

**THE
TRAGI-COMEDY**
of
Joan of Hedington

by
Dr William King
of Christ Church, Oxford

1712

SCENE *Hedington*

In imitation of
SHAKESPEAR

The Tragi-Comedy of Joan of Hedington
was first published in William King,
Useful Miscellanies (London, 1712)

For more information on William King (1663–1712),
see *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*

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reprinted with small revisions 2006*

Dramatis Personae

MEN

Mr. Pindar, a young gentleman, and a great Disputant, who had made a Progress in Moral Philosophy, and has a Notion of Friendship, as a Heroic Virtue, and therefore is very faithful to Mr *Cole*; but he has no great insight into Casuistical Divinity, which makes him undertake a Murder to pleasure his Friend.

Mr. Cole, a West-Country Gentleman, who is of an Amorous Temper, and very easie Nature, as appears by the Indulgence he shews to Mrs. *Frances*, and the Tenderness he bears to her mother.

Father Clerkenwell and **Mr. Atson**, two North-Country brawny Fellows, very powerful at their Ale and Tobacco.

The Church-Warden, a considerate discreet Person, and very compassionate, though something negligent in not having presented the Enormities of the Persons living in his Parish.

Persons mentioned: Mr *Warburton*, a deceas'd Lover of Mrs. *Frances Harris*; Mr *Hopaman*, a fictitious Name; *Crendon*, a famous Bag-piper, not admitted.

WOMEN

Mother Shephard, a prudent Person in her way of selling Ale, virtuously inclin'd, but suffering her Customers to run into Excess out of Hopes of her own Advantage.

Mother Franklin, a Person that concerns herself with little but the Offices of her Function, which are Brewing and Bottling of Ale, and at the same time very neighbourly.

Joan of Hedington, a Country Woman, and an ancient Parishioner of Hedington, of a Calling which though dishonourable, yet has been made use of in all Ages; she seems Spirituous, and, if her employment would suffer her, nor disinclinable to pursue Virtuous Counsels, at least she despises the more vile Practices of others of the same Profession.

Mother Harris, one of the same Calling with Joan, who though she pretends to more Gentility, yet has not the same Plainness and Sincerity as the former.

Mrs Frances Harris,* a Jilt.

Extract from Preface of the Publisher in 1712

It is many Years since, that this Tragi-Comedy of Joan of *Hedington* came to my Hands, when the truth of the facts were fresh in memory; however, it is hoped that time has so far buried some of them in Oblivion, that now it may seem a Fable, and that a Murder, like that of Hanging up of *Joan*, would never be attempted to be committed by a Person of Breeding, in so polite a Town as that of Hedington....

As to the **Time** of the Action, I have seen none ... that can come near it; for the whole Space of Time does not seem in probability to be of greater extent than that of Master Churchwarden's fetching up of the Cows, and his Wife's milking of them. The **Place** for the Performance of the Action is comprehended in the small vicinage of *Hedington*, in which Street every Body sees every Body, and every Body knows every Thing; there is no running from thence to *Cowley*, so to *Hinksey*, and then back to *Marston*, as we have Parallel instances in most of *Shakespear's* Tragedies. Then for the **Manners** of the Persons, they are entirely carried on throughout, Mother *Harris* and Mother *Franklin* don't talk like Mr. *Cole*, neither do Father *Clerkenwell*, or Mr. *Atson*, approach the spirit of Mr. *Pindar*....

[* In the original text, "Frances Harris" is shortened hereafter to "Frank Harris", but the full name has been used in this version to avoid confusion.]

ACT I. SCENE I

SCENE *Hedington*
In Imitation of Shakespear

SCENE *the High Street in Hedington*

Enter Mother Shephard and the Churchwarden.

THE PROLOGUE

*Gallants, we here present you with a Play
The product of a Country Holiday.
'Tis usual now with Prologue to be Witty
But we are not; good Faith, the more the Pity!
Our Play won't make ye Laugh, nor make ye Cry,
For 'tis a perfect Tragi-Comedy.
We have no hopes for this our homely Treat,
But that for being short you'll think it sweet.*

Mother Shephard INDEED, Mr. Church-warden, as I was saying before, this same Joan of Hedington is a naughty Woman.

Church-warden I cannot help it, Neighbour.

Mother Shephard She does not keep a Civil House, and is a Disgrace to the Town, for Gentlemen dare not come to my House to drink, for fear they should be thought to go to *Joan's*.

Church-warden Have you good Ale, Mother?

Mother Shephard Yes that I have marry.

Church-warden Why then People will come for all *Joan*, I warrant you. But I must go fetch up the Cows. Ha! Here are Gentlemen a coming.

Mother Shephard He! A Pox on them. They are going to *Franklin's*. However, I have got some good North-Country Customers still; and here are two of them coming.

SCENE II

Enter Father Clerkenwell and Mr. Atson

Mr Atson You are very welcom Masters, I am glad to see you.

Father Clerkenwell Have you got good ripe Ale, Mother?

Mother Shephard Yes indeed, Sir, but I have but a little.

Mr Atson How much?

Mother Shephard A dozen and a half.

Father Clerkenwell What's that between us two? But come let's go in. Wash the Two-Quart Mug, for I am a-dry; two of them may quench my Thirst a little for the present. Stay, give us a Quarter of Tobacco.

[Exeunt.]

ACT II. SCENE I

SCENE The High Street

Enter Joan of Hedington and Mother Harris.

Joan Hedington MARRY come up, you are so proud with your black Bag.*

Mother Harris Well, 'twas none of your Money paid for't.

Joan Hedington But your Daughter's did. You are so proud of that Minks, and think to spoil my Custom—But I would have you to know that I am sounder than e'er a *Harris* of you all.

Mother Harris You sounder! I'd have you to know I scorn to let such pitiful Rogues come into my House as you have to do with.

Joan Hedington I'd have you to know I have as good Customers come to my House as any Woman in *Hedington*, no Disgrace to you, *Goody Harris*.

Mother Harris Sure you might have had a Mistress under your Girdle when you spoke to me, *Hussey*.

Joan Hedington Hussey me no Hussy, Mrs *Slopawdry*. I'll pull your black Bag for you. I am a better woman than your self, I have been an old Parishioner here, and gone to Church and all the Town know I have been honest in my Calling; and to be abused by such a Gossip as you, that are come to put off your Pocky Ware in our Parish!

Mother Harris No more Pocky Ware than your self.

Joan Hedington You lye, you Whore, I'll tear your eyes out.

[Fall a fighting, Joan beats Mother Harris off the Stage, calling her a Whore and Bitch, the other crying.]

* [Playwright's footnote] N.B. Joan wore a Hat, and Mother Harris a Hood.

ACT II. SCENE II

The High Street
Joan of Hedington sola

Let's view the mighty Act which I have done:
The thing is worthy *Joan* of Hedington.
I that favour'd youngsters many a Score,)
Was ne'er affronted at this Rate before)
By such an Upstart, Tawdry, Pocky Whore;)
She from the *Maggoty Pie* away was sent,
Because she had not Trade to pay her Rent.
At Hinksey then they would not let her stay,
Because she kept a Bawdy-house, they say;
But now I think I have given the Whore her due.
Shall I be hussied by a Bitch like you!
No, I have beat her, and the Drab is gone,)
I will reign Mistress of this Place alone,)
And be the Topping Dame of *Hedington*.)

But I think I had best go home to drink a dram of Brandy.

[Exit Joan.]

ACT III. SCENE I

SCENE *Mother Harris's House*

Enter Mother Harris, Frances Harris, and Mr. Cole.

Frances Harris THIS is intolerable, that my Mother should be
abused by such a Drab as *Joan of Hedington*, I'll
be revenged whatever it costs me.

[Mother Harris groans.]

Mr Cole Alas, my Dear, torment thy self no more,
And you, dear Mother, cease to Sob and Groan,
For let me never more be happy made
By the Enjoyment of my lovely *Frances*,
If I don't satisfie your dire Revenge.

Mother Harris Ay *Mr. Cole*, nothing could oblige me and my
Daughter more, than if you would revenge me on
that Witch.

Frances Harris Ay, do my Doctor, study how to revenge my
Mother of that Witch; you're a Scholar, can't you
conjure?

[Cole walks about Musing.]

Mr Cole I'll break her Windows, Windows she has none,
And then her Lattice is not worth the breaking.
I'll go and drink her Brandy, and not pay her;
But not to pay for't would be Ungentile,
And I can ne'er be guilty of a thing that does not
savour of a Gentleman.
But stay, I have a friendship with a certain Man,
Cunning and close, and trusty to his Friend,
Pindar, my Eyes' Delight, my other Self;
He promised me that Disputations done
He'd take a Walk, and meet me at this Place.
Oh for his coming now when I most want him!

He'll find a speedy Way to my Revenge,
And gratifie my Mother and my Mistress.
Two heads are always wiser far than One,
And when to mine his Counsels shall be joyn'd,
We'll plague this Saucy *Joan*, with Force united.

I believe, Mrs. *Frances*, 'twould do your Mother
good to drink some of this warm Flip.

Mother Harris I can't drink Flip, if 'twas Flip of Gold, till I'm
reveng'd.

Frances Harris Dear Mr *Cole*, help my Mother but in this one
Business, and I'll leave you better than ever I did
Mr. Warburton.

Mr Cole Blessing attend you for this last Expression.
But what a fine reward is this you promise!
Thy Love, for which I many a time would die,
Is to be given now upon Easie Terms.
Were *Joan* on t'other side of Shotover,
And all the Way stuck full of Bears and Lyons;
Were Snakes and Camels there, and living Toads,
I'd fetch her tho' six Giants stood to guard her.
This I could do alone with single Strength,
But when I shall have *Pindar's* Force and Council
I'd dare—Indeed what would I not dare then.

Mother Harris I think you must carry me to the Bed, to lie down
a little.

Frances Harris Pray Mother stay a little, here's *Crendon* the Bag-
piper.

Mother Harris Musick increases Melancholy Thoughts:
But brings no Ease to Minds oppressed with Grief.

[They carry her off.]

ACT III. SCENE II

Joan's House

Enter Father Clerkenwell and Atson.

Father Clerkenwell Here Who is within here! give me a Quartern of
Brandy.

Atson And me another. *Joan*, we must go up the *Stone*
Stairs.

Joan Hedington Hold, two Words to a Bargain, you owe me a
Groat for last Time.

Father Clerkenwell *Joan*, where's your Helper?

Joan Hedington She is gone a Hay-making.

Father Clerkenwell Well then, I will go to Mother *Harris*.

Joan Hedington Rather than that I will do any thing,
Wipe off old Scores, and let you run on new;
I freely do forget the Groat you owe me,
But mention not, oh speak not any more
That odious, filthy, pocky Name of *Harris*;
For when I hear it once, my curdled blood
Chills at my Heart, and trembles in my Veins.
Be'nt so unkind, dear *Clerky*, to go thither;
I vow you make me weep with your Unkindness.

Father Clerkenwell I be'nt unkind *Joany*, I vow you make me cry
too. I won't go *Joany*, I won't.

Atson No, he shan't go. Come, let's all three go up
Stairs, and be Friends, and bid your Husband
burn us a pint of Brandy.

[Exeunt.]

ACT IV. SCENE I

SCENE A *Field adjacent to Mother Harris her House.*

Enter Mr. Pindar and Mr. Cole.

Mr Pindar I Tell you Friend, from henceforth be at Ease,
The Lovely *Frances* soon shall be your own,
And Mother Harris have her wish'd Revenge.

Mr Cole Thou best of Friends, let me embrace thee close;
Let's both away and perfect thy Design.

Mr Pindar Hold, you must stay behind; I'll act along,
To shew how much *Pindar* will do for *Cole*.
You in my Absence comfort up your Mother,
Put Sugar in her Ale, 'twill ease her Grief;
And you and gentle *Frances* search the Henroost,
That when I bring home News of your Revenge,
With a large dish you Lovers may be ready
In Eggs and Bacon to proclaim my Welcome.
But hold, I want a Rope.

Mr. Cole Here's one lies ready.

Mr. Pindar 'Tis well, Good-buy.

[Exeunt.]

Mr. Cole Now you propitious Stars be Guides to *Pindar*,
For never Man so freely undertook
To serve his Friend in such a Dangerous Moment.

ACT IV. SCENE II

Mother Harris's Parlour.

Enter Frances Harris leading Mother Harris, and Mr. Cole.

Mother Harris Lord, Mr. Cole, that sugar'd Ale was very good,
I did not care if we had the other Flaggon.

Enter Mrs. Franklin.

Mrs Franklin I'm sorry to see you so ill, Mrs. *Harris*; that same
Joan's a sawcy Hussey, she beat me one Day too.

Mr Cole Ah Mrs. *Franklin*, this is kindly done, to come to
comfort us in our Distress.

Mrs Franklin I am willing to do any Neighbourly Kindness;
Lord forsooth you are black and blue, you must
put on some wet Brown Paper.

Mr Cole [*Aside to Frances Harris.*] This Mrs *Franklin* is a
very good Woman, she understands Chirurgery
I see. Will you please to walk in and Drink,
Mrs *Franklin*?

[Exeunt.]

ACT V. SCENE I

SCENE Joan's House

Joan of Hedington, and Mr. Pindar

Joan Hedington I'M glad they are gone, they were two swinging Fellows.

Enter Mr. Cole.

Mr. Cole How do you do, *Joan*?

Joan Hedington Pretty well Sir; tho' I must beg your pardon, I don't remember your Name.

Mr Cole I believe not. I was never here before. But Mr *Hopman*, of Cripsy, recommended me to you for a Gill of Brandy, and a Firk or two up the *Stone Stairs*, little *Joan*,—up the *Stone Stairs*, little *Joan*.

Joan Hedington Will you please, Sir, to have your Brandy before you go up, or burn'd against you come down?

Mr. Cole Against I come down, little *Joan*.

ACT V. SCENE II

Joan's Chamber

Mr Cole and Joan of Hedington

Pind. solus]

I'll do it, and yet methinks my Heart relents.
Why should I murder her that never hurt me?
Not me indeed, but sure my friend is me,
And since this Joan has dared to be so bold
To injure Cole, she must have injur'd Pindar.
Hence then Compassion, and all tender Thoughts,
For Mother Harris soon shall be reveng'd,
And by this Hand of mine.

Enter Joan.

My Dear, come sit down upon the Bed little *Joany*.

[As she is going to sit down he tosses the Noose of the Rope over her Head.

Joan Hedington What's this for?

Mr Cole No hurt, little *Joan*! no hurt!

[He pulls the noose, and ties her up to the Beam.

'Tis done, and now I'll instantly to *Cole*,
And bring him joyful News of his Revenge.

[Exeunt

ACT V. SCENE III

Mother Shephard's *House*

Mother Shephard *and the* Church-warden

Church-warden Lord, Mother, have you heard the News?

Mother Shephard No not I, what News?

Church-warden Why, there is such a Clutter about *Joan's* Door, you'd admire at it; poor *Joan* has been almost hang'd. A Scholar came and tied her up to a Beam in her Chamber, and if her Husband had not come and cut her down, she had been hanged by this time.

Mother Shephard Well, I always said she would come to a bad End; 'tis but what she deserves for being such a Whore.

Churchwarden Well, I'm glad the poor Woman is not hanged for all that.

Mother Shephard Women whose Honour should be still their Guide,
When once they give it up, and go aside,
Into a numerous Maze of Mischiefs run,
As may be seen of *Joan of Hedington*.

EPILOGUE

*Our Play is done, and if it chance to please,
We shall be mighty glad, and much at Ease;
But if it should not please you, Sirs! what then!
Why our young poet ne'er will write again,
For he's as Proud and Surly as old Ben.*

Joan of Hedington was a real person:
she was the innkeeper of the White Hart
in St Andrew's Road, and is mentioned
a number of times between 1657 and 1690
in the diaries of Anthony Wood.

Mrs Alicia D'Anvers sent the hero of her
burlesque poem *Academia: The Humours
of the University of Oxford*
to Headington to visit Joan in 1691

Further copies of this play are available
from Stephanie Jenkins, 39 Kennett Road,
Headington, Oxford OX3 7BH