicholas, and Moll, and Nele too. Is she your daughter? A bonny girl—ha, ha! When Hanske comes he will fill my head again, then I shall know you all. I cannot see you now, good people. It seems to me your house is empty, but it should not be empty yet. No, not yet. The sands are running. There, I heard one of you moving. O, my ears are sharp enough!

[TYL *jumps out of the coffer.*

Who are you? Who is he, devil dear? Why, I know you; you are Ulenspiegel. But not yet, not yet.

[TYL *dances round her with the bag of silver.*

And what have you there? Silver, silver.

[TYL *plucks up her apron, and hangs the bag on her girdles.*

Fie upon you! A maiden's fortune under her gown!

[TYL *pulls at her dress.*

Shall I hide it for you? But where?

[TYL *points to the ground.*

Deep down, deep down it shall be laid. In my well, in the bucket of my well. Deep down, they will seek indoors.

[TYL *dances round her again.*

And where is my Nele?

[TYL *taps on the coffer and NELE jumps out. They dance round her together, then pull her towards the door.*

I can keep a secret, little ones. Deep down. Lie close, little ones. Footsteps—lie close!

[TYL and NELE *run together to the coffer, and jump in as KATHELINE hobbles to the door. MOLL enters breathless.*

MOLL: O Katheline, the constables are at the gate! Go meet my man, and bid him take to the fields!

KATHELINE: Ha, ha! Do you hear me jingle, sister? I have music under my gown to make the lads run after me.

MOLL: O, poor Katheline, I am afraid for my man and all of us!

KATHELINE (*pushing her off*): Hush! Never jingle them too loud, sister. Deep down they shall be laid, deep down. In cool dark water. Jump, frog, into the bucket. The stars are lighted.

[*A murmur outside.*

MOLL: O misery, she hears nothing! I speak to a wall. (*Shaking her.*) Katheline, Katheline, the constables are at the door!

KATHELINE: Jingle, jingle, sister. Heads for Spanish Philip, tails for Flemish Tyl. The crowns are kissing.

MOLL: My man is taken!

[*The door is thrown open, and NICHOLAS, struggling, is dragged in between two constables. After them enters the SHERIFF, with PETER, JOSSE, and NEIGHBOURS.*

SHERIFF: Is this the prisoner's house?

JOSSE: It is, your honour.

SHERIFF (*to JOSSE*): And it is here, you say, that the money is hidden?

JOSSE: Under that hearth, your honour.

SHERIFF: If it be found, you will claim your reward at the trial.

NICHOLAS: My crowns were for my son!

SHERIFF: To bring him up in the Lutheran heresy, so the informer declares.

PETER: The fishmonger!

NEIGHBOURS: The fishmonger!

SHERIFF: The house will be searched, and all within it if need be. Let no person cross the threshold.

KATHELINE (*moaning*): O Hanske, make a hole in my head, dear Hanske, and let the soul fly out!

SHERIFF: Who is this woman?

PETER: She is Katheline, called the Madwife since she was tried for sorcery before your honour's court.

SHERIFF: And who is this Hanske on whom she calls?

JOSSE: He is the devil! Hanske is her name for him. Burn her for a witch!

SHERIFF: You are too zealous, Master Josse. But we cannot be disturbed by her ravings. (*To his men.*) Let her pass, and bar the door behind her.

[*The NEIGHBOURS part, murmuring, and make way to let KATHELINE pass.*]

KATHELINE: Jump, frog, the hole is made. An empty head, and knocking within. Drive the ox from the gate, good people. (*She goes out.*)

SHERIFF (*to one of his men*): Take a crowbar, and lift up that hearthstone.

NICHOLAS (*struggling to be free*): My crowns! My brother's fortune, saved for Tyl!

PETER: Say no more.

MOLL: O my poor husband! I could tear the emperor with these nails!

SHERIFF: Silence, woman!

CONSTABLE (*at the hearth*): There is a hole, but it is empty.

NICHOLAS: Empty!

JOSSE: That is false.

PETER: Oho! Truth is falsehood now!

NICHOLAS: My crowns are stolen!

JOSSE: The silver is in the house! I demand a search.

SHERIFF: On your head be it, Master Josse.

JOSSE: He has forbidden books as well. I demand a search.

SHERIFF (*to the constable*): Open that coffer.

NICHOLAS: If books are in it, they were put there by an enemy!

SHERIFF: We shall judge of that. Open the coffer.

[*The coffer is opened. TYL and NELE spring up.*]

NICHOLAS: Tyl!

MOLL: Nele!

PETER: Ha, ha! Fishmonger, here are your Lutheran books!

[*Laughter among the NEIGHBOURS.*]

SHERIFF: Silence! (*To NICHOLAS.*) Whose are these children?

NICHOLAS: Mine.

SHERIFF: Their names?

NICHOLAS: Tyl and Nele.

SHERIFF: How came they there?

NICHOLAS: They come and go with the winds.

JOSSE (*beside himself*): This is devil's work! The Madwife has the money.
Search her house next door.

SHERIFF: Go, two of you.

[*Two constables go out.*]

And now, Peter Goedzak, stand forward.

[*PETER stands forward.*]

It is declared that you were drinking last night in a tavern with the prisoner, when he unlawfully sold indulgences and mocked at Purgatory.

PETER: He sold strips of parchment, surely, but without contempt of holy matters.

SHERIFF: At what price?

PETER: At the price of a quart of ale, which he drank himself, like a good citizen at his ease.

SHERIFF: You heard no mockery of the Blessed Virgin or the saints?

PETER: I did not, so help me God.

JOSSE: But I heard it!

SHERIFF: Nor any mention of his brother, whom he declared to have been murdered for bearing arms as a heretic against his Majesty?

PETER: He spoke of his brother indeed, but not unlawfully.

JOSSE: Do not believe him, your honour. This man is another rebel. In this very house, at the christening of the children, I heard him shout a lawless toast—"Steel for the heart of Spain!"

SHERIFF (*to PETER*): Is that true?

PETER: It was nine years back, and among neighbours.

SHERIFF: We are in a nest of heretics.

[The two constables return.]

Have you searched the Madwife's house?

CONSTABLE: The woman was there, your honour, but we found no money.

NICHOLAS: Come to me, my Tyl, my merry boy!

CONSTABLE: Behind the wall of the prisoner's garden we found two broken images.

[Movement among the NEIGHBOURS.]

SHERIFF: Bring them in. (*Fragments of stone are brought forward.*) These are images of the blessed saints Martin and Antony. How came they here?

NICHOLAS: I know not.

JOSSE: Maybe they were carried by the wind!

SHERIFF: Silence! Nicholas the Coalman, have you any reason to give why you should not be committed for trial on the charges of sedition and heresy? Consider well before you speak.

NICHOLAS (*looking about him*): We are all friends here, save you, Master Josse, and you, Master Sheriff, and your constables. My Lord looketh from on high; shall I darken His sunlight by denials? My son Tyl stands there, no taller than my hips; shall I lie before him? My neighbours listen; shall they say to one another, "There goes the man who forswore himself to save his skin?" Let drought and tempest wither up the trees of Flanders, sooner than freedom die beneath their shade. No books are in this house, for I have no learning; and the images you have found were laid at my door by an enemy. But in our hearts are images, and in our minds are thoughts, that shall not be broken.

NEIGHBOURS: Have pity, sir! Mercy, your honour!

SHERIFF: Are you a heretic?

NICHOLAS: Of that let God be judge.

SHERIFF: Do you reject the authority of Holy Church?

NICHOLAS: Of that let God be judge.

PETER (*crying out*): Nicholas!

JOSSE (*triumphantly*): He has confessed!

SHERIFF (*to the Constables*): Take him to prison, and see that these answers be written down. Let him say farewell to his wife and children. Make way there!

CONSTABLES: Way for the Sheriff!

[*The NEIGHBOURS fall back. The SHERIFF goes out.*]

MOLL (*swooning*): Nicholas, my man!

CURTAIN.

The scene as before. Three weeks have passed. There is a red flicker in the sky, and the bells are tolling. MOLL sits at the table with TYL asleep in her arms and NELE at her feet.

KATHELINE *appears in the doorway.*

KATHELINE: The fire, the fire! Smoke and murmuring; stones in the air like birds. Make a hole, make a hole, and let the soul fly out! Take away the fire, make a hole!

MOLL (*staring before her*): Is it finished?

KATHELINE (*coming to her*): Ashes in my hand. Ashes of Nicholas. From the hole in the fire. For Tyl, who sleeps.

MOLL: Give me the ashes. They shall beat against his heart.

END OF THE PROLOGUE.

ACT I

The Scene is a market-place where fairs are held, and the time late in the afternoon of a spring day. In the background is the apse of a church, with figures of the saints in niches and an exterior pulpit under a canopy. To the right are wooden tables set around the porch of an inn, and to the left is a covered cart with its shafts resting on the ground. Townspeople sit drinking at the tables. One of them plays the Flemish bagpipes as music for a country dance. The dance is ending when TYL, now a young man in the twenties, comes from the background and seats himself at one of the tables. The handsome young HOSTESS comes out to serve him.

HOSTESS: Young man, I know your face.

TYL: I am Lord of Fenland, Baron Bulrush, and Count of Ditchwater. And in this town, where I was born, I own a hundred acres of moonshine.

HOSTESS: What land is that?

TYL: A desert sown with seeds of hope, fair hostess. Draw me a quart for the price of a thimbleful.

HOSTESS: Are you not Tyl, son of Nicholas the Coalman?

TYL: Speak lower, if you love me.

HOSTESS: Why, have the Spaniards set a price on your head?

TYL: Let us not jog their memory.

HOSTESS: For your father's sake you shall drink for nothing in my house.

TYL: Would it were for my own sake!

HOSTESS: What, rude boy, are you grown to manhood already?

TYL: Fatherless as standing corn, motherless as a fallen apple. But ripe, my beauty, ripe. Will you not taste and see?

HOSTESS: I think you are of the age when all women are one.

TYL: And one woman all.

HOSTESS: But am I the one?

TYL (*taking her by the waist*): Try me and see.

HOSTESS (*escaping him*): Nay, I will take your word for your manhood.

TYL: I have a man's eyes and ears. (*Lowering his voice.*) They tell me you have customers to-day.

HOSTESS: Dark men are in the town—dark strangers dancing with our maids. Their skins are brown as chestnuts.

TYL: The Spanish sun has roasted them.

HOSTESS: What is afoot?

TYL: Deeds are afoot. My ears are open. Therefore be silent, hostess.

HOSTESS: My lips are firm.

TYL: Your lips are cherries of a Flemish tree.

HOSTESS: Golden tongue! But here, I think, comes the maid of your choice.

[The HOSTESS goes away, and presently NELE comes from the background. She and TYL are left alone together.]

TYL (*going towards her*): Nele, my love!

NELE: Nay, never touch me, for I am vexed with you. Must I mow the fields alone, while you go a-fairing in the town? I think you could not heed me less if we were married already.

TYL: I have not come a-fairing, Nele.

NELE: Then why must I seek for you in the taverns? Aye, and find you there! The hay stands thick and sweet; the scythe is set for mowing; and yet to-day you were fled like a bat before the sunrise.

TYL: This night I heard a trumpeter.

NELE: The wind in the trees, maybe.

TYL: I heard men marching and the roll of drums.

NELE: It was but thunder, Tyl.

TYL: It was thunder indeed, but the storm was in my breast.

NELE: Tyl, my heart has stopped! What are you saying?

TYL: The storm is in my breast. O joyous month of May! . . . The boughs are streaming music; come, good Inquisitors, 'tis time to burn and hang.—Wild roses are aflower; come, sweet informers, pluck a nosegay from our hearts.—The bees are swarming; let the King inherit honeycombs.—O lovely month of May! The finches pipe for dancing maids; come, sword and pike, come, fire and gallows.—O gentle month of May!

NELE: Beloved, let me share your bitterness and make it sweet.

TYL: I am lonely, Nele, lonely in the midst of men; and for that ill there is no cure. My father's ashes beat against my heart, and my mother's grave gives root to oaken cudgels. It is fifteen years since they are gone, and still Death reaps in Flanders.

Where Death reaps, how shall men mow? If I am idle, who will stir? If I sleep, who will wake? If I flinch, who will stand fast?

NELE: Let any man dare call you coward!

TYL: I call myself coward while Spanish goats browse on our fields. A man's part is to drive them headlong.

NELE: And a woman's, you will say, to weep at home.

TYL: Nele, I must needs go.

NELE: Yes, you must needs go, and I know it, Tyl.

TYL: Your image shall be next my heart.

NELE: I would rather your head were next my bosom. But I think your dame was right. You are of the age when all women are one.

TYL: And one woman all.

NELE: "Am I the one?" she asked you, and her eyes laughed, for she knew she was not. Shall I ask it too?

TYL (*as if to embrace her*): You are the one.

NELE: I shall be yours when you need me, wild lover.

TYL: Do I not need you now?

NELE: As little as the scythe that leans against your gate.

TYL: As much as the sun that warms the meadow.

NELE: As little as comfort, as little as peace.

TYL: As much as hope, as much as longing. O, Nele, I am all afire for you! Lower not your eyes, my sweet. And cover not your breasts; the sun would paint them.

NELE: Golden tongue, golden heart, shall I believe you?

TYL: Believe yourself!

NELE: Nay, I will marry no pilgrim at the outset of his pilgrimage. Never call me a millstone round the neck of adventure. You shall wait for my kisses till your homecoming.

TYL: I shall run the swifter to the fight.

NELE: But not the swifter from the enemy. O, Tyl, guard yourself! Beware the fire in which your father burned!

TYL: I am fireproof.

NELE: Where flames fail, a sword may strike.

TYL: I have a coat of mail under my skin.

NELE: Tyl, you mock me. I feel naught but flesh and blood, soft as my own. If you should be wounded, who will tend you? Give me a doublet and let me follow you to the fight.

TYL: Then losing you, I might lose all. No, Nele, the road is for me alone.

NELE: Is there no storm within my breast? What of my mother, who was maddened, worse than murdered? When I think of her, how can I fold arms and look sadly out of window? Can I be content to drive the geese to market while you drive the Spaniards to their doom?

TYL: Nele, you speak wildly now. I could take you for a witch.

NELE: My mother was a witch, they said. She knew the magic of black skies and serpent waves. She saw the gleam of Satan's smile before the thunder.

TYL: Nele!

NELE: But all I know is noonday magic—the spell of trees in blossom and the quivering air, the breath of grass, the crackle of the gorse. I waken with the birds, and toil with the bees, and swoon in silence with the glowing earth. O, Tyl! when hawthorn blooms and summer is near, then I could leave this world and fly beyond the stars—to you, to you!

TYL: If I could have a thousand lives, they should be yours. In every day you are the silent, secret hour.

NELE: Brave words for bitter partings!

TYL: My Nele, sweeter times will come. One day on apple, plum and pear trees, in our Flemish orchards, we may see a Spaniard hang from every bough.

NELE (*covering her face*): There is but one sweet time—that is your homecoming. Go, then, wild lover, since you must. I will be faithful.

TYL: Shall I find you safe when I return?

NELE: I will be faithful, Tyl. Ask me no more; for I will not ask you so much. Must we part now?

TYL: This very day. I take the road at sunset.

NELE: Will you not make provision for your journey?

TYL: I have ten crowns. The rest are hidden in the place you know.

NELE: Now I am vexed with you indeed. Are there no geese in my flock, that you set out like a hungry vagabond on the road?

TYL: I thought to slip from the town unseen.

NELE: Unseen you may be, but not unprovided. Wait here for me. If I am to be housewife, and furnish your larder, I may yet hold my tears a little while.

TYL: Nele——

NELE: Wait.

[*She goes. A movement is presently seen within the cart. The canvas covering is stealthily drawn aside, and there appears the round face of*

LAMME GOEDZAK.

LAMME: Hist!

[*He disappears.*

TYL: Who spoke?

LAMME (*reappearing*): Hist! (*He holds up in one hand a half-eaten loaf and in the other a flask of wine.*)

TYL (*turning upon him*): Lamme Goedzak!

LAMME: Aye, Lamme. Is the maiden gone?

TYL: She will return.

LAMME: That is well, for I think she spoke of provisions. (*He clammers out of the cart, still munching.*) She puts me in mind of my wife, and then I grieve. And when I grieve, I needs must eat and drink.

TYL: Do you always grieve, Lamme?

LAMME (*munching*): I am the saddest of men.

TYL: Yet I think you will not waste away.

LAMME: Do you know, Tyl, where our soul has its dwelling?

TYL: No, Lamme.

LAMME: In our stomach it dwells, like a good husbandman, tilling our meat and drink. Mark you, I do not say that meat and drink are all. They are but the soil of life. They need the tillage of the spirit, as earth needs the plough. While the body lives, the soul must labour.

TYL: And when the body dies, what then?

LAMME: Ah, Tyl, that is the saddest of thoughts—a poor soul sent fasting through Purgatory without a strip of earthly soil to call its own! When I think of that, I could empty a barrel at one draught. (*He lifts his bottle and drinks.*)

TYL: Come, come, this hasty drinking benefits no part but the kidneys. Give me the bottle.

LAMME (*giving him the bottle*): Will you drink any better?

TYL: I will drink with joyful temperance. (*He lifts it to his lips.*) But call me Spaniard if there is a sparrow's draught remaining.

LAMME: I have been very sad this morning, and my cellar is almost dry. (*He gropes in the cart and pulls out another bottle and a piece of meat, which he cuts in slices and devours.*)

TYL: Lamme, you eat too fast. I am a pilgrim, and need sustenance too.

LAMME (*giving him meat*): You shall have four slices of the ham of melancholy, since you are parting from your maid. But do not grieve too deeply, lest we devour all our store.

TYL: I will grieve in moderation. (*Eating.*) So you are still seeking for your wife who left you?

LAMME: Aye, Tyl. (*Eating.*) My dear sweet wife! How shapely she was, and how lovely her eyes! The neighbours said she cared for naught but ribbons and laces, but who will blame her? Are not the flowers richly dressed?

TYL: They are, Lamme.

LAMME: And her hands, her little white hands! Never would I let her blacken them with kitchen drudgery. Not a pan did she touch in two years.—Take a pull at this flask; I will drink later.—Yes, I swept the house, I made the bed, I washed the dishes for her.—Eat, Tyl, this ham was smoked in Ghent.—True, she came home late o' nights, but I was so glad to see her face again that I never scolded her. Those lips, those eyes! When she left me, I lost all.—Drink, Tyl, this is a Brussels vintage with the flavour of Burgundy.

TYL: Why did she leave you?

LAMME (*waving a crust*): Ah, why indeed? How can I tell? One day she was there, and the next she was gone. Will she come back to me?

TYL: Two things never return, once they are flown—money spent and a love grown weary.

LAMME: Maybe I was too boorish for her liking. Yes, I am a coarse fellow, God help me, and no fit mate for such sweetness as hers. Moonface, she called me. And she would pull down her sleeves when I looked upon her round white arms. Oh, those arms! Daily bread of love, shall I never eat of thee again? Wild thyme of kisses, shall I never taste your fragrance?—Tyl, is there any wine left in the flask?

TYL: A drop or two.

LAMME: Give it me, for a lump comes into my throat when I think of her. New waves that roll along the sunny river—where are the old waves now?—Feel in the

pouch and see if there be one more slice of ham.

TYL: Half a slice.

LAMME (*munching it*): Then I am half comforted. Aye, Tyl, my heart is big with one memory.

TYL: As your paunch is big with victuals. How came you in that cart?

LAMME: The cart is mine. You must know that I am now a man of substance.

TYL: So much is plain to the eye.

LAMME: I came a-fairing to seek my wife. For I hope to meet her face in the crowd, and I look into the faces of the girls who pass and they look into mine.

TYL: That I am sure they do.

LAMME: And then misfortunes befall me, Tyl. This morning I looked into the eyes of such a beauty, and before I could crave her pardon we were arm-in-arm together on the way to her lodging.

TYL: Oho!

LAMME: But if I sinned, it was from a good heart. I would not disappoint the girl, having given her such a promise of my inclination.

TYL: You are as gentle as ever, my friend. Well, harness your horse and drive home again before sunset, for our ways must part.

LAMME: Did you not speak of some pilgrimage that you must make?

TYL: I am seeking men who shall save the land of Flanders.

LAMME: That is Greek to me, but I am seeking my wife, and we might go together.

TYL: Do you love a soldier's life, Lamme?

LAMME: I cannot run, and standing still I offer too generous a mark to the enemy. But short of battle, the soldier's life pleases me well. I love taverns and music, and wenches with a rolling eye—saving my dear wife's memory. I have a soldierly love of fishing, too. A well-baked carp—is there a sweeter dish? And I can carry messages through the lines of foemen; trust me for that. I can swallow a parchment for secrecy if need be, though it goes much against an orderly stomach. Be my captain, friend Tyl, and let me serve you. Between your wits and mine we shall not starve.

TYL: Let me give you warning first.

LAMME: Nay, do not cool my courage while it simmers. I am in the mood to go blindfold to the fray. Tell me only what our part shall be.

TYL: We shall be two fortune-tellers, Lamme.

LAMME: Fortune-tellers?

TYL: Going from fair to fair, offering to show men the mirrors of themselves.

LAMME: Not without reward, I hope?

TYL: Not without reward.

LAMME: I can tell no fortunes, but I will shout your praises at the booth, and take the pence if there be any.

TYL: You shall take the kicks as well. For sometimes we shall ply another trade.

LAMME: A dangerous trade, I wager?

TYL: We shall be two friars, you a Fleming, and I a Dutchman.

LAMME: I like not friars.

TYL: Travelling by express command of Alva, to convert the heretics of this land to the true Faith. See, here is our parchment bearing the great seal of the Church. With this passport we shall enter the halls of the nobility and the kitchens of the fat abbots. They will surely feed us on capons and tell us their secrets. So lick your chops, Lamme. On the days when we are friars our bellies will thrive.

LAMME: Where did you find this parchment?

TYL: A dead man dropped it unawares.

[A silence.]

LAMME: I like not dead men.

TYL: We must all die once.

LAMME: I would it were deferred as long as possible. But shall we not be carrying on the trade of spies?

TYL: By right of war, we shall.

LAMME: Alas, I know that we shall thread our way between rack, rope and stake; and terror will sour the very supper we have stolen! My poor fat, that I had so much trouble to make, will be stripped from my bones in a twinkling! Pray let us keep to fortune-telling, and leave affairs of state to our betters. Oh, where are you, my wife? Where are you, fresh cream and golden cakes of courting days?

TYL: What, does your mouth water once more?

LAMME: Tyl, I would rather kill a chicken than a man. When lead-wind blows, my teeth chatter. When crow's-meat swings upon a tree, my stomach sickens. I confess it.

TYL: Indeed you have nothing to avenge, my friend, my gentle lamb. Leave me to take the road alone.

LAMME: Alone?

TYL: I am a pilgrim.

LAMME: Tyl, do not leave me. To lose a wife and then a friend would make me sorrowful indeed, and I should burst with over-feeding. I will complain no more, I promise you. If need be, I will face a rain of bullets; aye, and a forest of swords. I will even live among those fearsome men who call themselves soldiers and drink blood like wolves. If one day you see me stricken at your feet, bury me where I fall. And if you meet my wife, tell her I died for her sake.

TYL: Would that be true, friend Lamme?

LAMME: At least 'tis true I could not bear to live unloved. No, Tyl, I could not bear it. Without the meat and drink of love I wither to a shadow. (*He weeps.*)

TYL: Lamme, valiant heart! You and I will take the road together.

LAMME: Lead on, my captain. But I see your maid returning.

TYL: Go first, and make your cart ready.

LAMME (*lingering*): Tyl, let her not soften you. These women spread their nets about us; do I not know it? Be firm as I am resolute.

TYL: Go, Lamme. Seek your wife awhile.

LAMME: Alas, if I could but taste the bitter sweets of a farewell!

[*He clambers into the covered cart as NELE returns singing.*]

NELE:

SONG.

Say, stranger, did you meet
My lover gone astray?
He roams on folly's feet—
Saw you him, pray?

My heart the lamb he bore
To his high eagle's nest—
Shall I be bruised more
Upon his breast?

Say, stranger, did you meet
My lover gone astray?
He roams on folly's feet—
Saw you him, pray?

[N_{ELE} *re-enters*.]

N_{ELE}: My Tyl, here is the satchel for your journey.

T_{YL} (*motionless*): O rose of love, my breast is torn!

[L_{AMME} *peeps out of the cart*.]

L_{AMME}: Thoughtful maid, if he does not accept, it is but in forgetfulness. Give me the goose. (*He pulls it into the cart and disappears. Dusk is beginning to fall.*)

N_{ELE}: Does Lamme go with you?

T_{YL}: We are fellow-pilgrims.

N_{ELE}: I am glad. But perhaps you will forget me the sooner.

T_{YL}: I would not leave you weeping, sweet.

N_{ELE}: I am not weeping.

T_{YL}: No, but water pours from your eyes. Will you set up a fountain in the market-place? None but the dead have fountains in their memory.

N_{ELE}: I will be brave.

T_{YL}: Tears are pearls, but smiles are honey. I will make you a song on the road, if you will smile but once. The birds shall carry it back to you.

N_{ELE}: Golden tongue, golden heart, be gone!

T_{YL}: Kiss me but once.

N_{ELE} (*kissing him*): Avenger of Flanders, godspeed! Playmate and love, farewell!

TYL: Now falls a thunder shower indeed. My cheeks are wet. This salt of love shall be remembrance.

LAMME (*calling from the cart*): Tyl, are you ready?

TYL: I am ready!

[As he looks toward the cart, NELE suddenly runs off. When he turns to her again she is gone.]

LAMME (*peeping out of the cart*): The evening darkens.

TYL: My arms outstretched and empty. Lamme, she is flown! My maid is flown! She was here but a moment ago, and now——

LAMME: Now we are brothers, my captain.

[Lights begin to appear in the windows of the inn, and townsfolk return to the square. TYL beckons to LAMME, who clambers out of the cart.]

TYL (*drawing him aside*): Nightfall is dawn for us. Here, in this town, begins our pilgrimage.

LAMME: What do you plan?

TYL: We are fortune-tellers. Your cart shall be our booth. I go to fetch a lantern and our stock-in-trade.

LAMME: Must I stay here alone?

TYL: Stand before your booth, and shout the words I whisper from within. We will give a shadow-play.

LAMME: Would I were safe in bed!

TYL: I come in a twinkling.

[He goes behind the cart. The townsfolk approach.]

TOWNSMAN: Who is the fat man?

ANOTHER: Some farmer come to market.

TOWNSMAN: In these times, none but farmers can grow fat.

ANOTHER: And priests.

TOWNSMAN: Aye, priests and farmers.

LAMME (*boldly*): I'll have you know I am a fortune-teller!

TOWNSMAN: Oho! That paunch grown by fortune-telling!

[Laughter. TYL enters from behind the cart with a lantern. The cart, illuminated, forms a screen for a grotesque shadow-play. The group of onlookers grows larger. TYL thrusts a drum and drumstick through an

opening at the side.

TYL (*to LAMME*): All is ready! Beat your drum!

VOICES: A shadow-play! A shadow-play!

[*LAMME beats his drum, lending one ear to TYL, who speaks within. Murmurs among the crowd.*]

LAMME (*beginning his harangue*): Illustrious gentlefolk, honest tradespeople, and plain rustics——

VOICE: Rustic yourself!

TYL (*within the cart*): Gentlefolk, gentlefolk, Lamme.

LAMME: Noble lords and ladies, flowers of fashion, ornaments of chivalry——

VOICE: He mocks us!

LAMME: I present to you the learned Doctor Owlglass, who for the matter of twopence, cast into this drum, will show you the mirrors of yourselves.

VOICE: We can buy a mirror for a farthing.

LAMME: Here are none of your common glasses that show youth its beauty and age its wrinkles. If you would see yourselves with your own eyes, go buy your farthing mirrors at the fair and do not trouble us. We are no silvery flatterers who steal your pence.

TYL (*within*): Good, Lamme, good!

LAMME: But if you would read the riddles of your fate, step boldly forward. Here is the screen on which the learned doctor conjures up his images. And here is the doctor himself in the mask of wisdom.

[*The shadow of an owl appears. The crowd grows larger.*]

VOICES: An owl! Tu-whit, tu-whoo!

LAMME: O scholarly bird! Most sapient fowl! Wingéd oracle! The doctor speaks in you. Now the image is gone, the screen is empty. Throw your pence into the drum, lords and ladies. At the chiming of their music you shall see your fates appear. Loosen your purses, we will show you the plain truth. Who will be first? Is there not a soldier among you?

[*A SOLDIER is thrust forward by two maids and throws his pence into the drum. The shadow of a great cooking-pot appears.*]

VOICES: A pot! A cooking-pot! Show us our fortunes, not your dinner!

LAMME: We show your fortunes. The doctor says that battle will make hash of you, soldier.

VOICES: Spanish Philip has made hash of you already!

LAMME: Pray hush, good lords and ladies! We are no rebels, but plain fortune-tellers.

VOICE: They are rogues!

[The SOLDIER passes on.]

LAMME: Come, is there not a lawyer in this company? Being learned men ourselves, we will show him his fortune for a penny.

[A LAWYER struts forward and throws his coin into the drum. There appears the shadow of a great pair of scales, one of them weighted by a crown. Laughter among the onlookers.]

VOICES: Spanish justice! The scales are weighted! The crown is in the pan!

VOICE: The Spanish crown!

LAMME: Pray, good lords and ladies, let us have no treason. The crown is heavy, but we are fortune-tellers.

VOICE: They are spies!

[The LAWYER passes on.]

LAMME: I see a monk among you. Come, holy brother, will you see your image?

[A blear-eyed MONK is thrust forward.]

MONK: It is known we never carry money.

LAMME: Then the money carries thee. Let me feel in thy sandal.

[Laughter among the crowd.]

MONK: My son, it belongs to Holy Church. Yet I will give thee a farthing. *(He throws it into the drum. Shadows appear of a ham-bone and a tankard.)*

LAMME: The doctor says thou art a ham cupboard and a cellar for ale. Give us another farthing for speaking truth, O brother in gluttony.

MONK *(incensed)*: I will throw no good money after bad. *(He passes on.)*

LAMME: The Church has spurned us; where is the laity? *(To an OLD MAN with a YOUNG WIFE)*. Come, venerable sir and young madam, will you not read your fortune in the glass? We ask but twopence from a married pair.

VOICE: Read your fortune, greybeard!

[The OLD MAN pays his money. The shadow appears of a pair of stag's antlers in the likeness of a tree, with trinkets hanging from it.]

VOICES: A pair of horns! A tree!

LAMME: Aye, a tree that buds in frosty weather. This is the hornbeam, lords and

ladies. The doctor shows you finery sprouting from its branches.

[Laughter among the crowd.]

VOICE: Ha, ha! The doctor is a prophet!

OLD MAN (*raising a stick*): He is an impudent knave!

LAMME: I said we were no flatterers!

[While the OLD MAN is jostled by the crowd, his YOUNG WIFE steps forward.]

YOUNG WIFE: Will you show me my mirror?

[TYL himself peeps out of the back of the cart and beckons her.]

TYL: Step closer. (*She obeys, and he kisses her.*) Your mirror is proud youth, my pretty one.

YOUNG WIFE: For shame on you!

LAMME: Well, young madam, was the picture worth a penny?

YOUNG WIFE: It was worth a drubbing. (*She drops a coin into the drum. A sound of marching men is heard.*)

VOICE: Make way for the guard!

VOICES: The guard!

LAMME: I like not guards. Tyl, we had best be gone.

VOICE: Make way for the Count!

VOICES: The Count!

LAMME: I like not Counts. (*Whispering behind the cart.*) Must we stay?

TYL (*peeping out*): We will show him his fortune. Cry your wares.

[Enter a GUARD, then the COUNT and his CHAMBERLAIN.]

LAMME: I tremble like a leaf. (*Crying out.*) Noble lords and ladies, here is the learned Doctor Owlglass at your service. Buy a florin's worth of wisdom, lords and ladies!

COUNT (*striding up to the cart*): Who is the fellow within the booth?

VOICES: A fortune-teller, my lord! A rogue! He takes our pence to mock at us!

COUNT: Bring him out!

TYL (*within*): Show me your florin.

COUNT: You shall have it, and a flogging too, if your picture pleases me not. (*He throws a coin into the drum. The shadow of a lantern appears.*)

VOICE: A lantern!

VOICES: A lantern-shadow!

[TYL *draws aside the canvas of the cart and shows a lighted lantern.*

VOICE: No, 'tis lighted!

TYL (*appearing*): A lantern for the night that falls on Flanders.

COUNT: What shall I do with your lantern?

TYL: You shall look as far as Spain.

COUNT: Will you have ten lashes on your back?

TYL: I will have twenty, if I can put eyes in your head.

LAMME: I pray you, Tyl, remember there are two of us.

COUNT: I will speak with this fortune-teller. (*To his CHAMBERLAIN.*) Bid the crowd disperse.

[*The crowd disperses. TYL clammers out of the cart carrying his lantern.*

LAMME: Now, Tyl, be civil, for my sake.

COUNT: Are you not the vagabond they call Tyl Ulenspiegel?

TYL: Are you not the nobleman they call the Drinking Hercules?

LAMME: My lord, pardon my friend's bluntness. He means it not amiss.

CHAMBERLAIN: Shall they both be flogged, my lord, or only one of them?

COUNT: Wait a little.

LAMME: Wait a little, I pray you.—Tyl, be mannerly.

TYL (*to the COUNT*): There was a day when you strangled a Frenchman in his armour like a cockle in a shell. Are all your wits in your arms, my lord?

LAMME: God save us! Speak him fair!

[TYL *strides up to the COUNT.*

TYL: Why do you wear this cap, my lord? Why do you hang this badge about your neck—"Faithful to the king even unto the Beggar's wallet"?

LAMME (*taking courage*): Yes, indeed. Why, my lord?

TYL: Is it for the love he bears you? Is the king faithful to his beggars? Should they not press him in their arms with a loving embrace, as you pressed the Frenchman?

[*The COUNT regards him steadily.*

COUNT (*to his CHAMBERLAIN*): Order wine to be brought. (*To TYL.*) If you be not a spy of King Philip's, then you are a true Fleming. I will reward you in either case.

TYL: It shall be as you will.

COUNT: I will reward you both. This is for the spy. (*He draws his sword, and beats TYL with the flat of it.*)

TYL (*unflinching*): I have a coat of mail under my skin.

[*Wine is brought by the HOSTESS.*]

COUNT: Drink, then. This is for the Fleming.

TYL (*holding aloft his cup*): Ah, good Flemish, cinnamon speech, the saints themselves speak not its like! (*He drinks and passes the cup to LAMME.*)

COUNT: Who is this fat companion you reward for nothing?

TYL: He is my friend Lamme Goedzak, a victim of matrimony, who would wither like an apple in the oven if he did not revive his soul by constant nourishment.

LAMME: There you speak truly, Tyl.

COUNT: Whither are you going?

LAMME: To seek for men who will save the land of Flanders.

COUNT: What men are those?

TYL: When I find them, you shall learn who they are.

COUNT (*lowering his voice*): Are you a bearer of messages?

TYL: Do you know what is worth less than a burst bladder?

COUNT: No.

TYL: A secret that has been told.

COUNT (*to his CHAMBERLAIN*): I will speak with these men alone.

CHAMBERLAIN: My lord, they are vagabonds.

COUNT: Let the guards stand off.

[*The bodyguard stands at a little distance with the CHAMBERLAIN.*]

Now we can speak more privately than indoors. The times are dark.

TYL: Therefore I showed you a lantern.

COUNT: You may trust me with your message. I, too, am a good Fleming.

TYL: So said Egmont and Hoorn, the courtiers. Their heads rot on pikes in the market-place of Brussels, and the king inherits.

COUNT: They were faithless to our cause.

TYL: And who is faithful? You, my lord? Who waits for the cat to jump? Is it you, my lord?

COUNT: Fortune-teller, I have a mind to flog you yet. Give me your message.

TYL: I will tell you what you know already. The image-breakers are in your town.

COUNT: If images are broken, what is that to me?

TYL: To-day the crucifix at the Antwerp gate was thrown down. To-day the Black Virgin called Mieke was stoned in the streets.

COUNT: My townfolk rebel against the priests.

TYL: Blind Count, blind people! Strong arms and wooden wits! Are they your townfolk who rebel? Do you know the faces of these image-breakers?

COUNT: I know they wear the Beggar's cap.

TYL: O wise Count! O ruler of men! Is a man a king because a crown is on his head?

COUNT: He may be a pretender.

TYL: Then know this—all is not beggary that runs in rags.

COUNT: That may be true.

TYL: Mark the complexion of these strangers in your town. Are they not dark men?

COUNT: They speak good Flemish.

TYL: The devil speaks every tongue.

COUNT: Who are these men?

TYL: They are in the pay of Alva.

COUNT: Will you tell me this Spaniard sends image-breakers to my town?

TYL: Without a crime there is no punishment.

COUNT: O devilish cunning—to destroy his own handiwork!

TYL: A broken statue can be mended, but a dead man's fortune is confiscate for good and all.

COUNT: Come to my castle and tell me more of this.

TYL: My lord Count, I am a tavern-man. It is for you to go among your people.

COUNT: They know me well.

TYL: But you should know them better.

LAMME: Be not so hasty, Tyl. We have no lodging for to-night, and my mouth waters.

[A murmur of voices is heard.]

TYL: My lord Count, here are your image-breakers. Will you see them for yourself?

[The din comes nearer.]

CHAMBERLAIN (*approaching*): My lord, it would be prudent to withdraw from this disturbance.

COUNT: I will remain.

TYL: Stand in the shadow of our booth, and let your guards hold off.

[Men come running, led by the IMAGE-BREAKERS. In the forefront is a CANON, who is jostled by the crowd as he strives to calm them.]

CANON: Peace, my children, peace! Will you insult Our Lady?

CRIES: Mieke has a silken dress! Mieke has a golden crown! We will give them to our wenches!

[A dark leader of the mob climbs into the pulpit in the background.]

IMAGE-BREAKER: Come out of the church! Come out, Mieke, before we fetch you! Show us a miracle; let us see if you can walk! Show us your pair of legs, Mieke darling!

[Ribald laughter in the crowd.]

CANON: Silence, blasphemer!

CRIES: Ha, ha! Make the canon sing his vespers! Make him preach a sermon!

[The IMAGE-BREAKER in the pulpit crosses himself.]

IMAGE-BREAKER: I will preach you a sermon. (*Laughter.*) In the name of Three in One and One in Three—the devil keep us from arithmetic—this day our Lady Mieke was carried forth to show her wooden face in the streets. And as she went she met Satan, who mocked her and said, “There you go, Mieke, high and mighty, in your Sunday best, carried on lordly shoulders, and you have not so much as a look for poor man Satan who goes on foot.” She answered him, “Begone, foul serpent, lest I bruise your head again!” “Mieke,” said Satan, “I am stronger than you. Now I will make you dance!” And he took a whip and flogged Mieke, who ran for her life back to the church, and her lords with her, so that her jewels should not fall among the common folk. And now Mieke sits like a shivering mouse in her niche above the altar, watching Satan who cracks his whip and says, “I will make you pay for the blood and tears that flow in your name! You shall be hewn asunder, wooden image, for all the images of flesh and blood that were burned and hanged to please you! You shall come down from your altar, bloody Mieke!”

CRIES: Come down, Mieke, before we fetch you! To the river with the images!

VOICE: Long live the Beggars!

CRIES: Long live the Beggars!

[TYL *climbs into the pulpit and throws the leader of the* IMAGE-BREAKERS *down. Commotion in the crowd.*

VOICE: Who is this man?

TYL: I am a Beggar!

CRIES: He is a fortune-teller!

TYL: Fools fit to chain to madhouse walls, clods and wittings who look no further than your snouts, do you not see that this is traitor's work? They would have you sack the churches. Why? That they may call you Lutheran rebels, and inherit with the king. Friends and Flemings, pay no heed to them. Leave Our Lady and the saints untouched in the niches where they stand. In peace our craftsmen carved these images. Serene they smile upon a busy world. O friends and Flemings, drive away the crows of ruin from your midst! Look upon the leafy trees; they are budding faggots for the fires of Alva! Look upon the fields; the hemp is sown for the hangman's rope. Hear the hammer of the forges; steel-work is afoot! Let not the king inherit!

LAMME: Alas, good sirs, good people, commit no pillage! The king is very angry already; my friend Tyl told me so.

CRIES: What is the king to us?

VOICE: Into the church! Down with the images!

TYL: O leaderless folk, sheep for the butcher's block, lend no aid to the overthrow of altars! Seek out the men who drive you to such sacrilege! Beware of the Red Dog!

VOICE: This is a king's spy in the Beggar's cloak!

TYL: I am a Beggar. Let some sheriff come to confiscate my goods, and I will do as did the magistrate of The Hague. I will doff my cap and say, "Gentle thief, gracious rogue, worshipful rascal, show me your warrant." He will say the warrant is secret, for it is written in his greedy breast. And I shall give him the keys of my coffers. But afterwards I will take to the woods and arm against the tyranny.

VOICES: Arm!

TYL: Aye, arm! Beat upon the war drum, Flemings! Death is reaping in your fields. Images are wood and stone; throw them not down! Lift up your hearts! Raise up strong arms! You are lions, Flemings. Eat the dogs of the king!

VOICE: Will this fortune-teller preach rebellion?

VOICES: Who will lead us?

TYL: Have you cried upon your lords to lead you?

VOICES: The lords are traitors!

TYL: They are men like yourselves, who wait and watch. Their guards stand by while images are broken. Cry to them and they will answer you!

[The FLEMINGS in the crowd, hitherto silent, cry out.]

CRIES: To the castle! Give us a captain! Lead us, Count!

[The IMAGE-BREAKERS, separating from the rest, set up a counter-shout.]

IMAGE-BREAKERS: We will lead you! Sack the church! To the river with the images!

TYL (*above the din*): Blackamoors, I hear the florins clinking in your purses!

[The IMAGE-BREAKERS seize TYL by his feet, drag him down, and beat him. The COUNT comes from his hiding-place.]

COUNT: Bodyguard! (*A fanfare sounds.*) Seize all those stranger men!

[The guards come running, and take the IMAGE-BREAKERS prisoner.]

FLEMINGS: The Count! Our leader!

COUNT: Here is the Beggar's cap, token of weakness, badge of falsehood. I tread it underfoot. Our sign shall be a sheaf of corn for comradeship.

FLEMINGS: A sheaf of corn!

COUNT: Let Tyl come forward.

[TYL obeys.]

I lay my hands upon your shoulders; lay your hands on mine. So may our people stand united.

[They stand locked together.]

When Orange William needs five thousand men, they are in readiness.

TYL (*falling on one knee*): I go.

CHAMBERLAIN: My lord, what of the prisoners?

COUNT: I will not soil my dungeons with them. Drive them from the gates.

CHAMBERLAIN: They will carry the news to Alva.

COUNT: We, too, have a messenger. And now let all prepare.

GUARDS: Make way for the Count!

[The FLEMINGS make way for the COUNT, and then follow him with huzzas. TYL and LAMME remain.]

LAMME: Friend Tyl, I think this day's work brings us one step nearer the gallows.

TYL: Courage, Lamme, that road is long.

LAMME: The rope is shorter. Shall I ever see my wife in this world? Holy Mary, patroness of lawful loves, grant me again to rest upon her bosom, that white pillow!

TYL: Come, we will make a Protestant of you yet.

[As they pass, a lamplit window is opened above the porch of the inn and NELE, leaning out, drops a flower at their feet. The window is closed again.]

LAMME: A woman threw a rose.

TYL: Was she your wife, Lamme?

LAMME: She had the face of your maid.

TYL (*gathering up the rose*): O beauty of the world! Away!

CURTAIN.

ACT II

The Scene is an inn, the "Hive of Bees." It is late afternoon of an autumn day. To the left is the entrance from the street, and in the background and along the wall are tables. To the right is the stairway to an upper floor. Townsman are drinking at one of the tables, and near them sits a BAILIFF disguised in Flemish dress. From the upper floor a woman's voice is heard singing to the accompaniment of a viol. When the song is over the townsmen laugh together, as if at a tale that is ended. The BAILIFF moves closer to them.

BAILIFF: It is a good tale, but I can tell you a better.

A TOWNSMAN: What, better than the tale of Peter the blacksmith and his fall?

BAILIFF: There was a Jew of Amsterdam who stood in the street and summoned his enemy looking from a window. "Come down," said the Jew in the street, "and I will thump your head into your belly, so that you can peep through your ribs like a thief through prison bars."

TOWNSMAN: And what said the Jew at the window?

BAILIFF: He answered, "I will not come down, even though you offer me twice as much."

[Laughter among the listeners.]

TOWNSMAN: But Peter the blacksmith came down, and was given twice as much!

[Renewed laughter. Enter the HOST.]

HOST: Here's a merry company.

TOWNSMAN: We spoke of Peter the blacksmith and his wrestling bout.

HOST: Did any of you see that sport?

TOWNSMAN: I was there, and half the neighbours too.

HOST: There were two strangers, they say, who came to the door of his smithy and called him out.

TOWNSMAN: A round man and a slim man. They cried, "Come out, Master Smith the wrestler, come out, Strong Peter, and let us stretch your sinews for you!" The neighbours stood all amazed, waiting to see them crushed like oats in a mill. But as the smith came out of the smoke, with his sleeves rolled for the fray, the big man ran at him like a bull, and down he went. He fell against his own anvil, with the other atop of him, and never stirred for a minute at least, when he opened his eyes to ask, "Are they gone?"

HOST: And were they gone?

TOWNSMAN: Aye, with the neighbours dancing at their heels.

HOST: One of them was a big man, you say?

TOWNSMAN: So round-bellied that no one could stand within a yard of his boots. The slim man laughed and cheered him on. I think they were never seen before in these parts.

HOST: If they are never seen again I shall not grumble. Lord save us, this trade of innkeeping between the armies is dangerous enough already. Who would sell clear ale in such troubled times?

BAILIFF: Why, soldiers are the best drinkers in the world.

HOST: If they would be content with drinking, I should have no quarrel with them. It is this uncivil practice of fighting I cannot abide. There on the hill sits Duke Alva, and beyond the bridge in the plain lies Orange William—the king against the countries and the Pope against Master Luther! The roads are barred, the fords are spiked, lead whistles through our chimney-pots—and all for what? That one of them may take our peaceful town and spite the other!

BAILIFF: You should be proud that your beggarly township is a bone of contention between princes.

HOST: So we are, indeed—in a manner of speaking.

BAILIFF: But for such an occasion its name would never have been known to the world.

HOST: Now that may be true.

BAILIFF: It is a privilege to be razed to the ground in the cause of true religion.

HOST (*scratching his head*): But while we wait for the privilege it is plaguy hard to know which side to please—what with every friend a renegade and every customer a spy. (*Recalling himself.*) Saving your presence, friends and customers.

BAILIFF: You should draw us a quart apiece by way of amends.

HOST: Nay, I will do all for my customers except pay for their ale.

BAILIFF: Then I must stand treat. Bring us three quarts.

HOST: That I will.

[*Exit* HOST.]

TOWNSMAN (*to the* BAILIFF): And who might you be, sir, if we may ask?

BAILIFF: I am a traveller, come to these parts for the benefit of my health.

TOWNSMAN: Well, bless us!

BAILIFF (*with the suspicion of a threat*): And the health of my friends.

TOWNSMAN: And pray, sir, who might your friends be?

BAILIFF: Those who do not make themselves my enemies.

[*The HOST returns with ale.*

TOWNSMAN (*raising a pewter pot*): Your health, sir.

BAILIFF (*to all at the table*): I thank you, good townsmen.

TOWNSMAN: Look where the blacksmith comes.

[*Enter from the street the BLACKSMITH, limping, with his head bandaged. Laughter among the townsmen. The HOST goes over to him. The BAILIFF leans towards them, listening.*

HOST: Well, Master Smith, so you met your match at last! You whom they called Strong Peter, the lion of the countryside!

BLACKSMITH: Take care, innkeeper. The lion has claws.

HOST: Ho, ho, I thought they were drawn! Your overthrow must have been a merry sight—ha, ha! a merry sight!

BLACKSMITH (*towering over him*): Merry as a bloody nose!

HOST (*retreating*): No offence, Master Smith, no offence!

BLACKSMITH: Merry as a broken head and aching ribs!

HOST: Bless us, I hope he did you no injury. Though they say he sat heavily on your middle—ha, ha, ha!

BLACKSMITH (*threateningly*): Enough!

HOST: Indeed the men who challenged Strong Peter were brave men. And I warrant they were good Papists too.

BLACKSMITH: Papists?

HOST: Since you are a good Lutheran, Master Smith.

BLACKSMITH: My faith is no concern of any man's.

HOST: What of the muskets you forge and the bullets you cast?

BLACKSMITH: Not one firearm has been found in my smithy.

HOST: But one day Orange William may find a thousand.

BLACKSMITH (*seizing him by one arm*): Rat of an innkeeper, will you betray me to the Spaniards?

HOST (*crying out*): No offence, Master Smith, no offence! (*Rubbing his arm.*) You have a pretty grip for a wrestler just overthrown. I said only that these enemies

of yours must be Papists.

BLACKSMITH: They are dangerous men. If they should come to this house, let them be watched.

HOST (*anxiously*): Bless us, where are the officers of the law?

BLACKSMITH: You have officers enough. (*Lowering his voice.*) Behind you at the table sits a Spanish bailiff in Flemish dress. He listens while we speak. In your kitchen sit his catchpolls.

[The woman's voice is heard again, singing.]

And in your house you harbour his prisoners—Flemish women, daughters of our own folk—waiting his safe-conduct to the camp of Alva.

HOST (*doggedly*): I take all comers, and ask no questions.

BLACKSMITH: Then ask me none, but beware of these men who set upon me.

HOST: Oho! So you are planning a revenge!

BLACKSMITH: Aye, Master Innkeeper. A revenge!

[He goes out towards the kitchen. The HOST rejoins the BAILIFF and his companions.]

BAILIFF (*drinking*): And what said your Lutheran smith—the canting heretic?

HOST: He said we should beware of these enemies of his.

BAILIFF: Ha, ha! That is good! *We* should beware of them—very good! (*Drinking.*) A heretic's enemy must be my friend. I love these bold fellows already, and presently I will bring them here to take a glass with me.

HOST: Nay, stay a little. (*In his ear.*) I have a flask of old Malvoisie in the parlour.

BAILIFF: Well spoken. For the drowning of heresy, sweet wine will serve as well as bitter ale. (*Going out.*) Ha, ha! He said *we* should beware of them—very good!

[Exeunt the BAILIFF and HOST together. The townsmen remain drinking. A hubbub of voices and huzzas is presently heard. Enter from the street LAMME and TYL, followed by gaping townsfolk. LAMME marches proudly with his nose in the air. As he enters, he turns with a sweeping gesture of dismissal.]

LAMME (*to TYL*): Let this rabble depart. I would be alone.

[The townsfolk in the doorway retire, and the townsmen, emptying their pewter pots, follow them hastily. LAMME turns to TYL.]

Shall we quaff Burgundy? Shall we feast upon capons?

TYL: Order what you will. I think no tavern-keeper will dare to ask a penny of

you, so fierce is your reputation in these parts.

LAMME: I hope you speak in earnest, for I have not a penny to offer him.

TYL: Terror walks before us. Your name is worth a bodyguard of troopers. Who will dare affront Lamme, the hero who overthrew the strongest blacksmith in Flanders? The whole town knows your prowess. Did you not see the noses pressed against the windows as we strode along?

LAMME: I saw some lookers-on, indeed.

TYL: The peeping and the timorous, who dare not so much as kneel before you in the light of day. Some poor moles blinded by the radiance of your valour, some earthworms wriggling to escape the conqueror's beak.

LAMME: Am I truly feared so much?

TYL: You are a tower of valiance, and I walk in the shadow of your protection.

LAMME (*with satisfaction*): You are very welcome, Tyl. Indeed it is no more than your due, for you spurred me on to this assault. And if my fame brings you benefit—you are very welcome.

TYL: Good Lamme! Your friend is not forgotten in the hour of triumph.

LAMME: No, Tyl, no indeed. God save us all from pride! And now let me feast as befits a warrior.

TYL: Will you not first show yourself in the doorway? The people call for you.

LAMME (*in astonishment*): They call for me?

TYL: The very children cry your name. Mothers hold up their sucklings to catch a glimpse of Lamme the conqueror.

LAMME: Is it possible?

TYL: Pity the weakness of the herd, and show yourself but once. Bow to them in kingly fashion.

LAMME: And if they should set upon me?

TYL: Have no fear.

LAMME: I can but try.

[He goes to the door, opens it, and shows himself. A shout of applause is heard. LAMME bows to right and left, then he returns.]

TYL: There, are you not proud?

LAMME: I was never a hero before. Tell me, shall I grow a beard to match this warlike disposition?

TYL: No, Lamme, do not grow a beard. Better far your smooth round face, lighted by the fire of good victuals.

LAMME: Yet I must carry some outward mark of bravery, lest it ooze away. Already I marvel at my own boldness in facing that blacksmith. He was a villainous dirty creature, a bellows breathing sparks and flame. His sinews were steel. My knees quake at the thought of him.

[*The BLACKSMITH has entered by the kitchen doorway, where he stands listening. During the following he advances slowly upon the pair.*]

TYL: Yet you laid him low.

LAMME: How, Tyl? By what magic was it done?

TYL: Do not ask me, Lamme. We are none of us brave, if we look too deep into ourselves.

LAMME: You shall have no secrets from me.

TYL: Friendship without a secret is the sun without a shadow.

LAMME: You are hiding something from me. Tell me all!

TYL: I will not, for your sake.

LAMME: You shall tell me!

[*The BLACKSMITH stands close behind them, towering over both.*]

BLACKSMITH (*to TYL*): Tell him, Ulenspiegel!

LAMME (*crying out in terror*): Lord save us! (*He seeks to hide behind TYL.*)
Humour him, Tyl. Say it was but a foolish prank—say we meant him no harm!

BLACKSMITH (*indignant*): *You* meant me no harm! Ha! With these arms I could crush the fat like dew from the pores of your greasy hide!

LAMME: Humour him, Tyl, for my sake!

BLACKSMITH (*contemptuously, to TYL*): Comfort this hulk of flesh with the truth he asks for. I have urgent messages for our friends, and will return. (*He goes out.*)

LAMME: Tyl! Did he say “our friends”?

TYL: Yes, Lamme. This blacksmith himself is a friend.

LAMME: This fountain of sparks, this battering-ram?

TYL: He is of the Lutheran faith, and forges arms for our cause. In his granary are sheaves of muskets and bushels of leaden corn.

LAMME (*eagerly*): Where is he? Let me shake him by the hand! To think that I should harm such a man!

TYL: Listen, Lamme.

LAMME: I love him like a brother. How could these cruel arms have vanquished him?

TYL: How indeed?

LAMME: Why did you not restrain my ardour, Tyl?

TYL: Good Lamme, good friend, your victory was won by his consent.

LAMME: By his consent?

TYL: That he might be taken for our enemy, and we for Papists, as we came into the town.

LAMME: I'll not believe it!

TYL: Yet it is true.

LAMME: Alas for my folly, my vainglory! Am I no more than a bubble of bravery, blown and burst?

TYL: God be praised, you have more substance than a thousand bubbles. And more bravery too, for you knew nothing and ventured all.

LAMME: You should have told me of this stratagem.

TYL: I would not damp your ardour, lest we should betray our purpose. You charged the enemy with the valour of despair.

LAMME: Indeed my knees would scarcely carry me. Well, Tyl, I forgive you. My pride is tattered, but my skin is whole.

TYL: Hold your head high, my warrior. And now breathe fire and slaughter to all heretics.

LAMME: Alas, shall I ever breathe fire again?

[*Re-enter the HOST with the BAILIFF, both flushed with liquor. The HOST carries a jug of wine.*]

HOST: Good day to your worships. Are you not the brave challengers of Peter the blacksmith?

LAMME (*proudly*): We are his conquerors.

HOST: Very good, very good. (*Presenting the BAILIFF.*) Here is a fellow churchman—ha, ha! a bird of your own feather.

TYL: We are proud to know him.

LAMME: We will shake him by the hand.

HOST (*pouring out wine*): And here is a vintage I would have you taste.

TYL: We are honoured.

LAMME (*smacking his lips*): We are rejoiced.

HOST: Your worships' health.

TYL: An excellent toast.

BAILIFF: I drink to loyal churchmen.

TYL: We drink.

LAMME: We drink.

BAILIFF: To the extinction of heresy.

TYL: We drink.

LAMME (*spluttering*): We drink.

HOST: For the sake of form, may I beg to see your worships' passes? Since our town has been hemmed in between the armies, we must question every customer.

TYL: Here is our parchment.

HOST (*reading it*): Signed by Duke Alva himself. No passport could be in better form.

BAILIFF: I drink to his Highness.

TYL: His Highness!

LAMME (*spluttering*): His Highness!

HOST: In my house you will be at home.

TYL: We are sure of it.

BAILIFF: The town is loyal, save for some beggarly rebels like the blacksmith you chastised this afternoon.

LAMME: We gave him his deserts.

BAILIFF: Ha, ha! You taught him a lesson! I drink to your strong arms.

TYL: To our strong arms!

LAMME: To our strong arms!

[Some customers enter, and the HOST goes over to serve them. The BAILIFF comes closer and lowers his voice.]

BAILIFF: You hold Alva's passport. Can both of you keep secrets?

TYL: Our ears are prison doors that open inward only.

BAILIFF (*drinking*): And who is the prisoner we pray to see taken? Who is the great field-mouse we would snare?

LAMME (*to TYL*): Does this rat speak of mice?

TYL (*to LAMME*): Pour wine, pour wine. (*To the BAILIFF.*) The field-mouse is Orange William, the arch-heretic.

BAILIFF (*drinking*): Rightly guessed. You are the lad for my money.

TYL (*to LAMME*): Pour wine.

BAILIFF: He can take the town if he will, but his troopers fear to damp their breeches at the fords. Moreover, there is variance in his camp.

TYL: Say you so?

BAILIFF: Great is the variance. Like grease on linen spreads mistrust. It is whispered "Orange is a traitor." And at this hour the trap is baited for him.

LAMME: Baited, do you say?

TYL: Pour wine.

BAILIFF (*drinking*): Baited. To-night will come two preachers—dressed as goodly heretics, worthy Lutherans—bearing passes signed by Orange himself. They will be admitted to the camp to speak with him alone. (*He makes the movement of cutting a throat.*) To speak—with Orange—alone. For they carry secret messages—ha, ha! They carry secret steel for his heretic heart.

TYL: Have they no fear of death?

BAILIFF (*with a shrug*): They are foreign monks, maybe—secure in the promise of Heaven. (*Drinking.*) Now you and I, being laymen, have no such certainty.

LAMME: For yourself, friend, you speak truth.

TYL: Pour wine. (*To the BAILIFF.*) And how should we know these gentle travellers?

BAILIFF: They are said to be much of your stature—one round and one slim.

TYL: Would you take us for them?

BAILIFF: Ha, ha! I love a jest! I drink to the two preachers.

TYL: The two preachers!

LAMME: The two preachers!

BAILIFF (*drinking*): They come from Courtrai. Moonrise is the hour. I say no more.

LAMME: You are a merry fellow, and deserve to be well married.

BAILIFF (*drinking*): A wife would rob me of my secrets. And why marry, while wenches are willing?

TYL: Why indeed?

BAILIFF (*thickly*): Come closer. I have—I have wenches in a room above. Flemish beauties from the sack of Bruges, under convoy to the camp of Alva. But no hurry, say I. Let his Highness wait.

TYL: Aye, let his Highness wait.

BAILIFF: Three wenches there are. One of them has learned to sing and play the viol. You can hear her now.

[The woman's voice is heard again. The room has grown darker.]

TYL: Her voice is sweet. Shall we not see these beauties?

BAILIFF (*drunkenly*): Ha, would you then, would you? The key of their chamber lies next my heart. Later, maybe, later. For I like you, bold fellows.

LAMME: And we dote on you.

BAILIFF: Dusk is falling. I must fetch the preachers' passes and saddle their mounts.

TYL: So you are to furnish their passes to the heretic camp?

BAILIFF: Aye, when they show me the Cardinal's ring. (*About to go.*) If you meet with my jolly preachers, pick no quarrel with them.

TYL: We will pick no quarrel.

BAILIFF: I know you are fighting-cocks, but sheathe your spurs this once. They are of our own farmyard—ha, ha—of our own farmyard!

[Exit the BAILIFF.]

LAMME (*to TYL*): Shall this vulture live?

TYL: I have a mind to send the preachers to heaven an hour before their time.

LAMME: Have we not endured enough for one day? I am a-tremble at the thought of walking in the dark, much less waylaying cut-throats on the high road.

TYL: There is danger to the Prince.

LAMME: Give me a prince's larder, and I will brave his dangers cheerfully. Why should we poor men risk our necks to save the great ones of the earth? Will they do as much for us?

TYL: You speak base folly. Princes serve their people.

LAMME: Aye, for good wages. Look upon the meadows and the harvest, the orchards and the flocks, the birds and the wild creatures of the woods—delicious ortolans, savoury boars' heads, juicy haunches of venison, tasty trout—all is theirs, all in earth and sky and sea. And when we are dead in their service, they fetch our

corpses a kick and say to our mothers, “These are good for nothing; make us more of them.” Indeed, your princes know the value of their faithful soldiers!

TYL: This is no princely quarrel, Lamme, but our own. Bruges is fallen, and the Spanish troopers range from Alost to the sea. How will my Nele fare? In William’s camp is variance; who will slay the serpent treachery? The blackest hour looms over Flanders; shall we flee like twittering birds before the storm? Hope glimmers in the east. One forward surge, and Orange will join forces with our men who march from Limburg. Then Alva is surrounded, and the day at hand. Lift up your heart, my friend.

LAMME: O Tyl, of your storehouse of courage, give me but a crust! I am only a poor common fellow, unfit to serve you. My wife, my poor wife—is she in peril too? Shall I ever see her more?

TYL: Lamme, I think you are hungry.

LAMME: And what if I am? My soul cannot live like yours on prayer and fasting, but cries out for ham and beans and chitterlings, that it may breathe.

TYL: Then go to the kitchen and replenish your valour.

LAMME: That I will, gladly. Are you not coming too?

TYL: I must first speak with the blacksmith, who brings me news.

LAMME: Let me not meet him until I have victuals within me. And so—to table!

[Exit LAMME by the kitchen door. Re-enter the BLACKSMITH from the street, and from the other side the HOST, carrying a lighted lamp, and the drunken BAILIFF rubbing his hands in anticipation of a quarrel. The BLACKSMITH, in pretended fury, strides over to TYL.]

BLACKSMITH (*loudly*): So, my sprat, I find you alone! Where is your whale of a companion?

TYL: He refreshes his soul in the larder. But I think you would not dare insult him to his face.

BLACKSMITH: Will you be saucy too? You shall be thrashed for it, though my bones ache twice as much!

TYL: Come then and try your fortune, bellows!

[The HOST and BAILIFF applaud heartily.]

BAILIFF: I love a fight. Into it, merry men!

HOST: Into it, Master Pope and Master Luther!

[TYL and the BLACKSMITH begin to wrestle. They sway to and fro, then

TYL *trips the other and both fall.*

BAILIFF: Neatly thrown!

HOST: Well done, Master Pope!

BLACKSMITH (*rolling uppermost*): Dog of a Papist, you shall pay for that!

TYL (*rolling uppermost*): Vile heretic, will you swallow your purge of true religion?

[They roll away from the onlookers, who gleefully clap their hands. The BLACKSMITH speaks in TYL'S ear.]

BLACKSMITH (*uppermost*): Listen . . . you may believe the drunken bailiff . . . preachers on the road . . . Alva's cut-throats . . . here within the hour . . .

TYL (*uppermost*): Lutheran spawn! (*In his ear.*) Your message to the Prince . . . your message!

BLACKSMITH (*uppermost*): Croak your prayers, Spanish raven! (*In his ear.*) The fords are marked . . . all is prepared . . . armed men will seize the bridge for Orange. . . .

TYL (*uppermost*): The signal . . . the signal . . .

BLACKSMITH (*uppermost*): Listen . . . belfry tower . . . three chimes . . . advance . . . horse, foot and cannon. . . .

TYL (*uppermost*): He will advance. . . .

BLACKSMITH (*uppermost*): I go to warn our friends . . . beware of spies . . . adieu. . . . (*Louder, with his hands on the other's throat.*) Spanish dog, will you be flayed or throttled?

TYL (*loudly*): Neither, for mercy's sake!

BLACKSMITH: He cries for mercy now!

HOST (*approaching*): I pray you spare him, Master Smith!

BAILIFF (*in drunken terror*): Aye, spare him, good Master Smith!

BLACKSMITH (*as if to strangle TYL*): Call me Spaniard if I leave one bone unbroken!

[Townsmen have come from the street to look on. LAMME rushes in from the kitchen.]

LAMME: Tyl, my friend! (*He hurls the BLACKSMITH headlong and belabours him.*)

BAILIFF: A rescue!

HOST: Manfully done!

BAILIFF (*to LAMME*): Strike hard! No mercy for the heretic!

LAMME (*rising*): Nay, I will spare him. If all had their deserts, which of us would see to-morrow? The wretch shall live.

[*Applause from the onlookers.*]

HOST: Your worship is merciful.

LAMME (*coming to TYL*): My poor friend, how goes it with you? If one bruise be found, I will beat the Lutheran to a jelly.

TYL (*sitting up*): I am out of breath, good Lamme. Bring me to the night air and I shall recover.

LAMME (*to the onlookers*): Make way there! Way for my friend! Stand back, rabblement. Make way!

[*The onlookers make way. LAMME goes out triumphantly, supporting TYL on his arm.*]

HOST: This is a bold fellow, though he be fat.

BAILIFF: Indeed, I would not lightly affront him.

HOST: It is fortunate he is of your own camp.

[*The BLACKSMITH gathers himself up.*]

BAILIFF (*mockingly*): How goes it, Lutheran?

BLACKSMITH: I'll be revenged on you! Revenged! (*He rushes out amid mocking laughter.*)

BAILIFF: And now to celebrate the Papal victory. Let us have wine and women!

HOST: Women, do you say?

BAILIFF (*pulling out a key*): Go bring down the wenches who were taken at the sack of Bruges. They shall dance with us.

HOST: The officer ordered that no one should see them.

BAILIFF (*reeling*): Am I not an officer? Bring them to dance.

HOST: I dare not. Twenty crowns would not suffice.

BAILIFF: Old haggler! I will give you ten.

[*The woman's voice is heard again, singing.*]

HOST: Will you swear that I shall not suffer?

BAILIFF: Fool! You know that I am drunk and will swear the moon is a gong. But every man to his trade. If you were not a fool you would not be a wayside innkeeper.

HOST: I will fetch them. (*He goes out.*)

BAILIFF: Good. The singer for me; shall so much sweetness lie hidden in the dark? (*To the onlookers.*) Go bring your kitchen-wenches to the dance.

[*Tables are pushed back against the wall.*]

Where are my merry catchpolls? They shall have entertainment too.

[*The HOST descends, bringing with him three hooded women. The first is NELE, with a viol; the second CALLEKEN, LAMME'S wife, in the habit of a nun; the third GILLINE, in harlot's dress.*]

HOST: Here are the women. On your head be the blame.

BAILIFF: Why are they hooded still?

HOST: By order of the Spanish officer.

BAILIFF: Well, we may guess their characters. (*Before NELE.*) A peasant lass. (*Before CALLEKEN.*) A widow for love of religion. (*Before GILLINE.*) A wench who needs no history. Do I speak truth, sweetlings?

NELE: More truth than you know.

BAILIFF: Will you dance with me, my dear?

NELE: I will not dance, but I will play for you.

HOST: She has learned the viol since she came to this house, and her wanton song as well.

BAILIFF (*to NELE*): Play, then, and sing. The dance shall wait.

[*NELE seats herself with her viol.*]

NELE:

SONG

My lute is strung
By day and night—
My voice desire,
My lips delight.

An arch of fire
My curving hip—
My breast a bowl
For gods to sip.

Pay silver toll
For golden charms—
My song is sung,
I seek your arms!

BAILIFF: Indeed, it is a very wanton song. And it was never made for your husband, I dare swear.

NELE: No. Not for my husband.

BAILIFF: Nor for your lover neither.

NELE: Nor for my lover.

BAILIFF: If I were Duke Alva, and you were brought to me, do you know what I would do?

NELE: As all men do.

BAILIFF: Aye, but I would first be sure you had no knife in your garter.

[NELE puts a hand to her knee.

What, have you such a toy, truly? (*Reeling towards her.*) Let me see.

HOST (*interposing*): By the officer's orders, the women are not to be touched.

BAILIFF (*thickly*): I will be sure! (*He touches NELE'S knee and draws back suddenly.*) So, my dear, so? I would not be Duke Alva when you are brought to his chamber.

HOST: Let her be, I say!

BAILIFF: Never fear, I will touch her no more. She shall play a jig for all to dance.

[*A Flemish country dance begins. NELE remains apart, playing her viol, and the BAILIFF watches her. Near them stand the HOST and CALLEKEN. The girl GILLINE joins with the rest. While the dance is at its*

height two loud knocks are heard at the door. The music ceases abruptly. In the silence the knocks are repeated. All are motionless.

TOWNSMAN (*crying out*): Soldiers! Spaniards!

BAILIFF: My catchpolls, stand to arms!

[Several ruffians with muskets stand forward.]

HOST: Make way there! I will myself open the door. (*He goes to the door, opens it, and returns to the BAILIFF.*) They are two preachers who ask for you.

BAILIFF: Oho, my merry preachers! Have they changed their mounts at the stable?

HOST: The horses stand ready.

BAILIFF: Then bid the riders come in. And let us be more private. Unless I see double, there are twice too many faces here. Catchpolls, lead away those women.

[The company disperses. NELE, CALLEKEN and GILLINE are escorted from the room by CATCHPOLLS. The HOST returns, bringing with him TYL and LAMME, in the garb of Lutheran preachers, with broad black hats and cloaks drawn about them to cover their faces. They are booted and spurred, and dusty from the road.]

HOST (*to the BAILIFF*): The two preachers. (*In an undertone.*) Black heretics, by the look of them—and they speak not a word of any Christian tongue. You should have a care.

BAILIFF: Hold your peace, and leave us.

HOST: You know best. (*He goes out.*)

BAILIFF (*in drunken humour*): So your tongues are tied, worthy preachers? It is no matter. For they tell me you speak steel-talk, hey?

[TYL and LAMME look at one another, then both make the movement of cutting a throat.]

Ha, ha, very good! A sweet discourse, my worthy preachers. (*Reeling.*) And I am not too drunk to take your meaning. Go speak your steel-talk, and my blessings on you!

[TYL and LAMME stand motionless.]

Stay, have you not a token to show me in proof of your mission?

[In dumb show, TYL and LAMME feign not to understand: then TYL pulls a ring from his finger.]

The Cardinal's ring with the red stone. It is well. Drink, worthy preachers.

[LAMME reaches for a tankard.]

Ha, ha! So much Flemish you can understand! Now let me fetch your passes, which are sewn for safety in my mattress. Wait here, and drink if you will.

[Exit the BAILIFF, stumbling to the door. LAMME empties his tankard and draws a deep breath.]

LAMME: I sweat streams. This night's work will melt me to a wafer.

TYL: Hush, no word! I hear footsteps.

[A door is softly opened, and NELE and CALLEKEN, still hooded, peep in. They fly into the arms of TYL and LAMME, who make as if to defend themselves. The women uncover.]

NELE: Will you stab me, Tyl?

TYL: Nele, my love!

LAMME: Calleken, my wife!

TYL: My heart!

LAMME: My darling!

TYL (*holding NELE at arm's length*): Is it you indeed, my own Nele?

LAMME (*gazing earnestly at CALLEKEN*): Do I not dream, my Calleken?
[They embrace.]

TYL (*to NELE*): I thought you safe at home.

NELE: My heart was with my lover wandering to deliver Flanders. Why should I not wander too?

LAMME (*to CALLEKEN*): I thought you lost to me for ever.

CALLEKEN: My hand was given to Mother Church, until I knew that she devours her babes.

TYL (*to NELE*): Your voice—the singer's voice! How came you prisoners here?

LAMME (*to CALLEKEN*): Your nun's dress! Are you lost to me indeed?

NELE: In Bruges I heard a woman calling from the window of a nunnery.

LAMME: My Calleken! My wife!

NELE: She was pursued by a false friar, who wrought penance on her naked flesh.

LAMME: Vengeance! Vengeance!

NELE: To save her, I became a lay sister in her house.

TYL: My Nele! You!

NELE: And so at night we fled together, only to meet the Spanish troopers at the

gate. We were made prisoners, Calleken as a nun forsworn and I as her accomplice; and with us a light woman who spies upon us. The bailiff is to bring us to the Spanish camp.

TYL: How soon?

NELE: To-morrow, he says to-night. But it has been to-morrow this week past.

TYL: And will be to-morrow this week to come. Have no fear.

NELE: Whenever it be, I am prepared.

TYL: Your voice is strange. Your eyes are hard. Nele, what is the song you have learned?

NELE: They say the Spanish general loves music.

TYL: Alva!

NELE: And I have learned the viol for him.

TYL: The viol! That you may——

NELE: That we may be alone together.

TYL: Nele, will you be clutched by the spider Alva that Satan vomiting spat out upon our land?

NELE: I, too, have an arm to strike. You shall not be the only avenger of Flanders.

TYL: Brave heart! But you shall not go to him. We will return in time.

NELE: My thoughts fly with you.

CALLEKEN (*to* TYL): Will you not save us, then?

LAMME: Indeed we will, this very hour.

TYL: This hour we go forward and not back.

LAMME: Tyl, will you forsake our loves in danger?

TYL: I will not quit my errand.

LAMME: O cruel fate! Must I be mangled in the jaws of death, when the feast of life steams ready on the table?

TYL: Come, it is time to say farewell.

LAMME: O, Calleken, if you loved me still, why did you leave me?

CALLEKEN: In deep waters, who can see the ground? I love you now, my husband.

TYL (*taking leave of* NELE): Until the morning, sweet.

NELE: The night will be long.

LAMME (*taking leave of CALLEKEN*): Trust in my stars.

CALLEKEN: I trust your captain.

NELE: Cover your faces. The spy Gilline is here.

[*Enter GILLINE, with arms akimbo, laughing softly. TYL and LAMME draw their cloaks about their faces.*]

GILLINE: See our virtuous sisters with a man apiece! (*Calling.*) Master Bailiff, Master Bailiff, look what sport is here!

[*The BAILIFF staggers in.*]

BAILIFF: Oho, my worthy preachers, would you rob me of my wenches? You are lusty fellows indeed, and speak love-talk. But they are for Alva, not for you.

[*TYL and LAMME move apart from NELE and CALLEKEN.*]

Here are your passes, with the Orange seal. Now away with you! The moon shines clear—away!

[*TYL and LAMME go out.*]

Ha, ha, the moon shines clear! Silver for me; steel for the heart of Orange! Gallop, worthy preachers!

[*As TYL and LAMME ride away, NELE runs towards the door. The BAILIFF pulls her back.*]

What, would you follow them? The road is not far for you, my dear. Lead-wind whistles in the trees; steel-wind shimmers on the water. Thunder is brewing. Gallop, worthy preachers!

GILLINE (*in his ear*): Drunken fool! They ride to your destruction!

BAILIFF: Ha, ha! To my destruction! That is good! Bring in the dancers. Where is the wench who plays for us?

GILLINE: There—do you see her now?

NELE (*kneeling*): Spirits of earth, preserve our men!

CURTAIN.

ACT III

The next morning before daybreak. The Scene is the inn, the "Hive of Bees," as in Act II. In the dim light are seen the shapes of sleeping men, the BAILIFF and his CATCHPOLLS, huddled on the benches and the floor. The sleepers stir and compose themselves to sleep again, like men after a night's carouse. A door is softly opened, and GILLINE enters with a candle in her hand. She goes from one to the other, holding her candle to each face. The sleepers murmur and turn away from her. Presently she finds the BAILIFF whom she is seeking.

GILLINE: Master Bailiff!

BAILIFF (*stirring*): Who calls?

GILLINE: Wake, Master Bailiff, wake!

BAILIFF (*in drunken stupor*): Lead-wind, steel-wind. . . . The moon shines clear. . . . Gallop, worthy preachers!

GILLINE (*shaking him*): Treachery in the house! Danger on the road!

BAILIFF (*as before*): Preachers on the road . . . steel for Orange, silver for my purse. . . .

GILLINE: Drunkard! Will you wake?

BAILIFF: Wenches for Alva, not for you. . . . Gallop, worthy preachers!

GILLINE: The preachers were false!

BAILIFF (*turning away*): Ha, ha, I know it! Spaniards in the cloak of Lutherans!

GILLINE: Not Spaniards, but Flemings!

BAILIFF (*rubbing his eyes*): Who speaks?

GILLINE: Flemings in the Flemish cloak—spies of Orange! Now will you wake and listen?

BAILIFF (*sitting up*): What do you say?

GILLINE: The women whispered in the night. They thought I slept. Your preachers are their lovers!

BAILIFF: Bah, you were dreaming.

GILLINE: The townsmen stir. At dawn they seize the bridge for Orange!

BAILIFF (*lurching to his feet*): My head spins like a top. (*Banging on a table.*)
Ho! My catchpolls, stand to arms!

[*His men spring up.*]

GILLINE (*clinging to him*): Do not fly alone! Take me with you to the Spanish camp!

BAILIFF (*throwing her off*): Fly, hussy, fly? I am on duty here, know that!

GILLINE: We shall all be hanged if we stay.

[*The CATCHPOLLS murmur.*]

BAILIFF: Will you scare my brave followers? (*He turns to them.*) We must humour the women. Go, two of you, and bring me word the town is quiet. Then you shall sleep again.

A CATCHPOLL: Let us wait till dawn, master.

ANOTHER: Aye, till dawn.

BAILIFF: The dawn is breaking. (*With sudden rage.*) Go, you milk-livered scum!

CATCHPOLL (*doggedly*): The woman spoke of hanging matters.

BAILIFF: The rope is spun for every man of you. Will you shorten it by mutiny?

A CATCHPOLL: We will go all together.

ANOTHER: Aye, all together.

BAILIFF: Go then, you pack of skulking wolves!

[*The CATCHPOLLS go out, still murmuring. Enter the Host, half-dressed, and carrying a candle.*]

HOST: God save us, what is this uproar? Is there no peace in the night?

BAILIFF: Peace! Was I sent to your beggarly town to guard hen-roosts? Who speaks of peace where rebellion mutters?

HOST: Rebellion in the town!

BAILIFF: Yes, master timeserver! If you were not in the plot, it was because no man would trust you.

HOST: I am a loyal citizen.

BAILIFF: Aye, loyal to the cause that wins the day. (*Pacing up and down.*) My head will split. I could almost blame you for last night's work, instead of your sickly wine and sour ale.

HOST (*warmly*): You may blame me if you will, Master Bailiff, but you shall not slander my good liquor.

BAILIFF: Ho, ho! Even an innkeeper rebels!

GILLINE (*in his ear*): Waste no words on him! Danger threatens!

HOST: It is your women who have brought the house about our ears. I'll have no more of them—or of your Papist followers!

BAILIFF: Have you turned Lutheran now? There must be danger indeed.

GILLINE (*in his ear*): The dawn!

[*Two CATCHPOLLS enter.*]

A CATCHPOLL: The streets are quiet, master——

BAILIFF: Good!

CATCHPOLL: —but there's a light in every window, and a sound of singing within doors.

BAILIFF: Singing!

CATCHPOLL: Aye, master

BAILIFF: They shall squeak on a gibbet when Alva comes. (*To the Host.*) And you with them! Till then their canting hymns can do us no harm.

CATCHPOLL: They are singing no hymns, master.

BAILIFF: What then?

CATCHPOLL: The Song of Drums, they call it.

GILLINE: The Song of Ulenspiegel!

BAILIFF: Ulenspiegel!

GILLINE: Vagabond, clown and false preacher! (*She runs to the door and opens it.*) Now can you hear the song?

[*In the distance is heard the Song of Ulenspiegel:*]

“Slaet op den trommele, van dirre, dom deyne,
Slaet op den trommele, van dirre, doum, doum!”

[*Daylight begins to appear.*]

BAILIFF: Whence comes the singing?

A CATCHPOLL: From barns and cellars, master.

BAILIFF: Dig out those heretic rats! Smother me those yelping curs! Are you not armed?

CATCHPOLL: They are armed too. Who will go first?

[*The song swells:*]

“Slaet op den trommele, van dirre, dom deyne,
Slaet op den trommele, van dirre, doum, doum!”

[Upon the last note breaks the sound of three chimes from the belfry tower. Then a silence.

BAILIFF: What bells were those?

HOST: They were church bells, ringing the hour.

BAILIFF: You lie!

GILLINE (*in his ear*): Three chimes! The signal to Orange!

CATCHPOLLS: The signal to Orange!

BAILIFF: Go seize the bellringers!

[A CATCHPOLL *runs in*.

CATCHPOLL: The townsmen arm! The church is guarded!

[A sudden boom of cannon.

HOST: Lord save us! O wretched day that I was born an innkeeper!

CATCHPOLL: Orange goes forward!

BAILIFF: Fools and cowards! Orange is dead!

CATCHPOLL (*breathless*): By the roadside lie two foreigners, stripped and gagged! They have lain there since last night!

GILLINE (*to the BAILIFF*): Will you believe me now?

BAILIFF: False preachers! I am tricked! (*To his men.*) Run to Alva's posts and give the alarm!

CATCHPOLL: Rebels hold the bridge. Alva needs no warning.

[A volley of musketry fire.

BAILIFF: What, do they fire on their own heretic spawn?

CATCHPOLL: The Spaniards fire!

HOST (*wringing his hands*): My house and my silver!

GILLINE (*to the BAILIFF*): Away, while there is time! I know a path—the woods are secret——

BAILIFF: Why should I trust you?

GILLINE: Will you wait and trust the Lutherans?

BAILIFF (*resolved*): Gather all my men! Bring down the women prisoners!

[Two CATCHPOLLS *go out*. It is now full daylight.

HOST (*anxiously*): Will you not pay your reckoning before you go?

BAILIFF: Your heretic friends shall pay for me.

HOST (*lamenting*): Master Bailiff, have pity! I am eaten out of house and home.

BAILIFF: You should be burned out, if I were master.

[NELE and CALLEKEN are brought down.

Lock their room, to delay the pursuers. And bind that first woman, for she has a knife about her.

[NELE is bound.

HOST (*taking courage*): Nay, I'll not be cheated. You shall pay me.

BAILIFF: Stand aside!

A CATCHPOLL (*at the door*): The Lutherans are coming!

BAILIFF: Must we fight our way from this nest?

CATCHPOLL: The blacksmith leads them!

BAILIFF: They are nothing but a heretic handful! Come, my men!

[*Enter the BLACKSMITH, with his head still bandaged as in the previous Act. He carries a musket, and is followed by two armed townsmen.*

BLACKSMITH: In the name of Orange, lay down your arms!

BAILIFF: Who commands here?

BLACKSMITH: I command.

BAILIFF (*to his men*): In the Emperor's name, follow me!

HOST (*interposing*): I pray you, fight your battles out of doors! There is a meadow over the way.

BAILIFF: Silence!

BLACKSMITH (*to the BAILIFF*): Cross the threshold if you will. The rope is waiting.

BAILIFF (*blustering*): Who fears your rope?

A CATCHPOLL: I, for one.

[*He lets his musket fall, and the others follow his example.*

BAILIFF: Dregs of men!

BLACKSMITH: Release those women.

[NELE and CALLEKEN are released.

Will you go free, or remain under our safeguard?

NELE: We will trust you.

HOST (*stepping forward*): Master Smith, I beg you, make the bailiff pay his reckoning. Twenty florins he owes me. I am a poor man, Master Smith.

BLACKSMITH: You are a knave for harbouring cut-throats.

[*Shouting in the street.*

CRIES: The Orange captain! The Count! Make way for the Count!
[Enter the COUNT, as in Act I, with a lieutenant and two troopers.]

COUNT: Stand forward, Peter the blacksmith.
[The BLACKSMITH obeys.]

You have done well. Had our troopers shown half your spirit we would have gained the town a week ago.

BLACKSMITH: The town is the Prince's to command.

COUNT: He will reward you. Are these the prisoners?

BLACKSMITH: One of Alva's bailiffs and his men, my lord.

COUNT (to his troopers): Remove them under guard.

HOST: My lord, I pray you, the bailiff owes me for a week's lodging!

COUNT: The reckoning will come. Remove the prisoners.
[The BAILIFF and his men, with GILLINE, are marched out.]

BAILIFF (to the HOST): The reckoning with Alva, innkeeper!

GILLINE: Fool! That hour is past!
[NELE and CALLEKEN remain apart.]

COUNT: Who are these women?

BLACKSMITH: They are Flemish maids, whom the bailiff would have brought to Alva's camp.

COUNT: I will speak with them presently. Now call for Ulenspiegel.

A TROOPER (at the door): Ulenspiegel!

CRIES (in the street): Ulenspiegel! Ulenspiegel!
[The cries are echoed. Then a silence.]

LIEUTENANT: My lord, they tell me he is not to be found.

COUNT: He was with me at the bridge—and his fat companion too. Search the town!

[The LIEUTENANT goes out.]

CALLEKEN (to NELE): O, my heart will stop! What if they are lost?

NELE: I know my rascal lover. The parade of victory is not for him. When all men stand like wooden images, he runs in cap and bells.

[The LIEUTENANT returns.]

LIEUTENANT: My lord, they say both men were seen at this door, but they are vanished.

COUNT: Vanished! Do men dissolve into the air?

VOICE OF ULENSPIEGEL (*as if from above*): Slaet op den trommele, van dirre, dom deyne——

BLACKSMITH (*gazing upward*): Ulenspiegel's song!

COUNT: Is the house haunted?

HOST: Indeed, no, my lord.

COUNT: We will waste no more time on these mountebanks. (*To the HOST.*) Make a fire and leave us. We hold a council here.

[*The HOST goes to the fireplace.*

Sit, Master Blacksmith. Sit, Lieutenant. (*To the troopers and townsmen in the background.*) All but one sentry shall withdraw.

[*One sentry remains. NELE and CALLEKEN, forgotten, stand by the fireplace. The COUNT sits at the head of a table, with the BLACKSMITH and his LIEUTENANT on either hand.*

VOICE OF ULENSPIEGEL (*nearer*): Slaet op den trommele, van dirre, doum, doum!

HOST (*kindling wood in the grate*): Oh, mercy on us, the house is haunted indeed!

[*The HOST rushes from the room.*

COUNT: Blockhead! (*He resumes.*) Master Blacksmith, we enrol you with your followers in the Prince's army.

BLACKSMITH: We ask but to go forward against Alva.

COUNT: That day is not yet. We must first gain touch with the Count of Frisia, who marches from Limburg to take him in the rear. We need brave messengers——

LIEUTENANT (*coughing*): Your pardon, my lord, but the chimney smokes!

COUNT: Indeed it smokes damnably. (*Resuming.*) I say, we need messengers to pass the Spanish lines and bring news to Frisia.

BLACKSMITH: That is hard. Since the two preachers failed of their mission, every road will be watched.

COUNT: We must contrive to hoodwink Alva.

BLACKSMITH: My lord, there is perhaps one way.

COUNT: Speak.

BLACKSMITH: It is the custom of the armies to arrest all wayfarers, except the newly-wed who pass from town to town.

COUNT: The newly-wed?

BLACKSMITH: If we should send a young man and his lass bearing marriage-lines, in a cart decked out with flowers and branches, then I think that even the Spaniards would laugh and let them pass. They would come scot-free to Limburg, though the bride might have to yield a kiss or two by the way.

COUNT: The plan may serve. But where shall we find such a pair? Are you married?

BLACKSMITH: Alas, yes, my lord—but it was long since.

COUNT: You are a sprightly youth, Lieutenant, and should welcome the errand.

LIEUTENANT: My lord, I will brave all dangers but marriage.

COUNT: It seems the pair need only be wedded for the duration of their journey. Upon these terms many a lad might venture.

BLACKSMITH: And many a husband.

[A cloud of smoke issues from the chimney, which is almost hidden.]

LIEUTENANT: There is surely a stopper in the flue!

COUNT (*to the sentry*): Open the windows, or we shall choke. Ulenspiegel! Where is Ulenspiegel?

VOICE OF ULENSPIEGEL: Slaet op den trommele, van dirre, doum, doum!

BLACKSMITH: Ulenspiegel comes!

[NELE and CALLEKEN cry out for joy as TYL clatters down the chimney and leaps the fire. When the smoke clears he is seen in NELE'S arms.]

CALLEKEN, in the chimney corner, gazes anxiously upward.

COUNT: Now, rascal——

TYL: A moment, by your leave, my lord. I have a follower who passes not so readily. Ho, Lamme! Are you there?

LAMME (*from the chimney*): I roast! I frizzle! I am done to a turn! (*His legs appear, dangling.*)

TYL (*seizing them*): One pull, and you are ready to be served!

[By main force LAMME is pulled down. He totters into the arms of CALLEKEN.]

NELE (*to TYL*): Dear rogue, how came you there?

TYL: When a new master comes to a house, are not the chimneys swept?

NELE: No man saw you enter.

TYL: A ladder brought me to your window. You were flown, the door was locked. Lamme mounting broke the ladder. We came as best we might.

LAMME: As best we might, say you? O, my hams are smoked!

TYL: Better a Flemish chimney than the coolest dungeon in Spain. My respects to you, my lord Count.

COUNT: The manner of your appearance might be more respectful.

TYL: And the matter less sooty. That chimney was not swept this twelvemonth.

LAMME (*brushing himself*): There you speak truly, Tyl. I am black as a Spaniard's frown.

COUNT: You are both forgiven, since you come in time to join our council.

TYL: I am no counsellor, my lord, but a vagabond at a halt.

COUNT: Still it may be you can help us. I think you overheard our plan.

TYL: Your chimney kept no secrets. But my wandering is nearly ended.

COUNT: One road lies before you. There is none but you to run our errand.

TYL (*turning*): Nele, my Nele, heart of Flanders, peace is not yet!

COUNT: We will find you a fair companion for the venture.

NELE: Indeed you shall find him no hussy of these parts!

TYL: My lord Count, seek no further for your pair of messengers, for they are here before you. (*He takes NELE by the hand and leads her forward.*)

COUNT: What, are you wedded?

TYL: As near as makes no matter. Waken us a priest, for they lie long abed these frosty mornings. And make ready the bridal chariot for our journey.

NELE: Have I spoken yet?

TYL: Sweet Protestant, you shall speak at the altar.

NELE: Nay, I will confess before a priest is fetched.

COUNT (*to NELE*): Will you indeed set out upon this perilous errand?

NELE: I will go to the ends of the earth, if he go with me.

COUNT: The fires of Alva scorch.

NELE: My love burns deeper.

COUNT: The road is far to the bridal bed.

NELE: We bring rest to our people.

COUNT (*to his* LIEUTENANT): I think a priest is needless for this pair.

TYL: And since weddings are the fashion of the day, here are two more who follow us.

[*He brings LAMME and CALLEKEN forward.*]

LAMME: Tyl, I pray you, I am scorched enough!

TYL (*to the COUNT*): They are man and wife this long time, but no Spaniard would guess it, so merry is the bridegroom.

CALLEKEN: And the bride!

TYL: Only let them have a second cart, for safety as for modesty. Lamme is burdensome upon the springs.

COUNT (*to his LIEUTENANT*): Order the carts to be made ready. (*To TYL.*) Will you carry secret despatches to the Count of Frisia?

TYL: Our hearts will carry all.

COUNT: We will make provision for you, of the best the town can offer.

TYL: Let it be plentiful, if you please. But put not all in Lamme's cart, lest we starve when the melancholy takes him.

COUNT (*preparing to go*): You would be alone, I see.

TYL: It is an idle fancy of the newly wed.

COUNT: Godspeed! I will bring news of you to Orange.

[*The COUNT goes out with his sentry, and the four lovers are left alone.*]

NELE (*to TYL*): Do you speak so boldly to my lord Count?

TYL: To-day I am a king, Nele. Joyful flags are hoisted on our wagon. A rainbow is our arch, and Alva's cannon fire a salvo in our honour.

NELE: O Tyl, dear love returned to me, bring peace in your hands! I would be no longer the shadow of your roaming, but the refuge of your heart.

TYL: For me there is but one road, which leads to you. God grant me to deserve that journey's end.

NELE: Your eyes are shining, Tyl.

TYL: Our babes will sing:

Alva with the wooden head
Have you seen the newly wed?

NELE: Nay, they shall sing none but gentle songs, if I have their schooling.

[*From the street the song is heard:*]

Slaet op den trommele, van dirre, dom, deyne,
Slaet op den trommele, van dirre, doum, doum!

TYL: Our song of drums!

NELE: The echo shall be left behind us.

[Two troopers enter, flanking the doorway. LAMME and CALLEKEN, who go first, are greeted with huzzas from the street.]

LAMME: Come, my Calleken! *(He turns on the threshold.)* Tyl, I am a hero at last.

TYL *(going out with NELE)*: Master Sun is risen. Tell me, witch's daughter, can my father see us now?

NELE: Wild lover, he laughs in the sky.

THE END.

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Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been fixed.

[The end of *The Song of Drums* by Ashley Dukes]