

The Women of the Roses

Margaret Paston is forcefully thrown out of the doors of Mannington Hall, she calls out to those removing her...

Margaret: You ought to have compassion for those wrongfully dispossessed of their property.

Rival 1: This land is Lord Moylens.

Margaret: His lordship is a dishonest villain. We have a rightful claim to Gresham manor, and what right have you to remove a lady from her home?

Rival 2: You are a foolish woman. And tell your husband in London that Lord Moylens has taken back what is rightfully his.

Margaret: You are a company of ruffians, and do not care what you do.

Rival 3: You Pastons have no right to the land you seek. You are nothing but upstart churls, and you will be sorry every day you remain near Gresham.

(Margaret storms off behind the house, Lord Moleyns men address the audience)

Rival 4: There was one Clement Paston dwelling in Paston, and he was a plain husbandman, and lived upon the land he had in Paston and kept the plough there at all times of the year.

Rival 1: Also the said Clement had a son William, whom he sent to school and he often borrowed money from to pay for him.

Rival 2: And after that he went to court with the help of Geoffrey Somerton, his uncle, and learned the law, and by that he obtained much profit.

Rival 3: And he purchased much land in Paston, and with that he has a lordship in Paston, but no manor-house. But by right of this John Paston, son of the said William, claims a manor there, to the great loss of the Duchy of Lancaster.

(Margaret removes herself in fear, she speaks to the Audience as she faces the back of the house...)

Margaret: I would be sorry to live as close to Gresham as I do, until this business between Lord Moylens and my husband is resolved. We must protect ourselves from Lord Moylens' men. We need to get some crossbows and windlasses to bend them with. And bolts! The houses here are so low that no one can shoot out with longbows, even if we might have ever so much need. We must write to your son, John, immediately.

Agnes Paston: I believe that you could get such things from Sir John Fastolf who is a good friend to us in this business.

Margaret: Moylens' men are afraid we will take possession of Gresham again by force, and they have made great preparations inside the house, I am told. They have made bars to bar across the doors, and loopholes in every quarter of the house. My house! And, they dare to tell me they could abduct me and imprison me in the castle whenever they wish!

Agnes Paston: My husband should have safeguarded us against this possibility. Judge William Paston was respected and honoured throughout Norfolk, while my son, though hard working and valued in the Law Courts of London, is still too green in judgement to defend against these vicious and slanderous attacks. Lord Moleyns attacks at Gresham are just one faction against the Paston family.

Elizabeth Paston: Mother, tell Margaret about the friar.

Agnes Paston: Don't interrupt me, Elizabeth, we weren't talking to you. But my daughter is right, the friar was in town today and said openly that he will have Oxnead, and that he has the support of Lord Suffolk against my ownership of the Hall.

Elizabeth Paston: We have been warned—

Agnes Paston: Elizabeth! Enough! I have been warned that I am likely to be served as you were at Gresham, within a very short time. Sir Gloys, take this letter to John Paston in London, tell him of our plight, but pray, make sure he burns the letter upon reading it.

(Margaret & co go to back garden, Gloys carries letter through to the audience. Wymondham spies Gloys and grabs the letter from his hand)

Wymondham: The Pastons are too proud of late. John's grandfather was nothing but a farmer, they have no right to put on such airs in the county.

Gloys: Wymondham you do nothing but spread malicious lies about my master, pray return the letter you have stolen.

Thomas Hawes: Fool. *(Hawes strikes off Gloy's hat from his head)*. Cover thy head!

Gloys: So I will, for thee. *(Gloys strikes off Wymondham's head covering)*

Wymondham: Wilt thou do so, knave?

(Gloys defends himself and runs between members of the audience for protection)

Wymondham: Thief! Thou wilt die.

Gloys: Churl, thou liest!

Agnes: Gentleman. Sir James Gloys, I beseech you, go back into my house. Wymondham, I ask you to leave my house.

Wymondham: You and your daughter-in-law are none but flagrant whores. The Pastons and all their family were none but knaves.

Agnes: Thou liest, knave and churl that thou art. We will go to the Prior of Norwich to complain about your foul deeds. Thou wilt live to regret these actions, and rue the day thou caused any bodily harm to Sir James.

Wymondham: James wilt die, and I wilt never regret nor come to a farthing of harm even if I killed you both. You Pastons are nought but churlish upstarts.

Agnes: Oh yes thou wilt. Even if you kill the smallest child from Sir John Paston's kitchen, thou art likely to die from it.

(Wymondham and his men move apart, whispering amongst themselves against the Pastons. Margaret and Agnes gossip over to one side, trying to not be overheard by Wymondhams' group)

Margaret: Thank God they are gone. Mother, I must confess, these actions are worrisome. I will send Sir James to my husband in London and entreat Paston with all my heart to not let James come home until John returns himself. I have been thrown out of my house at Gresham, while your ownership at Oxnead is contested. We must work with industry to support our claims to land and title.

Lady Elizabeth Clere: My dear cousin, I was shown a letter of Lord Moleyns thanking his well-wishers in the area for the good will they have shown him. He dared say that he was sorry and ill pleased that his men had attacked us, and that it was not his wish, nor has he done any illegal act against us. With such brazen falsehoods, John Paston will need a powerful patron to work against him.

Agnes Paston: We must trust in God. I hear people of Norfolk are very sad about our state of affairs. Both in Norwich and in the district there are many who love my son, John Paston. We must thank God that he is as greatly loved by the people as he is, or we will not be able to defend ourselves against our enemies. We are living in troubled times, and Lord Moleyn's men are plotting against us on all sides.

(People of Norfolk approach Agnes Paston, leaving audience between them. When they begin to fight, both Agnes Ball and Paston move to the centre of the audience)

Agnes Ball: Good evening, my lady Paston.

Agnes Paston: Why do you block my path? What is that you want?

Agnes Ball: Why do you block up the King's road?

Agnes Paston: I have blocked up no road but my own. And pray, why have you bought my property from Clement Spicer. Property my late husband, William, lawfully purchased from him.

Agnes Ball: Clement Spicer assures me he made no such agreement with Judge William.

Agnes Paston: If his father was alive, he would be ashamed to have spoken so.

William Harman: This is a deplorable change, for the town is ruined by your road, and the worse off by £100.

Agnes Paston: It is discourteous to meddle yourself in a matter unless you are called into consultation.

William Harman: Whatever anyone here says, even if it costs you twenty nobles, it will be pulled down again.

Agnes Paston: And I say sir, that the one who tears it down may pay for it.

William Harman: It seems it is a good thing that you set men to work to collect money while you are here, but in the end you must lose your outlay. (*William addresses the audience*) People of Paston, do you not think that we have a right to our road to the church as we have for many a year? Why should the Pastons now be so fine they deny us our right to go church as before.

Agnes Ball: It is an act of the devil himself! (*the Norfolk people begin to rally the audience to their cause*)

William Harman: And why have you taken my hay at Walsham? I only pray I had known about it at the time so that I may personally have put an end to your folly.

Agnes Paston: It is my own land, and I would manage it as my own.

Warren Harman: I see a rock holds no match to your stubbornness. Very well, take four acres and go no further.

Agnes Ball: 'There was never a Paston poor, a Heydon a coward or a Cornwallis a fool'.

Warren Harmand: May all the devils drag your soul to hell because of the road you have made!

(Agnes Ball and villagers storms off)

Agnes Paston: My cousin, Elizabeth, I am concerned by this distressing state of affairs. Good you know that few amongst us would have dared insult the Paston name so openly when my lord husband, Judge William was alive. The Vicar of Paston agreed that the road in the village be diverted to give our manor house at Paston more privacy, and since his death I find only disputes and bad feeling in the village from all sides.

Elizabeth Clere: You must labour to gain more power and place in the land and then the villagers cannot touch you.

Agnes: We need more support in the land. I had hoped my daughter Elizabeth might be well matched, but...

Elizabeth Paston: Mother, I asked my brother to persuade Sir William Oldhall for my hand in marriage, and John requests an answer about your will in this business.

Agnes: Elizabeth, I told you not to speak of it. You and your brother's unseemly haste in this matter may cause Sir Oldhall to react unfavourably to the match. You must rely on me to act according to your honour and advantage.

Elizabeth Paston: Yes, mother. (*Elizabeth is distressed*)

Agnes: Take heart. If John believes that Sir Oldhall's land is clear as to title, in so far as I perceive you are well-disposed towards it, I will consider myself content.

Elizabeth Clere: My lady, your family will make good matches on all sides. Just yesterday, my kinsman Wroth saw your grand-daughter Margery and praised her, saying she was a fine young woman.

Agnes: Pray, entreat him then to find her a good marriage, if he knows of any.

Elizabeth Clere: Indeed, I took that liberty, and he claims to know someone worth 100 marks a year, who is the son my Lady of York's chamberlain.

Agnes: How old is this gentleman?

Elizabeth Clere: He is but 18.

Agnes: With the world the way it is, it may be good to get Margery settled with one so close to the counsel of the Duke of York. I will enquire of my son about it. What do you think of the business, Margaret?

Margaret: If we come to an agreement, I will give him a greater treasure, that is an intelligent gentlewoman, and even though I say it myself, a good and virtuous one. Because if I were to take money for her, I would not have her away for £1000.

Agnes: I also hope for my daughter, Elizabeth Paston as well. But I despair in her ever having a match. She has been so wilful this last year, I know not what to do about her.

Elizabeth Clere: Your son John has spoken with a young Suffolk lawyer, for your daughter.

Agnes: Let us hope his jointure is good enough for the family. But so many of the marriage plans come to nought for my foolish daughter.

Elizabeth Paston: I am losing sleep with worry.

Agnes Paston: Elizabeth, you must put yourself to work readily as other gentlewomen, and do something to help yourself therewith.

(As Agnes takes Elizabeth aside complaining about her every move, Margery Paston beckons to the audience to tell them a secret. She asks that deliver a letter in secret for her)

(Music Love Song, sentimental)

Margery Paston: Pray my friends, please keep this letter close to your heart. I pray to God every day to send me such a person to be my mate in this world who will respect and

faithfully and genuinely love me above all other creatures on this earth. For I believe that worldly goods are transitory and marriage lasts for the term of one's life, which for some people is a very long time. (*Agnes moves to return to Margery's side...*) My grandmother returns, pray remember to keep this secret. I believe, as I know you do, that love is important above all things. We do not need to follow my father's motto: *Omnia pro pecunia facta sunt* (all things are done for money).

Agnes Paston: Lady Clere, I despair of my daughter, she does nothing to aid her plight.

Elizabeth Clere: Cousin, there are other ways to gain place in the land than matrimony. I have heard that Sir John Fastolf has sold Hellesdon manor to Boleyn of London, and if it is so, it looks like he will sell more of his property.

Agnes P: I suppose that, if Sir John Fastalf were spoken to, he would be gladder to let his kinsmen have part of his land than unrelated people. You speak good counsel. Now is the time to strike. I must write to my son.

Elizabeth Clere: Indeed, if you were to secure Caister Castle for your family, it would secure your position as one of the most powerful families in the county. (*Addressing the audience*) Madam, please deliver this letter to Sir John Paston, Esquire.

(Rival 1 bribes audience member for the letter)

Rival 1: (upon reading) My dear sirs, Sir John Paston claims Caister Castle for his own. His wife Margaret may be a relation of Sir Fastalf, but who would not know the Paston's antecedents? They are not worthy of such lands, such manors, such castles!

Rival 2: John Paston claims that he should take upon him the rule of Sir Fastolf's household and of all his livelode in Norfolk and Suffolk.

Rival 3: This news is most strange. I stood well in favour with Master Fastolf three days before he died and John Paston has no more rights to Caister than myself.

Rival 2: It will go hard on Paston unless he has good witnesses to his claim.

Rival 4: I will inform the Lords above at London of Paston's wrongdoing, and they will deal with him well enough.

(Audience are brought to view Margery Paston reading a letter in front of a gate)

Elizabeth Clere: Cousin, I fear for your lord's position in Norfolk. Paston's enemies appear to be growing in strength of late.

Margaret: I have asked my men to don their jacks and sallets, preparing to protect what is ours from Lord Moleyn's men. My ladies, someone must speak to Walter Barrow, who has taken over my home at Gresham this past month.

Katherine: My lady, I am afraid we can get no man to volunteer to the business, so I will go.

Margaret: Katherine, I right thank you, and wish you well. (*Katherine exits*)

Margery Paston: Mother, do not invite them in, as they are not well-wishing to our cause.

Margaret: We have friends on our side, Margery. I have spoken to Lady Felbrigg and she said openly that she would not and never intended to let Lord Moleyns or any other have their way in this business as long as she lives. Let us not be afraid. Your father has asked that we remain close by to our house at Gresham. And that is what we will do.

Katherine: My lady, Lord Moleyns men say that you can take anything you desire from your house at Gresham.

Margaret: Nay, if I might have had my desire I should neither have departed out of the place nor from our goods that were therein.

Katherine: I regret that they said as for the goods, they were but easy and scarce worth £20.

Margaret: They speak falsely. My lord husband would not have given our belongings in that place up, not for £100.

Katherine: My lady, I hear that John Damme and my lord, your husband are threatened always. They that are at Gresham say they have not hurt him as much as they were commanded to.

Margaret: If this be true, I must write to my husband and tell him at the reverence of God to beware of Lord Moleyns and his men, though they speak ever so fair to John, he must trust them not, nor eat nor drink with them, for they are dangerous rogues.

Music begins playing throughout next scene for the War of the Roses theme (similar to A Ls Roussee/Ab Insurgentibus)

Agnes: My daughter-in-law, the world has changed greatly. The trouble with our King Henry VIth has caused such anxiety among the people. I will entreat my son, your husband, to send me news from beyond the sea, for here they are scared to repeat what has been reported.

Margaret: Last Saturday, a good man of my household was seized by enemies when he was walking by the coast and they have taken him away with them.

Elizabeth Clere: Indeed, I heard they also seized two pilgrims, a man and a woman, and they robbed the woman and let her go and they brought the man to the sea. Praise be to God, when they found out that he was a pilgrim, they gave him money and put him back on land again.

Agnes Paston: This week, they have seized four vessels from Winterton and Happisburgh and Eccles' men are very afraid.

Margaret: May God give us grace that the sea may be better protected than it is now, or else it will be dangerous to remain dwelling by the coast.

Elizabeth Clere: I pray that these wars in France will end soon. Indeed, I hear rumour of a marriage planned between the King and Margaret of Anjou, which should surely return the peace to our shores.

Margaret Paston: I would that my husband were home.

Agnes Paston: My son should have less to do in the world. His father said ‘in little business lies much rest’. This world is but a thoroughfare, and full of woe; and when we depart from it we bear right nothing with us but our deeds, goods and ills. And no man knows how soon God will call him, and therefore it is good for every creature to be ready. Whom God visits, him he loves.

Elizabeth Clere: My lady, John Scrope has been in this region to see my cousin, Elizabeth, and he looks favourable upon her.

Agnes: I would like to know whether if Scrope marries and is granted children, it is the children of his second marriage or his married daughter who will inherit his land.

Elizabeth Clere: Scrope has told me that if he marries and has an heir, his married daughter will have from his estate 50 marks and no more. But my cousin, Agnes, without a reassuring word from you, or your son, Scrope is afraid that you are not favourably disposed, and he will not pursue the match without your consent.

Agnes Paston: I will think on this business.

Elizabeth Paston: But mother—

Agnes: What did I tell you about interfering? Remember, Elizabeth, take heed to be an obedient and dutiful daughter under God.

(a letter is delivered to Elizabeth Clere)

Elizabeth Clere: The Queen is coming to town. She has sent for me, and I dare not disobey her commandment. I must go. Come, follow me, we should not leave the Queen waiting.

(Audience leave the cloistered garden to attend upon the Queen’s entourage)

Musical interlude with Queen’s procession

Margaret of Anjou: My right well beloved People of Norfolk. We greet you heartily well. And for as much as it hath likened unto my lord’s Highness to grant unto our well loved People good favour, we desire and heartily pray that good fortune attends you all. His majesty sends his love to you through us. Our full trust is now in you. Whatever you most desire of us, we give you as our greatest pleasure, and give you our loving favour most heartily.

Song of Love by Elizabeth Clere for the Queen’s visit

Elizabeth Clere: Your majesty (*bows*), you are right welcome to Norfolk.

Margaret of Anjou: Madam, thou art the best wise gentlewomen. I have seen no gentlewomen I liked better than you since I came into Norfolk. Tell me, are you not married?

Elizabeth Clere: No madam, I am a widow.

Margaret of Anjou: Then I would wish you to have a husband.

Elizabeth Clere: Your majesty. *(Bows to the Queen)*

(as they go off, Margaret bids the audience to follow)

Margaret: Let us follow in their wake. If truth be known, I wish that my husband had remembered my gift for Witsuntide, that I might have something for my neck. I have had to borrow a necklace from my cousin, Elizabeth Clere, for the Queen's visit, for I durst not for shame go with my beads among so many fresh and gaily attired gentlewomen as are here at this time.

(Agnes watches the Queen go)

Agnes: The finishing wars with France and the new Queen have done little to end the troubles in the country.

Rebel 1: The law serveth nought else these days but for to do wrong.

Rebel 3: It would seem that the King has had false counsel, for his lands are lost, his merchandise lost, his commons destroyed, the sea lost, France is lost, and himself so poor that he may not pay for his meat nor drink.

Rebel 4: The King owes more than ever did King in England, and yet daily his traitors that be about him wait wherever thing should come to him by his law, and they ask it from him.

Rebel 3: My Lord of York has presented a bill to the King and desires many things that are the will of the common people.

Elizabeth Paston: I am uneasy, mother. The people are riotously disposed and the elections in the county and temperature of the time is not peaceable.

Agnes: Elizabeth, I told you not to meddle with what was none of your concern.

Elizabeth Clere: She is right, cousin. The enemies be so bold that they come up to the land and play them on Caister sands and in other places as homelily as they were Englishmen.

Agnes: They come to Caister? I must look into this.

(Agnes leaves with the letters of business, Elizabeth Clere goes to follow her and is stopped by Elizabeth Paston)

Elizabeth Paston: My cousin, I pray you go to see Friar Newton on my behalf in great secrecy. Pray ask him to write to my brother, John, of my grief, and entreat him to be my

good brother and assist me. I have heard much of Scrope's birth and social position, and if John wants me to marry him, I will, whether my mother wants me to or no.

Elizabeth Clere: My dear cousin, I would mention that Scrope is twice your age, and is afflicted with the pox, which makes him, I hesitate to say, unattractive in appearance.

Elizabeth Paston: Cousin, I cannot endure much longer in the same house as my mother. Since Easter, she has for the most part beaten me weekly, sometimes twice in a day. She wants me married, but deems no one suitable. I was never so sorrowful as I am nowadays. I cannot speak to anyone, whosoever may visit, nor am I allowed to speak or see the servants, as my mother thinks my intentions deceptive. Look at how I am abused?

Elizabeth Clere: My dear cousin, I would still council you not to be too hasty. For sorrow often causes women to bestow themselves in marriage on someone they should not. If you were in that situation, I know you would regret it.

Elizabeth Paston: I cannot live like this, I entreat you to write to my brother.

Elizabeth Clere: If your mother knew that I sent letters behind her back, she would not love me anymore. However, I will write in great secrecy to your brother John, and entreat him in this business. Indeed, cousin, take heart, I have been told that there is a pleasant man in your brother's Inn at Court, a fellow lawyer. I will ask your brother if he would be better for you than Scrope, and if so, to canvass for him. Take heart, cousin, you are not without friends.

(Margaret enters the garden)

Margaret: Lady Clere, what news have you had of my sister Elizabeth's marriage prospects? John Falstaff wanted to bring to a conclusion the marriage between my lady and Scrope.

Elizabeth Clere: The marriage with Scrope has been abandoned. For my part, I am glad of it. For many wished that it should not conclude, for they say it was an unlikely marriage. However, now circumstances for your sister worsen. Your mother, Agnes, seems to not be satisfied with any suitor.

Margaret: I will write to my husband, it is important that he remembers his sister, and to play his part faithfully in helping to get her a good marriage before he comes home.

Elizabeth Clere: I confess, her mother has said she would never be so glad to be free of her as she would now.

Margaret: I have been told that the Knyvett heir is to marry, both his wife and children are dead, we should enquire whether it is so or not, and what property he has.

Elizabeth Clere: I think the best situation would be to get our cousin away from her mother's house. Indeed, we could entreat your mother to have Elizabeth sent to London to board with my Lady Pole for the season.

Margaret: I will do as you advise. By staying in London, indeed, it might increaseth her prospects as well as improve her domestic situation.

The Plague Procession (*Villagers hand out plague charms to the audience and protective herbs*)

Plague music throughout scene (instrumental)

Procession of Villagers: Crux Christi salva me. Zelu domus tuae liberet me. Crux vincit, Crux regnat, Crux Imperat per signum, Crucis libera me, Domine, ab hac Peste. Deus meus, expelle Pestem a me, et a loco isto, et libera me. In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum, cor et corpus meum. Ante Coelum et Terram Deus erat, et Deus potens, est liberare me ab ista Peste. Crux Christi potens est ad expellendam Pestem ab hoc loco, et a corpore meo. Bonum est prestoari auxilium. Dei cum silentio, ut expellat Pestem a me....

Margery Paston: Mother, I have heard that one of the most handsome young men of this parish is very ill with the pestilence. God knows how he will get on.

Margaret: I must entreat my husband with all my heart to send me a pot of medicine in haste, both myself and my daughter have suffered greatly since he left.

Elizabeth Clere: My dear cousin, thank god for your good fortune at being but lightly touched with the disease. It has been even worse in town. I have sent word asking if any of our friends or well-willers be dead, for I fear there is great death in Norwich and in other borough towns in Norfolk. I purpose to flee into the country to my home at Ormesby and advice to you quit Norwich for Caister this week.

Margaret: Indeed, the pestilence is so strong in Town that we dare not abide there, God help us. I assure you that it is the most universal death that ever I knew in England. For, by my troth, I hear from pilgrims that pass through the country. No borough town in England is free from the sickness.

Agnes: May god end it where it pleases Him. I will to Oxnead for the time being and send my young sons to some friend of mine in the country, and you should do the same, by my advice. Indeed, I will remove my whole household in this county.

Margaret: My husband would fain do well to speed his business and leave London, which is unsafe at this time.

Elizabeth Clere: Cousin, even in times of woe fortune can be favourable. Your sister, Elizabeth is finally suitably matched. She has married Sir Robert Poynings.

Margaret: It is by the grace of God, for she is almost 30 years old. I know my brother is relieved his sister is so well matched at long last.

Elizabeth Clere: He is bound in a bond of £1000 to your mother.

Margaret: And to my husband and others who needed no such bond, but for my mother, Agnes, it is well that this is the case. However, I fear she will not give over Elizabeth's dowry as easily as she should.

Elizabeth Paston: Mother, in the most humble fashion I commend myself to your good motherhood. If it pleaseth you to hear of me, and how I do, I am in good bodily health, thanks be to Jesus. And as for my master, my most loved one as you call him, and I should call him now, because I know no reason to the contrary, and as I trust to Jesus never shall. He is very kind to me and is as solicitous as possible to make me certain of my jointure. Therefore I beseech you, good mother, that my most loved one should not be without the 100 marks which was promised to him on his marriage, and also the remainder of the money left to me in my father's will. He cannot pay off any of his other sureties without this said silver, as my brother John can tell you that well enough if it pleaseth him to do so. And concerning all other things, as for my lady Pole, with whom I stayed, I hope that you will be my esteemed and good mother so that she can be paid for the expenses incurred for me before my marriage.

Agnes: We will speak of this later. The pestilence has reached North Walsham, we must depart.

(Margaret, Agnes, and Elizabeth Clere remove themselves to safer ground, leaving the citizens of Norfolk behind to speak to the audience)

Instrumental music under next scene, dramatic War of the Roses music

Gossip 1: The pestilence has not helped matters abroad, and the land has been ungovernable in recent months. There is much rumour in the land about the terrible state of affairs with the King.

Gossip 2: Indeed, since the loss of the lands in France, the King has been insensible to anyone.

Gossip 3: I heard the young prince Edward, was taken to Windsor to see his father, the King. The Duke of Buckinghamshire took the babe in his arms and presented him to the King in goodly wise, beseeching the King to bless him; and the King gave him no answer.

Gossip 1: The Queen also presented the child to his father, but all their labour was in vain.

Gossip 2: Indeed, the King gave him no answer or expression, saving only that he once looked on the Prince and then cast down his eyes again, without any more recognition of his son or Queen.

Gossip 1: This bodes no good for England. The Queen has made a bill that she desires the whole rule of the land in her King and her son's name.

Gossip 4: The people have no love at all for the Queen's right hand, the Duke of Suffolk or his mother. They say that all the traitors and extortionists of this district are maintained by them, and by those they can bribe.

Gossip 2: If the Duke of Suffolk gains control, there will be a malicious regime in the county.

Gossip 3: The lords are rising up against the Queen. Cardinal Kemp has charged and commanded all of his servants to be ready with bows and arrows, sword and buckler, crossbows and all other habiliments of war that they can obtain to wait upon the safeguard of his person.

Gossip 4: I have heard the Earl of Wiltshire has cried at Taunton in Somersetshire that every man who is able and willing to go and serve them against the Crown.

Gossip 2: The Duke of York will be at London next Friday night. His own men tell with certainty, that he will have the fellowship of good men before him, all devoting themselves to York's right to rule against the Queen's claim.

(Gossips speak to audience asking them to choose who should rule, the King, Margaret or the Duke of York)

(A letter is handed to Gossip 2)

Gossip 2: The Duke of Suffolk has been murdered most shamefully, and there has been rebellion throughout the land. Jack Cade has murdered the Treasurer of England and seized London against the Crown.

Gossip 4: My master, Sir John Falstaff, has been called the greatest traitor that was in England or in France to spy on their power and weapons of war. I escaped with my life only because of John Paston's brother in law who married Elizabeth these few years ago.

Gossip 3: Can this be true? The Duke of Suffolk was no friend to us, but the trouble in the land makes it hard to know which way to turn.

Gossip 4: You speak the truth, my friend. We must ally ourselves with powerful protectors, but the law of the land changes daily. They have imprisoned the King in the tower in the name of the Duke of York, and there he remains, as a man amazed and utterly dulled with troubles and adversities.

Gossip 1: Please, my lords and ladies, go and seek out the Queen in her Garden of Roses. Decide for yourselves of her rights, but be warned, do not believe everything you hear. The King was not steadfast of wit as other kings have been, and his foreign Queen claims power for herself in his name.

(Audience go to the rose garden where they meet Margaret of Anjou)

Margaret of Anjou: We do not understand the temper of the people of England towards their Lord and Master, the King. My worshipful husband and his said son have most rightful claim to the throne, by God himself.

It is only through the malice of York that untrue rumours and surmises have spread throughout the Kingdom about myself. I am only trying to rule for my son's claim, as any Queen would do in France, why is this not allowed in England?

I have proven to my people a Queen of untiring energy and industry in public and household affairs. I have rewarded the Viscount of Kent such goods for his loyal service and zeal in punishing those unfortunate persons who were not otherwise able to satisfy our claims. My lord Edmund, Duke of Somerset, has proven a good friend to ourselves, but has known ill-deserved censure by the people of the land. Indeed we are all maligned by the machinations of the families of York with their false claims to the throne. Though the rightful King, my husband, Henry the VIth has been afflicted with poor health and insensibility these many a year, his son, the rightful Edward, is still the grandson of King Henry Vth and will prove a most noble king, in future. It is only through the designs of those who would take the power for themselves that these scandalous and most untrue rumours have spread throughout the land.

Indeed, I stand here before the gates of London where my worshipful husband has been kept against his will at Westminster, to offer a plea to the people. The Duke of York has now died in his unsuccessful rebellion at Wakefield. His son may continue the false claim of the Yorkists against the Crown, and family of Lancaster, but we are determined to defend our rights and we greet our right trusty and well-beloved Citizens of London heartily well.

And whereas the late Duke of York with extreme malice, long hid under colours, imagined by divers ways and means the destruction of my lord's good grace, hath now of late, upon an untrue pretence, feigned a title to my lord's crown, and royal estate: a preeminence, contrary to his solemn oaths of allegiance made, uncompelled or constrained, to my Lord King Henry VIth and to my son's claims to the throne. We know that York schemed to have the King deposed of his regality, had it not been for the unchangeable and true dispositions of you, his true liegemen, for the which we thank you as heartily as we can.

And howbeit, that the same untrue and unadvised person, of very pure malice, continues in his cruelty to the uttermost undoing, if he might, of us, and of my lord's son and ours the prince, which, with God's mercy and by the help of you and all other of my lord's faithful subjects, he shall not be of power to perform.

We know the Yorkist faction hath thrown among you divers untrue and feigned matters and surmises against us. The claims that my Lord's said son and ours should newly draw toward you with an unseen power of strangers, disposed to rob and to despoil you of your goods and property is a mischievous falsehood. We tell you for certain that, at such time as we or our said son shall be disposed to see my Lord held in captivity in London, none of you shall be robbed, despoiled, nor wronged by any person. You may know, our desire to see my lord husband is not to go against you, but our duty for the love we bear him. We pray most heartily that above all earthly things you will diligently attend to the surety of my lord's royal person in the meantime; so that through malice of his said enemy he may be no more troubled, vexed, nor put in jeopardy. We pray that you will support our claim as rightful

rulers under God. In honour, justice and God's good grace we appeal to your loyalty to the Crown.

Gossip 1: Let us leave the Queen, I fear she has not been successful in her plea to the people of London.

Elizabeth Clere: As for tidings, the Queen and the Prince are at Tutbury, my Lord York at Sandal. I am somewhat uneasy of heart to hear about the purpose.

Gossip 3: I heard that Queen Margaret and her son is in the West Country, and I believe that King Edward will depart from here to drive her out again.

Margaret: Both my sons fought in the battle of Barnet, I beseech you, is there any news?

Paston III: Mother, blessed be God, my brother John is alive and fares well and is in no peril of death. Nevertheless he is hurt with an arrow in his right arm beneath the elbow. I have sent him to a surgeon who has dressed it and he tells me that he trusts that he shall be all whole in a short time. I am also in good case, and in no jeopardy of my life, I think, for I am at my liberty if need be.

Margaret: Nevertheless, you have since been troubled, I see?

Paston III: God has showed himself marvellously like him that made all things and can undo again when he pleases. I now understand that he has a pardon, and so we hope well. It is better news than from my cousin, Elizabeth's husband.

Elizabeth Paston: Sir Robert Poynings was killed in the Battle of St Albans. And I am afflicted with even greater grief. My husband's will gave me control all of his estates. But Robert Fiennes has taken them from me and caused a great amount of destruction and damage there. I entreat you with all my heart to canvass the King's highness to return to me what is mine.

(Elizabeth and Paston III walk off, leaving Margery to speak to the audience)

Music begins (Love song theme, instrumental)

Margery: Much has happened in the land, to both the Kingdom and my family. King Edward now rules the land and the tide is turning against Lord Moleyn and his men. My father has laid claim to Caister Castle, and many other manor houses in Norfolk, increasing our importance throughout the county. Indeed, my father is famed for doing his enemy a shrewd turn his household never fairing the worse for it. The same can be said for those who run his estates, especially, Richard Calle, the most noble and devoted of managers.

Richard and I have secretly been in love for many a month. I am his own lady and mistress, and before God his true wife. Pray, give this letter to my brother. *(upon John III's return)* John, I ask for your good will in our match.

John III: My ungracious sister, if my father was alive, and he and my mother consented, I would never give you my good will to allow any sister of mine to stoop so low as to marry a servant. He will reduce you from a lady to a goodwife selling candles and mustard in Framlingham.

Margery: Little John, I marvel much that you should take this matter so hard. Richard's deserts in every way are such that there should be no obstacle against it. I had rather be with him than have all the goods in the world.

John III: You will not marry him. I will entreat the Bishop of Norwich to question you under threat of excommunication.

Margery: Will I not? I have already married him in secret. It seems a thousand years ago since I spoke with him! In good faith I have been right sick since we have met.

John: You have married him, against your family's wishes?

Agnes: John, I know well my granddaughter's bad behaviour has pierced your heart painfully. I will tell the Bishop we can never accept Richard Calle as a husband for Margery.

Margaret: Margery, remember you are a Paston, remember who your relatives and friends are, and all that you will have if you are ruled and guided by us. But without our good favour, you will have nothing.

Agnes: And if you will not be guided by us, you will have nothing but rebuke and shame and loss. You will be abandoned of material help and comfort that you could have if you remain in our good grace.

Margery: Alas! I love one who my friends do not want me to marry, that is all.

Agnes: Consider very carefully what you say, Margery. We need to know whether the words you gave him constituted matrimony or not.

Margery: I believe in my heart and in my conscience that we are committed, whatever words were spoken.

Margaret: Daughter your foolish words, and even more foolish actions, grieve us so. You are no longer welcome in our house. My ladies, do not admit her today or any a day into our household or that of her grandmother's. My daughter, if you had been virtuous, things would not have been as bad as this. Because even if Richard Calle were to fall down dead at this very hour, you will never be in my heart as you used to be.

(Margery Paston exits)

John Paston III: Mother, we must remember that Richard Calle has kept the management of our estates for many a year. I hear he has secreted away many of our legal documents essential to our affairs of business. We may be forced to accept him as Margery's husband.

Margaret: To see my daughter behave in such a manner. It breaks my heart.

Agnes: Remember, in losing her we have only lost a wretch, and so take it less to heart. You can be sure of this, she will bitterly regret her foolishness in the future, and I beg God that she may do so. I entreat you, take heart in all things, I trust God shall help.

Margaret: Grief continues upon us. I hear that John the elder behaves scandalously at court and carries on with lavish expenditure and sinful behaviour. He has had two major losses this year. God chastises him in various ways.

Agnes: Indeed, he wishes my grandson to know and serve him better than he has done before now.

Margaret: I wish for the love of God, he would accept the judgement patiently and thank God for his chastisement. For, as I told his father, I will condone no low behaviour.

Agnes: I would rather he were fittingly buried than lost out to negligence.

Margaret: As long as he is of good conduct and attitude, he shall not lack anything that I can help with, provided that he needs it. His estates can be put into such order, but by my faith, I have helped as much as I can, while ensuring my own salvation. I pray he takes care before it gets worse.

Agnes: I counselled your husband to learn the law, as his father before him. For his father hath said many times that whosoever would dwell at Paston would need to know how to defend himself, and lord knows in these troubled times, that has proven to be the case.

Margaret: Our family has had need of the law in these late years. Fastolf's will has proven more difficult than we thought, and many contest our claim to Caister Castle.

Agnes: Indeed, my son has proven stubborn in all things. Men say he will neither follow the advice of his own kindred nor of his counsel, but only of his own wilfulness, which, but grace, shall be his destruction.

Music begins, drums and war music which occur throughout next scene

Caister Castle: (Battle of Caister)

John Paston III: Mother, we stand in great jeopardy at Caister. Two are dead and others badly hurt, and gunpowder and arrows are lacking. The place is badly broken down by the guns of the other party, so that unless they have hasty help, they are likely to lose both their lives and the place.

Katherine: They say that my lord the Duke has 4000 men!

John Paston III: And we have but 30. Come, we must defend ourselves as best we can!

(Cast get audience to defend Caister with whatever is at hand)

Elizabeth Clere: What a cruel day, with guns fired at the Castle. They must have hasty succour that be in this place, for they be sore hurt and have no help.

Margaret: I will write to my son, John the Elder. It will be the greatest rebuke that ever came to any gentleman.

Castle Servant 1: My lady, the fine fellowship at the Castle stand in great jeopardy. They lack victuals and fail in gunpowder and arrows, and places are broken with guns of other parts, so that but they have hasty help, they are like to lose both their lives and their place.

Margaret: We have sought assistance from my son, and should get relief soon for those at the Castle.

Katherine: My lady Paston, your son John's writes denying any battle. He says that a truce and abstinence from war should endure until Monday next. He assures us that those within have no worse rest than I have, nor fear more danger.

Margaret: It appears that my son thinks that I am writing to fables and imaginings. I have written as I have been informed, and I will continue to do so. Every man in the country marvels greatly that you suffer them to be so long in such great jeopardy without help or other remedy. For certain two good men are dead, God rest their souls.

John III: Right worshipful mother, we were forced to surrender Caister Castle. We were sore lacking in victuals, gunpowder and men's hearts, and lack of certainty of rescue drove us to the treaty. If my brother had not been hasty, the Duke of Norfolk's wife would tire of the whole affair and the King would grant our claim. But my brother was hasty, and brought this battle and bloodshed upon us.

Margaret: We must find a quick way to regain Caister, for to see all that we fought hard for gone to our enemies. Our lands stolen, and our rents taken by others. We beat the bushes, and have the loss and the disworship, and other men have the birds.

Elizabeth Clere: My dearest cousin, it grieves me to add to your woes. But these troubled times lead to want for us all, and I must ask for the return of my loan to you of 100 marks.

Margaret: Oh cousin, my heart is a very spear. I know not how to repay you, by my troth, for I have it not, nor I cannot make shift therefore, not even if I should go to prison. I would have thought John the Elder would have some consideration of the danger that I have been put in for him.

Plague Procession Reprise (Elizabeth Clere brings a letter to John)

Plague music throughout scene instrumental

Procession of Villagers: Crux Christi salva me. Zelu domus tuae liberet me. Crux vincit, Crux regnat, Crux Imperat per signum, Crucis libera me, Domine, ab hac Peste. Deus meus, expelle Pestem a me, et a loco isto, et libera me. In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum, cor et corpus meum. Ante Coelum et Terram Deus erat, et Deus potens, est liberare me ab ista Peste. Crux Christi potens est ad expellendam Pestem ab hoc loco, et a corpore meo. Bonum est prestoiari auxilium. Dei cum silentio, ut expellat Pestem a me....

Elizabeth Clere: My dear cousin, there seems to be the worst occurrence of the pestilence in this year of our lord 1479, than I have seen in my life. There is a huge mortality and death of people not just in the City, but also in many other parts of the realm.

John Paston III: Our family has been afflicted with grief. Sure tidings have come to Norwich that my grandmother is dead.

Margaret Paston: Your brother, Walter, has also been taken by God.

Elizabeth Clere: And my lady, I bring even more sad tidings. Your other son, John the Elder, has been stricken by the pestilence as well.

Margaret: Alas, he wrote but last week of his fear of sickness and his poor lodgings in London. If he had only fled the city as his uncle did.

Petrarch Song: Alas what lies before me? Whither now Am I to be whirled away by the force of fate? Time rushes onward for the perishing world And round about I see the hosts of the dying, The young and the old; nor is there anywhere In all the world a refuge, or a harbor Where there is hope of safety. Funerals Where'er I turn my frightened eyes, appall; The temples groan with coffins, and the proud And humble lie alike in lack of honor The end of life presses upon my mind, And I recall the dear ones I have lost, Their cherished words, their faces, vanished now, The consecrated ground is all too small To hold the instant multitude of graves.

John III: My brother is buried in the White Friars at London. I did not think that it would have been so, and if it had been his will to lie at Bromholm, I would have brought home my grandmother and him together.

Margaret: Dearest John the Younger, I pray you will not go to London, and if you must, that you depart from that dangerous place as quickly as possible, for it a city of such pestilence that has taken both your grandmother and brother.

John III: Right worshipful Mother... please it you to understand that whereas ye willed me by pains to hasten out of the foul air that I am in, I must put my faith in God, for I must remain in London for a season. And in good faith, I shall never while God sends me life, dread more death than shame. But thanks be to God, I hear the sickness is well ceased there, and my business putteth away my fear.

Margery Brewes Paston: Madam, while John is in London, I think it best if I would go myself to my Lady of Norfolk and plea our cause. If we can regain Caister Castle, our fortunes are saved.

Margaret: Very well, if you could control your tongue and speak no harm of your uncle.

Margery Brewes Paston: I trust that I should say nothing to my Lady's displeasure, but only to your profit. I understand that my Lady Norfolk is near weary of her part in this. It would be even better, if you yourself came before my Lady, beseeching her to take our part. I think that

we will have a conclusion. Our possession of Caister is in our hands. For she would fain be rid of it, if she could save her honour.

Margaret: Should I speak for our family then?

Music begins War of the Roses theme instrumental

Elizabeth Clere: Indeed, for experience has shown us that one word from a woman will do more than the words of twenty men.

Margaret: *(beat)* My cousin, you speak the truth.

(Margaret steals herself to go and save the family fortune once again)

Paston Treasures (or Robert Paston's Cabinet of Curiosities)

Rebecca and Margaret Paston (Opening section)

Rebecca Paston: My lords and ladies of the King's company, we right welcome you to Oxnead Hall for the visit of his most noble majesty, Charles II. We invite you to see Sir Robert Paston's best closet in the new building, designed and created in honour of the King's visit.

Margaret Paston: The Paston Treasure is well known for its display of my grandfather and lord father's fame for loyalty to the crown, virtuosity and their dedication to natural philosophy. Indeed our collection is a compliment to the Nation as well as the family. As the great Thomas Pecke described, to the Noble, Sir William Paston:

Your Recreation is to feed your Eyes,

With the most select Things, the Globe comprise,

I know the Medium to let you see

A wonder; England's choicest Rarity.
Advance to the reflecting Looking-Glass:

There you may view, the Fam'd Meceoena's Face.

Rebecca: We invite you to explore my husband and son's dedication to the Royal Society of Alchemists and the Royal Adventurers Company. Welcome to Sir Robert Paston's Cabinet of Curiosities, please follow us.

(One half of audience go left to discover Dora and Abbie in Alchemy Section)

D: I much rejoice to hear our affairs are so prosperous!

A: Yes! I am confident that with a little more money and labour, we may find it the most auspicious of our endeavours.

D: It is likely! After all, Lord Yarmouth does have the most celebrated laboratory in England.

A: And of course, as genuine alchemists we are firmly aware that truly the emotional and spiritual state of the individual experimenter is involved intimately with the success and failure of our pursuits. And, coming from a line of gentlemen, we will continue to make great progress in the pursuit of alchemy of which we speak!

D: Indeed Sir, praise be that we are not involved with the lowly pursuit of chemistry, which is inevitably growing in fashion amongst the baser sort of the populace...

A: Oh... hello....

D: Are they early?

A: Welcome to the Royal Society of London for improving natural knowledge.

D: As our newest members, you should congratulate yourselves on following the honourable footsteps of some of the most illustrious alchemists of our generation

A: Christopher Wren, my Lord Robert Paston, Earl of Yarmouth, and even our respectable friend, Sir Isaac Newton

D: and from this point on, pledge yourself to live by our most important maxim...

A: Nullius in verba.

D: Take nobody's word for it.

A: Today, we dedicate our assembly to the family of the Pastons, who have contributed immeasurably to the pursuit of Alchemy for many years. Notably, the late Sir William was renowned for the discovery of cures and aids to health, assisting a range of conditions and medical pursuits from gout, to childbearing.

D: indeed, The Pastons contribution is unmatched, and it is unsurprising that the family has received such praise from many respectable gentleman. Renowned Edward Phillips states that Sir William's medical excellence was for "the benefit of mankind"

A: and as for his son, and our friend, Robert Paston developed a kinship with Sir a Thomas Browne, founded in the Paston curiosities, and a shared fervour for collecting the phenomena of the wider world.

D: With this knowledge and support, we grow ever closer to discovering our medicinal panacea, the cure for all diseases, and indeed we are close to discovering The Red Elixir so long lusted upon!

Camryn DELIVERS LETTER

CAM: This is for the attention of the royal society, please open it with haste!

D: We have just been made aware that our colleague, and Lord Paston's own brother in law, John Clayton, found a recipe for the Philosophers stone from a monk of the right order!

A: It seems that the secret was found hidden in the bottom of a well, in a book enclosed with soldered lead and with a marble cover! Clayton even tells us that the title of the book was written in gold and silver made out of the philosophers stone itself!

Recepie

-Have first a strong armoniache spirit

-Change receiver and take the middle part of this humidity by itself

-And likewise the phlegme by itself

-Take feces and grind them very small in a marble

-Put them into a body with a blind head

-Power on them of your middle part till it swim two fingers over

- Set them on warm ashes for 24 to 48 hours till you see your liquor tinged
- Then decant neatly and power on fresh till the liquor is no more tinged
- Have a good store of the tinged liquid
- Digest in balneo for four days
- Distille by degrees in sand and bring over the sulphur

DELIVER LETTER

CAM: Urgent letter from Elias Ashmole

A: My goodness...our very own fellow, Elias Ashmole, has discovered a lightning stone fallen from the sky! I cannot believe it...

D: By the grace of divinity! It's miraculous!

A: He tells us that by the magical and prospective stone it is possible to discover any person.. in what part of the world... forever!

D: He is correct! If what Ashmole tells us is true, the stone would present to our view even the whole world, wherein to hear, see or behold your desire.

A: It would even allow us to understand the language of the beasts... of the creatures... even the chirping of the birds, and the lowing of the beasts!

D: We may be able to convey a spirit in to an image, which by observing the influence of heavenly bodies, shall become a true oracle!

A: How close we are to grasping the whole wisdom of nature! And we can only imagine what other discoveries may be within our reach...

D: With the philosophers stone AND the red elixir, we would be unstoppable!

(Audience are invited to move on and overhear Margaret and Lady Paston speaking in confidence):

Margaret Paston: Mother, I am deemed to be somewhat bare in apparel in Town, and there is a kind of privilege in youth for wearing fashionable clothes and dressing well will only add more beauty to find me successfully matched. I will purchase accordingly to be seen as well apparelled as any in London.

Rebecca Paston: My dearest Peg, we are somewhat wanting of money at present. I must confess, I fear we will miss the honour of serving his Majesty as becomes him in our house. His lordship has spent a king's ransom on the improvements of Oxnead, but it is not enough. Indeed, Sir Robert proclaims he has spent three times an Earl's daughter's dowry to house the King as he is accustomed.

Margaret Paston: Was not that money borrowed to pay off the mortgaging of our estate? No matter. Your ladyship, the King's visit will be the beginning of all good fortune for us in the

county. The Paston family are the most ancient of all the Norfolk gentry here without competition and my lord father has done good service to the King.

Royal Adventurers Section (audience come upon Shams and Chris in conversation)

Shams: Marvel at the globe! The world is round and we can now experience it for ourselves, not just know that this is the case.

Chris: Indeed. Explorers send fast ships now to the Indies, the Americas, and the Orient. We are living in a true age of discovery.

Shams: Where in the vast world shall we investigate? *(The two look at map and globe to plan where to travel. They notice the audience and Chris addresses them...)*

Chris: 'Greetings fellow explorers, welcome to another Royal Adventures Meeting. We have long and fully resolved with Ourselves to extend not only the boundaries of Empire, but also the very arts and sciences. Therefore We look with favour upon all forms of learning, but with particular grace We encourage philosophical studies, especially those which by actual experiment attempt either to shape out a new philosophy or to perfect the old.

Shams: Indeed, if our gentlemen shall more condescend to engage in commerce, and to regard the Philosophy of Nature then we can take advantage of our charter to assist in the improving Natural Knowledge by seeking out information about people, animals and things from the great ends of the Earth.

Chris: The first of these since the King's return, has bin carry'd on with great vigour, by the foundation of the Royal Adventurers Company: to which as twin sister of the Royal Society, we have reason as we go along to wish all prosperity.

Shams: In both these institutions begun together, our King has intimated the two most famous works of the wisest of the antient Kings: who at the same time sent to Ophir for gold, and compos'd a Natural History, from the cedar to the shrub observations and inventions scattered up and down the world.

Chris: We can use this opportunity for profit as well as science. The Royal Adventurers Society could have use and enjoy mines of gold and silver which are or shall be found in all or any of those parts. We also may supply the American colonies with negro servants. We find that blacks are the most useful appurtenances of a Plantation and perpetual servants.

Shams: Sir, I would pause before condoning the trafficking of countrymen of my complexion into the miserable situation of those who are barbarously sold into captivity, and unlawfully held in slavery.

Chris: My dear sir, with what ease it will be to our kingdoms to have many of the lazy and idle people set to work and trained up as servants? Indeed, we can sell slaves to Gentlemen in the West Indies for £17 each. A most profitable venture indeed.

Shams: I must observe your country's conduct has been uniformly wicked in the East –West Indies –and even the coast of Guinea. The grand object of English navigators, indeed of all Christian navigators –is money, money, money.

Chris: A greater division of mankind is made by the skinne than by any other part in the body that is into white and black.

Shams: Enough, it is a subject that sours my blood, and I am sure will not please the friendly bent of your social affections. I mention these only to guard my friend against being too hasty in condemning the knavery of a people who, bad as they may be, possibly, were made worse by their Christian visitors.

Chris: Ladies and gentlemen, my reasoning is based in Science of the Natural Philosophers and the Royal Society, not profit alone. Indeed, examine our questionnaire sent to trading posts and travellers, calling for all ingenious men, such as consider the importance of cementing philosophical spirits to supply information about climate, geography, flora, fauna, and local inhabitants.

(Interactions with audience *Questions and Answers Section*)

(Harry Rumbold receives a letter and then calls across to Margaret)

Harry Rumbold (Shams): Margaret, your family at Oxnead have discovered all. They will surely apply all possible vigilance and care that we should not come together.

Rebecca Paston: My dear sir, my daughter is sorry for her folly and this business is now at an end. Go back to Tangier and do not seek out my daughter any longer.

Harry Rumbold: Your ladyship, I am resolved never to quit this business, unless I should hear from Margaret's own mouth that she is repented of what she has done. Only then will I desist and never trouble her more. I have nothing but my life to lose, and that I am resolved to sacrifice.

Margaret Paston: *(coming towards HR and RP):* My dear heart, they cannot stop us. I will be your martyr, if I should suffer the reproach and contempt of my friends, all this would for your sake be but a pleasure and a glory to me.

Rebecca Paston: Peg, desist in this. My ladies, remove my daughter to a place of protection from this outlandish behaviour not fitting a lady of quality.

Harry Rumbold: I declare my eternal constancy and fidelity, madam. Take heart and we shall be together hereafter.

Margaret : Mother, I have £4000 well secured to me in my grandfather's will, and that money you cannot deny me. I can marry whosoever and whenever I please once I achieve my majority.

Abbie: I have a great tenderness for Sir Robert and my Lady. I would not add to their grief to state that they can little lose £4000 at present. Not any one that has heard this lamentable story hath any pity for their daughter, Margaret Paston. Come follow me to view their collection, say not a word of what I have told you.

Audience move into the Gallery where music is playing

Song: *Hark! how all things in one sound rejoice.
And the world seems to have one voice.
Hark! how all things in one sound rejoice.*

(Music then turns into instrumental and keeps playing a second loop)

Rebecca: Your majesty, honoured guests, welcome to our Theater of treasures. The world of wonders in one closet shut.

Once one is captured by the immeasurable charm of art,/ what need is there to set full sail upon the shipwrecking surface of the sea,/ In order to survey whatever marvels this vast world contains?/ What is the delight in eagerly traversing so many lands?/ A single theater that displays everything it its classes/ Can serve as a stand-in for the globe in its entirety an accomplishment.

William: The tables being spread and sideboards richly adorned with Plate, please may your Majesty take note of some of the more Remarkable Pieces.

Camryn: We present our world of curiosities, cabinets and jewels.

(Music continues with second verse with Holly singing)

Inventory: *(actors go round asking people to value the objects, bragging about how fine the collection is)*

One mother of pearle botle, each side the fashion of a swan with a silver and gilt foote, and a silver and gilt statue upon the top.

A mother of pearle dish, all set in scollops, with silver and gilt foot, a cristall ball standing upright in the midle, carved.

A shell cup set in a carved and silver gilt frame and foot and cover, a piece of cristall in the midle of the cover, set with a silver and gilt knobb in the midle.

A cristall cup, with a silver and gilt foot and ledge, a cristall cover with a silver and gilt knob in the midle.

A black Indian bottle set in silver, with a chaine.

A red speckle shell standing upon a silver foot.

A mother of pearle flower pott, inlaid in a silver and gilt frame.

A boy gilded, with a socket for a candle in his hand.

A shell standing on a dolphin, silver and gilt, with a silver and gilt figure upon the top.

A shell, engraven with the story of Atalanta, standing upon an eagle's foot of silver.

A gilded horse in a trotting posture.

One amber cabinet broken

One amber cup broke.

Margaret: Had a representative from the crown not plunder'd it from my grandfather by Trunk full, we would have welcomed his majesty with greater plenty.

Chris: Shh...

(The Paston's frieze in tableau)

Abbie: We look on a world of wonders shut, a place where our dealings of importance are shut up, a room proper and peculiar to ourselves.

Shams: Of this we keep the key to our selves, and use thereof alone do only appropriate unto ourselves.

Dora: And yet, who is to see the key to a human heart? The glittering jewels and precious plate may hide secrets a family is loathe to reveal.

Abbie: The soul remains caught in the passion and animalistic lust of the world. The slavery of the world remains something Man cannot detach himself.

Shams: Just as a snail's back is bound to its house, so Sir Robert's ambition drove him on towards his destiny.

Abbie: As it is writ in the psalms, Man being in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish. This their way is their folly; yet their posterity approve their sayings.

Rebecca: His lordship troubles himself too much over these concerns. My husband must learn to do as other men in more troublesome place do, Let things in their mind run indifferently If he would only resolve to withdraw himself from all things that do not immediately concern him, he would be well. Otherwise indeed, he will never have a quiet hour.

Chris: My lady mother, this morning I took my leave of Sir Robert, who confessed that the King above twenty times the day before repeated that none was nearer his heart than Paston, that he intended to mend our family's honor and fortune.

Camryn: Indeed, the service he has done the King is so great that he is looked on as not being denied anything in his Majesty's power.

Rebecca: And yet the King still does not speak.

Camryn: Madam, at last though through many sad changes Sir Robert has surmounted all difficulties and gotten the King's sweet hand, accompanied with many favourable expressions which entitle him to any further boon he shall ask. I wish your ladyship much joy and long life to enjoy the advantage of this grant.

(Abbie and Dora begin to gossip about Margaret Paston Alberti)

Dora: The Viscount and Viscountess of Yarmouth have known good favour, and yet Miss Paston has yet again proved disobedient to her family.

Abbie: Indeed, during the King's visit, she met yet another suitor who proved unsuitable for a woman of her station. Giralamo Alberti de Conte, a member of the Venetian court—

Dora: And a Catholic.

Abbie: It has broken her poor father's heart to see her so matched. The disgrace of the family from a beloved daughter's rebellion, is one the Viscount will little recover from.

Margaret Paston: I can assure you, I am used with all respect imaginable by my husband's friends, and command whatever I desire. I have money and clothes, and all things suitable to a woman of quality. Though I may have not met with a match so good as my father believes I might have deserved, yet there is no reproach in it. I have married a gentleman, a man of parts, one who uses me worthily.

Chris: Mother, my sister's marriage and grandfather's settlement on her will prove difficult for our state of affairs. Her marriage to an alien makes it impossible for her inheritance to be gathered through the Southown estate, and we will have to raise her dowry of £4000 by some other means. Indeed, I see no end to the affair without the mortgaging of more of our properties, and even then we will be lacking of ready money.

Rebecca Paston: We know so much of the want of money is, and what the straitness of a fortune is, that we must succeed or be ruined in the attempt. Our family is on the brink of those necessities that no man of the nation of our quality or fortune is. Our revenue is seized for a mortgage on £10,000, and our family is hated and oppressed on every side. However, we must trust still in God. The King hath promised he will never leave us or forsake us.

Chris: I am not ignorant nor insensible of my father's occasions for money. But he remains a special friend to the King. Indeed, he supplied his Majesty with money whilst in Exile; Nay I had it from himself that he borrowed to give, fearing his Sovereign might want.

Rebecca Paston: His lordship's disposition is keenly troubled. He suffers from windy splenetic vapours which have left him in great fits of weeping which eases when they are over. His melancholic fits and trouble with the gout increase his difficulties,

Margaret Paston: Would that my father allowed me to assist him. I have a keen knowledge of physick, like my father and grandfather, and have published volumes here in Venice of recipes gathered even from the King himself. My pursuit of alchemy is indeed the desire to find a cure for all diseases. Let me prove to you my l'antidino infalibile will assist in any illness you might have. It is taken from my father, who cured everyone of his household from the plague.

(Margaret begins to invite audience members to be cured by her)

Dora: We must remember that all flesh is as grass. Like many of these treasures, they too will pass.

(Dora gives Shams a letter)

Shams: My Lord Yarmouth has become Lord Lieutenant of Norfolk, and yet his honour increaseth his debts. I have here a list of Payments by Robert Paston, Earl of Yarmouth 1672-1676

To Mr Bullard for the charge of the Trial of Yarmouth £177

To Mrs Katherine Eaton £455

To My Lady Clayton for money advanced on the orange farm £304

To Mr Wak Exchangeman £100

Total Expenses: £1725

(dialogue continues while the debts continue to be read)

Abbie: The inactiveness of the lord lieutenant is a great discouragement to the part, for, though he is respected for his other good qualities, yet the gentry of his party equally dislike his little love of business and his lady's too much meddling in it.

Margaret Paston: Mother, I find the sad story of my father's broken heart a thing I never dreamt nor would ever have imagined; the King's ingratitude amazes me. And to speak the truth, he merits not to have so faithful a subject, nor so real a friend, but the old proverb fails not which says many in this world are incapable of knowing the good they do.

William Paston: Our father is worse than I expected. His fainting was about three hours, and so cold in his hands and feet as nothing could be liker death but death itself insomuch as many strong cordials together with rubbing his hands and breast and feet with palsy water could very hardly at last bring him to heat.

Song (Holly):

O, let me forever weep:

My eyes no more shall welcome sleep.

I'll hide me from the sight of day,

And sigh my soul away.

He's gone, his loss deplore,

And I shall never see him more.

Margaret Paston (to her brother William during song): This makes me see the inanity of following Courts and makes me thank God that fortune has condemned me to lead a private life in which perhaps I have suffered less disquiet than you, sir.

William Paston: Perhaps if my dear father had contented himself with the wholesome air of Oxnead without troubling him with State affairs and following the Court, then our mother would not now be a widow.

Abbie: Pass on, traveller; a noble man and citizen is buried here. There is lacking in his treasure house this one unique and everlasting gem; it is called eternal life.

Dora: Who knows what troubles each bring with them to the grave?

Shams: The great lady lyes about her with her flaming sword, which if it were well edged would wound as well as defend, but it is known to be so ill sett that it will do neither.

Rebecca Paston: The Countess of Yarmouth, Rebecca Paston, was now held at Court as an indiscreet and mischievous woman. Though she made a great bustle in King Charles the 2nds time, now boards in a thatched house; and although there she keeps up her pride to the height by suffering no one to set at meat with her and many other vain formalities, yet with difficulty enough finds money to pay for her board, and hath made her landlord so weary of her as to make use of all the civil ways he can to get rid of her; but she will understand none of them, not knowing where next to go. Her son gives her no respect or holds any correspondence with her, though she lives not above 2 miles from him.

Margaret Paston Alberti: Margaret Paston Alberti, who seemed to triumph with all of her family's misfortunes, ended sadly. Her son, Carlo Alberti, a Venetian statesman, like his father, was arrested in 1722 for forging money orders and other documents, and sentenced to death. Margaret's petition stated that "Would that I, the Countess of Yarmouth, had never been born; or after becoming a mother had at least not survived my utter misery until this my

ruinous old age, if it only remains for me to see my son in the hands of an executioner; and to hear from England my country which I have abandoned, and from my kinsfolk there, that I came to shed their blood—which is illustrious—under the axe of judgement on an ignominious scaffold in this Queen City of the world.” Shortly after her son’s execution, she died.

William Paston: The second Earl of Yarmouth lived on until 1732. Debts and misfortunes crowded upon him, and he seems altogether to have lost heart. He drifted on, year after year, his estates mortgaged, his pension secured to pay some fraction of his debts, until everything was in hopeless confusion. His three sons died, none of them leaving issue. His beautiful Oxnead falling to ruin. Paston, like his father, would never escape from his whirlpool of misadventures and the rising tide of debt closed over the heads of his posterity.

Shams: Ladies and Gentlemen, behold the auction of the goods and chattels of the Right Honourable William, Earl of Yarmouth, which were seized and taken in Execucion at the Suite of John Gasquoyne, Gentleman. Valued and appraised by Joseph Ellden Gent and John Wingfield, on the fifteenth day of Octoer in the year of our Lord One thousand, seven hundred and three.

(Music underneath the selling of the goods)

Auction of goods:

Inventory of Ornamental Plate, &c.

formerly at Oxnead Hall[*]

A paire of coaker-shell cups with covers, in the midle of the covers agate-stones sett in enamell, with a gold knob of the top.

A paire of shell cups with covers, ivory feet and ledges.

A paire of cristall candlesticks.

A black cupp with an ivory rim and foot.

A gourd botle with a silver frame,

On the left side of the chimney, on the creast.

A mother of pearle flower pott, inlaid in a silver and gilt frame.

A shell cup, enameld.

A litle red gourd.

On that of the creast, the right side of the chimney.

A browne cupp with a cover and a silver frame.

A gilded head upon a pedestall.

A figure enameld, upon a pedestall.

A red Indian cup with a cover and black rim.

On that side right against the chimney.

Hanging 5 shelves in scarlett ribbin, and trimd with scarlett ribbin.

On the 1 shelfe a paire of crystall balls, A litle shell boxe for amber,

On the 2d shelfe.

A shell cup engraven, set in a silver and gilt frame, in ye midle of ye cover a green stone.

A paire of cristall botles.

An amber cupp. A christall ball.

Two gilt boxes with agat covers.

On the 5th shelfe.

A cristall ball upon a silver foot, tied with scarlet ribbin.

A mother of pearle boxe, engraven, set in a silver frame.

A ball of glasse of severall colours.

A Cheiny pott with a cover.

2 christall ovals.

Under this shelfe a mother of pearle shell with scarlet ribbin.

On that side over against the windowes hanging 7 shelfes in scarlett ribbin, and trimmed with scarlett ribbin.

Song: (Holly)

O Solitude

O solitude, my sweetest choice!
Places devoted to the night,
Remote from tumult and from noise,
How ye my restless thoughts delight!

O solitude, my sweetest choice!
O heav'ns! what content is mine
To see these trees, which have appear'd
From the nativity of time,
And which all ages have rever'd,
To look today as fresh and green
As when their beauties first were seen.
O, how agreeable a sight
These hanging mountains do appear,
Which th' unhappy would invite
To finish all their sorrows here,
When their hard fate makes them endure
Such woes as only death can cure.
O, how I solitude adore!

Robert Paston's Whirlpool of Misadventures

Intro in the Barn:

H: The story of the rise of the Paston family has often been told.

Abbie: ‘There was one Clement Paston and he was a good plain husband, and live upon his land that he had in Paston, and kept thereon a plough all times in the year.’

Chris: Then followed a long succession of struggles,

Dora. difficulties

Ben: and triumphs which brought the descendants of Clement Paston to opulence and power.

Camryn: The fights and wrangles and disputes;

Shams: the sieges of Gresham, Hellesdon and Caister.

Rebecca P (Sarah E): The shrewd capable calculating wives, seeing to affairs in Norfolk while their husbands and sons waited at Court, hoping for a chance word with the King.

Robert P: But this is the story of the End of the Pastons. The sudden collapse of the family at the end of the 17th century, so soon after Robert Paston, First Earl of Yarmouth, achieved the long sought power and place from King Charles II.

Sarah L: To tell Robert's story, we return to 1660 with the Restoration of the Monarchy.

Astrea Redux (Dryden)

Holly: While our stars denied us Charles,

For his long absence Church and State did groan;

Madness the pulpit, faction seized the throne:

Experienced age in deep despair was lost,

To see the rebel thrive, the loyal cross'd:

When by their designing leaders taught

To strike at power, which for themselves they sought,

The vulgar, gull'd into rebellion, arm'd;

Their block to action by the prize was warm'd.

Ben: The rabble now such freedom did enjoy,
As winds at sea, that used it to destroy:
Blind as the Cyclop, and as wild as he,
They own'd a lawless, savage liberty;

How great were then our Charles' woes, who thus
Was forced to suffer for himself and us!
He, tost by fate, and hurried up and down;
Heir to his father's sorrows, with his crown,

Sarah E: Thus banish'd David spent abroad his time,
When to be God's anointed was his crime;
And when restored, made his proud neighbours rue
Those choice remarks he from his travels drew.

Ken: Methinks I see those crowds in Dover's strand,
Who, hastened to welcome you to land,
How shall I speak of that triumphant day,
When you renew'd the expiring pomp of May!

Sarah L: Oh, happy prince! Whom Heaven hath taught the way,
By paying vows to have more vows to pay!
Oh, happy age! Oh times like those alone,
By fate reserved for Great Charles' throne!
The world a monarch, and that monarch home.

Song: (Holly)

Halcyon Days, now wars are ending, you shall find whene'er you sail,

Halcyon Days, now wars are ending, you shall find when e'er you sail,

Tritons all the while attending, with a kind and gentle gale

With a kind and gentle gale.

Tritons all the while attending with a kind and gentle gale.

Halcyon days now wars are ending, halcyon days now wars are ending

You shall find when e'er you sail.

Tritons all the while attending with a kind and gentle gale.

Sarah E: And now abundance shone for our loyal Cavaliers, “a laughing, quaffing, and unthinking time,” with the gallant Charles II granting favour to those who remained loyal in the long years of exile. My lord John Dromore became the First Viscount of Scudamore, while John Granville became the first Earl of Bath, and Sir Robert Paston, knighted at the King’s landing at Dover, sought hard to gain more power and place for his family in the Brave New World of Restoration England.

H: Sorrow comes over night, but joy comes in the morning. With the death of his father, William Paston, Sir Robert Paston inherited the estate of Oxnead on the 22nd of February, 1663.

Margaret Beddingfeld: My Lady Rebecca Paston, I was strangely transported with the visit I made to Oxnead, which was at that time like a terrestrial paradise: so full of flowers and so pleasant. The house appeared so magnificent. Nor did I ever in my life find anything in poetry or painting half so fine as what I saw that day at your house where I wish you and your lord settled in peace.

Thomas Henshaw: My honoured patrone, I do from my heart congratulate your safe arrival at your own Oxnead, which must now be the very theater of your happiness. You should be satisfied with your lot, for few of mankind has God relished so much advantages of that felicity which yet seems to you but a dull quiet, above the troubles, turmoils, disquiets, and subjections of the *grande monde*. You should daily give God thanks on your knees for his accumulating so extraordinary favours upon you, for you as yet are one of the happy husbandmen, did you but know it.

Paston: I will commission a portrait with gifts from abroad showing to the wide world the treasure of the Pastons.

(Actors bring around Grapes, Shells, Precious Jewels, Rich Tapestries, and a Lobster! With music accompaniment)

H: Inventory of Jewelry July 30th 1663

(Halcyon Days song continues through jewelry list)

An onix stone ring set round with diamonds and rubies £20

A blackamore in a sardonix set round with diamonds £10

A ring with a blackamore head & turbett set with 8 diamonds £15

A sardonix ring with 6 diamonds and a white head £15

A plain gold ring with a white and black agate £1

A free stone with diamonds round it £10

A ring with a dark emerald £1

An emerald ring with a face on it £10

28 rings about 15s a piece £21

A diamond ring with 3 great stones and four or more small stones £52

A diamond hatband £5

A turkey stone with two diamonds £10

A ruby ring set round with rubies and 2 diamonds £16

A long ruby and 2 table diamonds £10

And a prized opal with the sun set round with diamonds £10

Total fortune in jewels £587

H: Fortune favoured Sir Robert as a loyal friend of the new King. However, with money and spending being the fashion of the age, 1671 would prove to be a particularly expensive year at Oxnead.

Margaret Paston: Father, upon leaving the country, I am deemed to be somewhat bare in apparel in Town, and as Hannah Wooley writes, there is “a kind of privilege in youth for wearing fashionable clothes” and dressing well will only “add more beauty” to find me successfully matched. So my lady mother, and lord father, I will purchase accordingly to be seen as well apparelled as any in London.

William Paston: Mother, I have now seen the whole city of Paris and all that is curious or magnificent in it, and I find that our money does crumble away extremely. Therefore do send relief and pray present my humble duty to my father.

Thomas Henshaw: Oh my dear Patron, I much rejoice to hear your affairs are so prosperous! Since I came to town I have been extremely delighted with the chemical manuscript poem of one Edward Noell, who to my judgement understood the whole business of chemistry as well as that ever writ. He describes in a dozen places plainly what we have been so long upon. Though his writing is perhaps not so plain being written in verse, yet I am confident that with

a little more money and labour, you will find it the most auspicious of our endeavours. God give you success in all your other affairs and in our great hopes for success in finding the red elixir we seek. Indeed sir, the philosopher's stone is in our sight!

RP: My dear heart, the King intends me personal thanks and great promises I hear. I will manage my affairs with as much prudence and policy as my poor wit can design and I am plying my affairs for the good of our family. I have a great deal of business lying upon me and am in haste. I bid you a most passionate adieu. (*off RP goes to the bridge site*)

(*Narrators get the audience into their groups, set up how the show will work, who goes with whom, what is expected. Take your letters invites and coins to show at various places.*)

Song: (Holly)

Hither this way, this way bend. Trust not trust not. Trust not the malicious fiend, trust not the malicious fiend.

Hither this way, this way bend. This way. Hither this way, this way bend.

Those are false deluding lights, wafted far and nearby sprites. Trust 'em not for they'll deceive ye, trust 'em not for they'll deceive ye, and in bogs and marshes leave ye, and in bogs and marshes leave ye.

Hither this way, this way bend. Trust not, trust not, Trust not the malicious fiend, trust not the malicious fiend.

Hither this way, this way bend. This way. Hither This way, this way bend.

Audience leave barn space, in front of the courtyard to bridge location Margaret Paston elopement section

Margaret Paston (to audience member): Pray you, deliver this letter to Henry Rumbold, an ensign to Tangier.

Margaret Beddingfeld (intercepts letter and takes it to Rebecca P): Your ladyship, I was desired to keep this to myself, but I thought it might be a failure of friendship to conceal any thing I knew in this case, for wounds can never be healed till they be searched to the bottom.

Harry Rumbold (Shams): Margaret Paston's friends have discovered all. Margaret, your family at Oxnead will surely apply all possible vigilance and care that we should not come together.

Rebecca Paston: My dear sir, my daughter is sorry for her folly and this business is now at an end. Go back to Tangier and do not seek out my daughter any longer.

Harry Rumbold: Your ladyship, I am resolved never to quit this business, unless I should hear from Margaret's own mouth that she is repented of what she has done. Only then will I desist and never trouble her more. I have nothing but my life to lose, and that I am resolved to sacrifice.

Margaret Paston: (*coming towards HR and RP*): My dear heart, they cannot stop us. I will be your martyr, if I should suffer the reproach and contempt of my friends, all this would for your sake be but a pleasure and a glory to me.

Rebecca Paston: You will find my daughter proves an extravagant expensive wife,

Margaret Paston: 'Tis true, I spend my father £200 a year, and why should I not as things are? But when I am your wife, I will be content to wear haircloth and be pleased with the coarsest diet in the world.

Rebecca Paston: Peg, desist in this. My ladies, remove my daughter to a place of protection from this outlandish behaviour not fitting a lady of quality.

Harry Rumbold: I declare my eternal constancy and fidelity, madam. Take heart and we shall be together hereafter.

Margaret Paston: My dear, stay true to me, and do not believe any letters contrived by my friends, they would all be counterfeit or forced, do not believe anything written, though you should see it under my own hand.

HP and MP parted. Audience progress to the Bridge various actors speak to their audiences about the matter.

HP (to his audience) : Indeed, they have lately sent me a counterfeit letter from her maid. Sure they that sent it took me for a man of a gross understanding that could be imposed on by so palpable an imposture. But my lady assures me she has £4000 well secured to her in her grandfather's will, and that money her family cannot deny her. She can marry whosoever and whenever she pleases once she achieves her majority. I sat up with her alone in her chamber the whole night after her first day's journey homeward. What the combination of youth, love, darkness and solitude inspires in us all. Do not fear, we are resolved to be together.

Lady Elizabeth Cary and other audience leaders: The young lady has been imprisoned by her family. However, she has managed to send to her secret betrothed an authenticated copy of her grandfather's will, which you know will free such a conniving gentlemen from all scruple, that her £4000 is well secured. He would never have dared to make any address to one of her quality and fortune had he not been encouraged by a letter from her, that she constantly told him whatever was said of him by her uncle or others.

I have a great tenderness for Sir Robert and my Lady. And will not add to their grief of which I fear they have but too much already. Not any one that has heard this lamentable story hath any pity for their daughter, Margaret Paston.

Audience go to Bridge Location

(Servants and estate people gossiping about mortgage and debt...)

Robert: My darling, if ever flesh was tired out it is I that have taken more pains at Court than an horse. My Lord Chancellor Clarendon decided I was the very man to plea for two and a

half million pounds needed for the King to finance the new war against the Dutch. They sought out ‘honest worthy men, looked upon as lovers of their country and great fortunes, and unsuspected to have designs at Court’. Rebecca, you should have heard my speech, where I said that they needed such a sum to strike terror into the enemy. My voice rang out to Parliament that day: ‘The machine of war requires strong hinges to play upon and would show us ill managers who to save a stake would venture the loss of the game.’

Phanaticks (*Shams and Abbie aside to audience*): Paston, whose belly bares more millions than Indian carracks, and contains more tons.

Robert: The King told me, ‘Sir Robert Paston, your kindness to me at this time I’ll never forget. If my favour and respect may ever manifest itself in you, you are sure of a friend in me’. My dear, the service I have done the King is so great that I am looking on in a capacity of not being denied anything in his Majesty’s power. Pray God send us a merrie meeting and that all things may go well which is desired. The King’s visit to Norfolk is upon us, and with all in our power we will improve Oxnead to be fitting of a King’s visit. Let us build a banquet hall, let us improve upon the foundations, and with the plate, and the provisions, I will spend three times the dowry of an Earl’s daughter to entertain the King!

Oh my darling, I am more than confident when this business is settled, I shall have a lusty bidder that will in eight or ten years free us of all debt whatsoever.

Audience go to Garden Maze, en route they overhear conversation over the King’s visit

Margaret Beddingfeld: Your ladyship, the King’s visit will be the beginning of all good fortune for you in the county. I wish I could myself be present as a Paston, but being a poor papist, I can only serve you with a good heart, and whisper to my friends and acquaintances about Norwich to the advantage of your concerns and how they may pay their respects.

Rebecca Paston: I must confess, my dear cousin, I fear we will miss the honour of serving his Majesty as becomes him in our house. The Queen is now come into Norfolk too, and desires to attend on us at Oxnead. His lordship has spent a king’s ransom on the improvements of Oxnead, but it is not enough.

Margaret Beddingfeld: ‘Tis true that it is impossible to lodge both their Majesties at once with any convenience in your house. Lord Arlington has sent you the King’s guest list, you may rely on it that the Queen will go no farther than Norwich, otherwise he would not have failed to send you word of it.

Rebecca Paston: Does her Majesty now speak uncertainly of her coming to us at all? I am confounded. Should her Majesty now deny and withdraw that honor totally from us, it would be our eternal disgrace and mortification to all this country.

Margaret Beddingfeld: Your ladyship, the Paston family are the most ancient of all the Norfolk gentry here without competition. To be slighted by the Queen in this manner, would be the undoing of all.

Rebecca Paston: We must ask Lord Arlington to speak in a most humble manner to the Queen, and beg the knowledge of the day or night her Majesty will honor us.

Letter delivered to MB who passes it to RP

Margaret Beddingfeld: Your ladyship, all has been resolved to everyone's advantage for the King's visit. The Queen will come to supper tomorrow, leaving the King's stay at Oxnead as designed. I hear the music of the procession, the King is coming, let us join the entertainment.

Song: (Matthew)

Music, music for a while, shall all your cares beguile, shall all, all all, shall all your cares beguile,

Wondering, wondering how your pains were eas'd eas'd eas'd and disdainng to be pleased, till Alecto free the dead, till Alecto free the dead, from their eternal, eternal band.

Till the snakes drop, drop, drop, drop, ... from her head and the whip, and the whip from out her hand.

Music, music for a while, shall all your cares beguile, shall all, all all, shall all your cares beguile.

Shall all, all, all, shall all your cares beguile.

(Audience are seated in front of the garden maze)

Rebecca P: Your majesty, it is a common notion that dedications in our age are only the effects of flattery, a form of compliment and no more. This humble offering, which I presume to lay at your majesty's feet, does not only require the patronage of a great title, but of a great man too. If this piece finds but favour in your majesty's eyes and gives you one hour's diversion; that is the only honour and fame wished to crown all our endeavours.

Robert Paston: To please your majesty, known throughout the land as a most famous amour, we present you stories of Love from the playhouses of London!

Sarah L. This truth we can to our Advantage say,

They that would have no King, would have no Play:

The Laurel and the Crown together went,

Had the same Foes, and the same Banishment.

Florinda (Sarah L): What an impertinent thing is a young girl bred in a nunnery! How full of questions! Prithee, no more, Helena, I have told thee more than thou understand'st already.

Hellena (Holly): The more's my grief; I would fain know as much as you, which makes me so inquisitive; nor is't enough I know you're a lover, unless you tell me too who 'tis you sigh for.

Florinda: When you're a lover, I'll think you fit for a secret of that nature.

Hellena: 'Tis true, I never was a lover yet; but I begin to have a shrewd guess what tis to be so, and fancy it very pretty to sigh, and sing, and blush, and wish, and dream and wish, and long and wish to see the man, and when I do, look pale and tremble, just as you did when my brother brought home the fine English colonel to see you—what did you call him? Don Belvile?

Florinda: Fie, Hellena.

Hellena: That blush betrays you. I am sure 'tis so; or is it Don Antonio, the viceroy's son? Or perhaps the rich old Don Vincentio, whom my father designs you for a husband? Why do you blush again?

Florinda: With indignation, and how near soever my father thinks I am to marrying that hated object, I shall let him see I understand better what's due to my beauty, birth and fortune, and more to my soul, than to obey those unjust commands.

Hellena: Now hang me, if I don't love thee for that dear disobedience. I love mischief strangely, as most of our sex do, who are come to love nothing else. But tell me, dear Florinda, don't you love that fine Inglese? For I vow, next to loving him myself, 'twill please me most that you do so, for he is so gay and so handsome.

Florinda: Hellena, a maid designed for a nun ought not to be so curious in the discourse of love.

Hellena: And dost thou think that I'll ever be a nun? Or at least till I am so old, I'm fit for nothing else: faith, no, sister; and that which makes me long to know whether you love Belvile, is because I hope he has some mad companion or other that will spoil my devotion. Nay, I'm resolved to provide myself this Carnival, if there be e'er a handsome proper fellow of my humour above ground, though I ask first.

Florinda: Prithee be not so wild.

Hellena: Now you have provided yourself of a man, you take no care of poor me. Prithee tell me, what dost thou see about me that is unfit to love? Have I not a world of youth? A humour gay? A beauty passable? A vigour desirable? Well-shaped? Clean-limbed? Sweet breathed? (*Florinda goes off with Hellena chasing behind her*) Yes I do, and will; therefore lay aside your hopes of my fortune by my being a devotee, and tell me how you came acquainted with this Belville...

Song and Dance (Holly)

Fairest Isle, all isles excelling, seat of pleasures and of loves.

Venus here will chuse her dwelling, and forsake her Cyprian groves.

Cupid From his favrite nation, care and envy will remove.

Jealousie that poisons passion. And despair that dies for love.

Gentle murmers, sweet complaining, sighs that blow the fire of Love.

Soft repulses, kind disdainig, shall be all the pains you prove.

Ev'ry swain shall pay his duty, grateful ev'ry nymph shall prove. And as these excel in beauty, those shall be renown'd for love.

Dorimant (Ben): Music so softens and disarms the mind

Harriet (Sarah L): That not one arrow does resistance find.

Dorimant: Let us make use of the lucky minute then.

Song (Matthew)

If Music be the food of love, sing on, sing on, sing on, sing on.

Till I am fill'd am fill'd with joy.

Mrs Pinchwife (Holly): Well, 'tis e'en so; I have got the London disease they call love. I am sick of my husband, and for my gallant. I have heard this distemper called a fever but methinks 'tis like an ague, for when I think of my husband I tremble, and am in a cold sweat and have inclination to vomit; but when I think of my gallant, dear Mr Horner, my hot fit comes and I am all in a fever, indeed, and as in other fevers my own chamber is tedious to me, and I would fain be removed to his, and then methinks I should be well. Ah, poor Mr Horner! Well, I cannot, will not stay here, therefore I'll make an end of my letter to him, which shall be a finer letter than my last, because I have studied it like anything; O sick, sick! *(off she storms)*

Valentine (Ben): Well, Lady Galloper, how does Angelica?

Mrs Frail (Sarah L): Angelica? Manners!

Valentine: What, you will allow an absent lover—

Mrs Frail: No, I'll allow a lover present with his mistress to be particular. But otherwise, I think his passion ought to give place to manners.

Valentine: But what if he have more passion than manners?

Mrs Frail: Then let him marry and reform.

Valentine: Marriage indeed may qualify the fury of his passion, but it very rarely mends a man's manners.

Mrs Frail: You are the most mistaken in the world. There is no creature perfectly civil but a husband. For in a little time he grows only rude to his wife, and that is the highest good breeding, for it begets his civility to other people.

Angelica (Sarah E): Do you know me, Valentine?

Valentine: Oh, very well.

Angelica: Who am I?

Valentine: You are a woman; one to whom heaven gave beauty, when it grafted roses on a briar. You are the reflection of heaven in a pond, and he that leaps at you is sunk. You are all white, a sheet of lovely spotless paper, when you first are born; but you are to be scrawled and blotted by every goose's quill. I know you, for I loved a woman, and loved her so long, that I found out a strange thing: I found out what a woman was good for.

Angelica: Ay, prithee, what is that?

Valentine: Why, to keep a secret.

Angelica: O Lord!

Valentine: O exceeding good to keep a secret. For tho' she should tell, yet she is not to be believed.

Angelica: Why this is nought but madness. I thought your love of me had caused this transport in your soul. (*she goes to leave*)

Valentine: You are not leaving me in this uncertainty?

Angelica: Would anything but a madman complain of uncertainty? Uncertainty and expectation are the joys of life. Security is an insipid thing, and the overtaking and possessing of a wish discovers the folly of the chase. Never let us know one another better, for the pleasure of a masquerade is done when we come to shew faces. But, I'll tell you two things before I leave you. I am not the fool you take me for, and you are mad and don't even know it.

'Tis an unreasonable accusation laid upon our sex. Men tax us with injustice, only to over their own want of merit. They would all have the reward of love, but few have the constancy to stay till it becomes their due. Men are generally hypocrites and infidels. They pretend to worship, but have neither zeal nor faith. How few, like Valentine, would persevere even unto martyrdom, and sacrifice their interest to their constancy. In admiring me, they misplace the novelty.

The miracle today is that we find

A lover true, not that a woman's kind.

Music instrumental

Sarah L: Your Majesty, May Caesar live; and while his mighty hand

Is scattering plenty over the land,

With god-like bounty recompensing all,

Some fruitful drops may on the muses fall—

Since honest pens do his just cause afford

Equal advantage with the useful sword.

Move the audience down through the garden maze to the alchemy section. Set it up.

Robert Paston: My dear heart, this morning I took my leave of the King who above twenty times the day before repeated it to my friends that none was nearer his heart than myself, that he intended to mend my honor and fortune, the which I had this day from his own mouth. That he will speedily make me a nobleman of England and will grant me what I can find to make suit for, some politic considerations postponed the honor now, for the King thinks it will look too near a contract to have just done it at this time, but the words and ways of a Prince are not to be disputed. I hope I shall make the best advantage of both.

Margaret Beddingfeld: Your lord and ladyship, at last though through many sad changes Sir Robert has surmounted all difficultyes and gotten the King's sweet hand, accompanied with many favourable expressions which entitle him to any further boon he shall ask. I wish your ladyship much joy as Viscountess of Yarmouth, and a long life to enjoy the advantage of this grant.

(Musical Fanfare)

Margaret Paston: Your lordship, I am very happy of my condition in Venice, and happy with my husband, Girolamo Alberti de Conti, were it not for the sense of your displeasure. I can assure your lordship, I am used with all respect imaginable by my husband's friends, and command whatever I desire. I have money and clothes, and all things suitable to a woman of quality. Though I may have not met with a match so good my lord as you believe your daughter might have deserved, yet there is no reproach in it. I have married a gentleman, a man of parts, one who uses me worthily. Father, consult the generous inclination of your nature and after so long an absence I entreat you to give us your blessing and good wishes. It will give me and my husband the greatest consolation we are capable of receiving.

Robert Paston: I perceive my daughter Alberti is well situated and offer you good fortune. Things are well at Oxnead, and all our pursuits continue. I have taken on the Lord Lieutenancy in Norfolk.

Shouting amongst the factions: (cheers for the new Lord Lieutenant, cries against him from the opposition)

Royalists: *Down with the Papist Monarch*

Phanaticks: God bless the King's favour!

Margaret Beddingfeld: My Lord Lieutenant has such a triumphant passing through Norwich. I wish his detractors had but seen how filled the streets, doors, windows were with persons of all ages and sexes, the very highways and hedges were lined with men. And they tell me that there was so many got upon trees for a sight of my lord, that the poor boys hung on bows together as moles.

Robert Paston: I do not think, however, these favours done me so extraordinarily will relish with some of the country.

Margaret Beddingfeld: I hope their mouths are pretty well stopped for lying, the very night before, t'was reported at Norwich that none would meet your lordship but the papists with the rascality of people: and in this corner of the country that if Sir Henry Bedingfeld did not drive them his own self, none would go. But they'll find my lord can stand on his own bottom, and substantial men carrieth most sway, many more you would have had if the justices had not set that very day upon the business.

William Paston: Your lordship, I doubt not but the honest part of our city of Norwich do still retain high esteem for your honour. But it is likewise as evident that other men, who neither wish well to the King nor to his interest, are still active as ever to deceive the people with all lies and tricks imaginable. They have done so much as to set the fanatic party already a bawling, and yesterday at North Walsham the cry for Hobart was very rife.

Robert Paston: My son you must build hopes of your fortune along with mine. We will spare no expense in our entertainment the loyal Norfolk gentry at Oxnead. We must work in opposition to the factions bacing my Lord Hobard and Townshend. I pray to god that we may not find some obstacles unforeseen. Let our expectations be answered. The Papists and those loyal to the King are on our side, it is only the fanatics against us.

William Paston: Your lordship, I know the faction has no bound, but notorious falsehoods appear in every direction.

(Crowd heckle Robert and William Paston)

William Paston: The fanaticks in Norwich now threaten strongly to make opposition on Monday, but that will be to less purpose then that of the country.

(Crowd Heckle Robert and William Paston cont...)

Robert Paston: I must expect to have all the dirt thrown in my face that the privilege of the house can warrant.

Fanatick (Abbie): I wish Lord Yarmouth, rather than entertaining Papists, would think of paying his debts which he takes no care of.

Rebecca Paston: My dear, I know what difficulties and disappointments you lie under, and would pity you, but I believe you may surmount them all. We know so much of the want of money is, and what the straitness of a fortune is, that we must succeed or be ruined in the attempt.

Robert: I suggested the King buy our lands at Little Yarmouth,

Rebecca: Alas, the request has not been pursued, and we are left in great difficulties. Our family is on the brink of those necessities that no man of the nation of your quality or fortune is. Our revenue is seized for a mortgage on £10,000, and our family, indeed your very self, is hated and oppressed on every side. You must again approach the King.

Thomas Henshaw: Your lordship, I have sent the epistle to the King you asked for, though it cost me more pains than ever any I have had and I fear will have worse success with you. You know that a curled and painted style was ever disagreeable to my nature and I have no patience with either a swollen, bombast, affected, forced, or pedantick piece of rhetoric, nor can any please me that is not sober, perspicuous, close, nervous, free, and the words proper discreet, well chosen, not savouring either the English schoolmaster, or the French dancing master. If you ask me why I have not done this suitable to the character I affect, I answer it was either because I could not put myself in the right humour, or else because it was above my genius. Pray sir, you are the Viscount of Yarmouth, is that not enough? Does nothing satisfy you but to be made an Earl?

Robert: As your Majesty's person is sacred to me, so is your royal word, I therefore humbly beg of your Majesty to remember your promise so long depended upon and renewed when I waited on you at Whitehall to make me an earl when you made any and not to forget me. Since this justice of your Majesty will enable me the better to serve you when the country sees me borne up as well as others by your Majesty's favour so long expected. My own lameness at present of the gout hinders me from attending your Majesty, but I cannot doubt of a gracious answer in the present order for a warrant.

(Instrumental Music Some celebration on becoming Earl)

Margaret Beddingfeld: I wish you great joy as the Earl and Countess of Yarmouth!

Robert: We have achieved what we long sought, but our debts increase and no word from the King about our plight. No matter, I am a member of the Royal Society, and trust that the great alchemist, Thomas Henshaw, will find the red elixir at long last.

Transition moving audience down through the Garden maze and through to Alchemy area

TH: My Lord, after all these melancholy dispensations let us see if chymistry will afford us any better consolation. I thank you for your account of your latest experiments you have taken with a great deal of care and pains. Though things do not succeed yet according to expectation, I hope that we cannot long miss on such a good subject.

Thomas Henshaw exists to Alchemy area, audience to follow with gossiping guides

G1 (Dora): My Lord Yarmouth has the most celebrated laboratory in England.

G2 (Chris): Alchemy is the practice of gentleman, whereas the base Chemistry is for nought but artisans.

G3 (Abbie): I heard that his Lordship's brother in law, John Clayton, found a recipe for the Philosopher's Stone from a monk of the right order. A Benedictine, the whole story is miraculous. The stone he tells me he has made, and the process was at length fished of him.

G2 (Chris): The whole business is grounded upon the purifying of common mercury for forty days to make the sulphur of philosophers and dissolve gold and silver.

G1 (Dora): I heard the secret was found in a book hidden in the bottom of a well, enclosed in soldered lead with a marble cover. The title of the book was made from silver and gold made out of the Philosopher's Stone!

G3 (Abbie): I saw the book with my own eyes. The recipe was missing parts, alas, and filled with secret codes of ancient Alchemists, otherwise it could solve all of my Lord's debts... and indeed mine.

G2 (Chris): Shh... hold your tongue!

(Audience move to Alchemist location in front of water)

Alchemy Sequence

Thomas Henshaw (*Muttering to himself away from the audience as if reciting his secret formula*): You are first by a strong graduated fire to draw out all the humid part of your subject; in the rectifying of which you will have first a strong armoniacke spirit which by his description is just ours, then change your receiver and take the middle part of this humidity by itself and likewise the phlegme by itself. Then take the feces remaining in your retort, grinde them very small in a marble, put them into a body with a blind head, power on them of your middle part till it swim two fingers over, set them on warm ashes for 24 to 48 hours, till you see your liquor tinged, then decant neatly and power on fresh till you see the liquor no more tinged. When you have good store of the tinged liquid, digest it *in balneo* for four days, then distille by degrees in sand and you will bring over the sulphur. You will find the greatest volatile pearly *terra foliate* which will all turn into a liquour. Jack Clayton told me last night that our doctor tells him by grindning all armoniacke he can create a sulphure as red as rubies and at last we have our Red Elixir!

(Henshaw notices Audience)

Henshaw: Greetings fellow members of the Royal Society. As you know we are in the pursuit of Alchemy, along with our honoured fellow members, Robert, Earl of Yarmouth, Christopher Wren, and our illustrious colleague and friend, Sir Isaac Newton. Unlike the lowly pursuit of chemistry which is growing in fashion amongst the baser sort of the populace, the genuine alchemist is absolutely firm in his belief that the emotional and spiritual state of the individual experimenter is involved intimately with the success or failure

of our pursuits. We have made great progress in our pursuit of the Philosopher's Stone. Our redeemed member, Elias Ashmole, has discovered a lightning stone fallen from the sky, for Intellects and Spirit of virtuous beings never communicate with mortals without a special grace of Divinity, through the Philosophers Stone. In the words of the illustrious Ashmole, "By the Magical and Prospective Stone it is possible to discover any Person in what part of the World forever, although never so secretly concealed or hid; in Chambers, Closets, or Caverns of the Earth: For there it makes a strict Inquisition. In a Word, it fairly presents to your view even the whole World, wherein to behold, hear, or see your Desire. More it enables man to understand the language of Creatures, as the Chirping of Birds, Lowing of Beasts, etc. To Convey a Spirit into an image, which by observing the Influence of heavenly Bodies, shall become a true Oracle; And yet this as E.A. assures you, is not any way Necromantical, or Devilish; but easy, ponderous easy, Natural and Honest.

In brief, by the true and various use of the Philosophers Prima Materia (for there are diversities of Gifts, but the same Spirit) the perfection of Liberal Sciences are made known, the whole Wisdom of Nature may be grasped; And (Notwithstanding what has been said, I must further add) there are yet hid greater things than these. In fifteen kingdoms had our Red Stone existed and we can, I believe, we can discover it once more!

(Audience with actors are asked to solve their letter code puzzle for portions of the secret recipe of the philosopher's stone. As they do so, Robert Paston eagerly goes around in desperation asking for portions of the recipe. He gets more and more frustrated as the formula does not yield results.)

H: List of Payments by Robert Paston, Earl of Yarmouth 1672-1676

To Deborah Burton of the Exchange: £100

To Madam Sherrad £32

Mr Mr Lably £50

To John Le Roy alias King Jeweler £25

To Richard Allen £460

To Mr Goff Minister of Oxnead £105

To Lady Clayton £103

To Francis Rawlins £985

To Mr Gossling Caseman £366

To Mr Bullard for the charge of the Trial of Yarmouth £177

To Mrs Smith Linendraper £150

To Mrs Katherine Eaton £455

To My Lady Clayton for money advanced on the orange farm £304

To Mr Wak Exchangeman £100

Total Expenses: £1725

RP: My dear sir, where are the results you promised? I have been patiently awaiting them all these years, but indeed there are none. Where is the red elixir?

TH: My dear patron, I am very sorry to find that your passion is so much raised and your mind so disturbed. If your patience be so short breathed that you give over the race as soon as almost you entered it, if you despair because fruits do not ripen in the spring and you cannot stay till autumn, it is no wonder if all this time you have seen no effects of your great charge and trouble. I hope you will do me the justice to remember that twenty years since, Sir John Clayton is my witness, I earnestly deterred you both from entering on so hopeless a study, which is a lottery wherein there are so many millions of blanks for any ever so small a victory.

RP: John Clayton is the very devil, he is to be eschewed as a venomous creature that will infect all our friends with the leven of his malice which he has fermented so desperately against us. I would not take John Clayton's word for a hundred others, we must stand upon a strict guard against his malice.

TH: Be that as it may, I did never pretend to revelations, secret demonstrations, or recipes found in abbey walls. If I had ten elixirs you had been master of them all long ere this time. Therefore in justice and equity you ought not to impute to me the ill success of your trial, nor the loss of your time and expense. I have often exhorted you to desist, but you could not live without a castle in the air. You may with much less charge and anxiety spend your afternoons with a chessboard. I have no hopes from chymistry but to obtain an extraordinary medicine which will cure most diseases and maintain a vigorous health. But your aims are so vast that you lose time and patience in the attempt. Desist my lord, desist. Your lordship should abandon this sooty employment unsuitable to the calling of a gentleman.

(Thomas Henshawe goes off, leaving Robert Paston alone with his debts)

Rebecca Paston: My lord, do not despair. I hope God will dispose of all things for our good and then his will be done, and certainly my believe is that so good a martyr for his country as your lordship, can at last never bring forth other than good to his posterity, and surely at last it will be found that he is not damned but rewarded.

RP: My dear heart. I have so many sad thoughts that I think they will not let my health go on. I love you with all my soul, and take my chief pleasure in your counsel. Alas, it is a business of so great concern to me as I must be liable to everything by consequence they will demand, or else be threatened with ruin.

Rebecca Paston: My dear, do not be discouraged, but trust still in God for all our sake. The King hath promised he will never leave us or forsake us. Remember all the good you have done his majesty, in the past.

Robert Paston: I confess, I cannot be in love with histories without effects; I am old and men's lives are not long enough to embark in affaires whose course is so tedious, and perhaps frivolous. I wish it may prove otherwise. I pray to God every day to crown our industry with such success as may make us experience the continuation of his miraculous preservations in many brinks of approaching ruin and contempt. This whirlpool of misadventures will hurt me worse than I could conceive.

Rebecca Paston: My lord-

Robert Paston: I have nothing more to say.

(Robert Paston goes off, guides start leading the audience up the path towards the Church)

Margaret Paston: Mother, I find the sad story of my father's broken heart a thing I never dreamt nor would ever have imagined; the King's ingratitude amazes me. And to speak the truth, he merits not to have so faithful a subject, nor so real a friend, but the old proverb fails not which says many in this world are incapable of knowing the good they do.

Rebecca: Your father is worse than I expected. His fainting was about three hours, and so cold in his hands and feet as nothing could be liker death but death itself insomuch as many strong cordials together with rubbing his hands and breast and feet with palsy water could very hardly at last bring him to heat.

Church:

Song (Holly):

O, let me forever weep:

My eyes no more shall welcome sleep.

I'll hide me from the sight of day,

And sigh my soul away.

He's gone, his loss deplore,

And I shall never see him more.

Margaret Paston (to her brother William during song): This makes me see the inanity of following Courts and makes me thank God that fortune has condemned me to lead a private life in which perhaps I have suffered less disquiet than you, sir.

William Paston: Perhaps if my dear father had contented himself with the wholesome air of Oxnead without troubling him with State affairs and following the Court, then our mother would not now be a widow.

Rev Hildeyard (Holly): “It is comfortable and glorious for a Christian to consider the joys of heaven; but when it is remembered that before his entrance into them, he must twice put off the old man, once with its lusts of the flesh, and afterwards with the flesh of mortality, it is good to remember that we must all lie down in the dust, and in the dishonour of the grave, is a great ally to all delight we have in the expectation of the glories above. But witness the spectacle before us; none can reverse the sentence, no man can escape the doom.

Rebecca Paston: I speak on this sad day a portion of the sermon by Dr. John Hildeyard for his great friend, and my loving husband. ‘If honourable birth and ingenuous education, if courage and greatness, loyalty and piety, if anything could have been given immunity against a sad day, this sad scene of sorrows had not been the entertainment of this assembly. We, with joy in our countenances, would welcome the arrival amongst us of the Right Honourable Robert Earl and Viscount Yarmouth Baron of Paston.

For my own part, he was pleased to give me so intimate acquaintance with him, and that so filled me with just arguments of his praise, that I am more at a loss to determine what to leave out, than what to say.

The place in which he was born was Oxnead. He was of a nature so kind, so sweet so courting all; of a disposition so prompt, so ready, so cheerful in receiving all that he had no enemies except such as deserved no friends. By advancing the King’s honour and interest, he gained the affections of the loyal party, made them all his own, and at his death left the number of them almost double to what he found them.

Thus by his Prudent Management, he acquired great Fame to himself, great peace to the county, and great satisfaction to all good and honest men. Nay hereby, even whether they would or no, he took possession of many hearts, to the admiration of all that would not love him: would not love him, did I say? Yes, ‘tis true, some did not, they lov’d not him, that did not love the King, they lov’d not him that did not love the Church and his Service to the King, and the Church, he valued more than he did their Love. Sure I am, they did not love him that vilified his person, lessened his parts, undervalued his Prudence, and reproached his religion; That mercilessly and unchristianly, without colour of the Laws of Man, or Conscience toward God, pierced the sides of his hearties friends to give him a wound, a stab. When his friends for his sake must be taken into custody, and squeezed in an arbitrary skrew, or hands as harsh and cruel: Yet, in all this I neer saw him daunted, his Countenance fall, or his courage fail.

I bury my husband today, a man I greatly loved, who was put into his grave by his love of honour, virtue, and loyalty to his King and country. My God grant him peace.

Gossip in front of Graves, on the way up to the final position

William P: Mother, as for the business with the King and the 20,000 since your Ladyship has not had the opportunity to speak with him, then it may be hard to have the money although he promises to.

G1: (To William Paston) The great Lady lays about her with her flaming sword. She has too much meddling in business.

(Rebecca goes up the path)

G2 (To William Paston):I had the luck to be upon the place when your mother made both her address at Windsor; know nothing could be more contemptuous. She is being held as an indiscreet and mischievous woman. Neither civility nor manhood will let me recount all I heard, but only so much as related to your lordship, to wit, that if you suffer yourself to be governed by her you would be a weak person and ruin your interests at court.

To the Audience

G1 (Abbie): To speak plainly, for several reasons I hope that Yarmouth's son will not succeed in the Lieutenancy. Oxnead hath personal animosities to many of the gentlemen of our County, and if not granted the position of his late father, will then not be in a capacity to offer those personal injuries and affronts which otherwise may reasonably to be expected from him. We may be able to reconcile those unfortunate divisions which have of late afflicted our County.

G4 (Holly): The Earl of Yarmouth at present lives very obscurely and yet increaseth his debts. His mother, who made a great bustle in King Charles the 2nds time, now boards in a thatched house; and although there she keeps up her pride to the height by suffering no one to set at meat with her and many other vain formalities, yet with difficulty enough finds money to pay for her board, and hath made her landlord so weary of her as to make use of all the civil ways he can to get rid of her; but she will understand none of them, not knowing where next to go. Her son gives her no respect or holds any correspondence with her, though she lives not above 2 miles from him.

G3 (Ben): The Early of Yarmouth is as low as you can imagine. He hath vast debts, and suffers everything to run in extremity; so his goods have been all seized in execution and his lands extended, so that he hath scarce a servant to attend him or a horse to ride abroad upon, and yet cannot be persuaded to take any method of putting his affairs into a better posture, which they are still capable of, if he would set about it.

Narrator (Sarah L): From this time, Yarmouth disappears from history. Debts and misfortunes crowded upon him, and he seems altogether to have lost heart. He drifted on, year after year, his estates mortgaged, his pension secured to pay some fraction of his debts, until everything was in hopeless confusion. His three sons died, none of them leaving issue. His beautiful Oxnead falling to ruin.

Narrator 2: Stories had been whispered in Norfolk, for generations past, of a curse laid upon the Pastons by a Prior of Bromholme.

Prior: Sir

Narrator 2: The Prior had said

Prior: Since you are thus cruel and inexorable to us, and our brethren and house, you shall certainly from henceforth always have one of your family a fool, till it is become poor.

Narrator (Holly): The second Earl of Yarmouth lived on until 1732, a pathetic and forgotten survival in a Norfolk dominated by the Walpoles and the Townshends. Paston perhaps sometimes recalled, amid the overgrown gardens and neglected woods of Oxnead, the words of his father's old friend Sir Thomas Brown:

Brown: Generations pass while some trees stand, and old families last not three oaks.

Song: (Matthew)

Evening song

Now, now that the sun hath veil'd his light
And bid the world goodnight;
To the soft bed my body I dispose,
But where shall my soul repose?
Dear, dear God, even in Thy arms,
And can there be any so sweet security!
Then to thy rest, O my soul!
And singing, praise the mercy
That prolongs thy days.

Hallelujah!

On Lady Katherine Paston's Tomb at Oxnead by Michael Riviere

Sarah L: Sun set three hundred years,
These marble shadows on the wall still stand,
Fixed by her husband's grief, and Stone's hand,
Long vanished skill, and wealth, and tears.

Outside her dilapidated

Church the usual June again transposes

The graveyard offals into grass and roses,

Beauty and corruption equated,

Balanced principles,

Whereby this white memento-mori is

Now mere memoria pulchritudinis,

New summer dappling her walls.

We're not the tomorrow, alas,
Of this lady's wish; her treasures scattered for ever,
Her mansion now green mounds beside the river,
Not a Paston left to wear her flesh...

And since we put the resurrection
Even of annual crops to chance,
Eternity of blood's no longer, as once,
Any man's confident possession.

We do with less than that:
The uncertain hope that someone not yet born
May saunter here on a remote June morning
To find the key under the mat.

End: Some Final words about the letters found, etc... and invite audience to have a drink on the lawn and feel free to explore the grounds as they wish. If they want to speak to us more about the performance and Robert Paston, we will be available for comments, questions, and feedback.