

THE HONOURABLE COBBLERS
OR
THE CROWNED BOOT

written as a Shrove Tuesday play

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Amant Alterna Camenae.
(The Muses Love Change).

*Change is never better than in
Parnassus' singing and playing.*

FOREWORD

The merry history of The Crowned Boot is so well known that it is unnecessary to repeat it here. The episodes added to it here are indicated before the appropriate act. This play was performed in the Rhetoricians' Chamber at Dunkerque on Shrove Tuesday in the year 1688.

CHARACTERS

TEUNIS, cobbler.

MAEY, his wife.

JAQUELIJN, their daughter.

JOREN} Teunis' assistants
KOSEN} and Jaquelijn's suitors.

EMPEROR CHARLES.

AMBROOS, his bodyguard.

A courtier.

The Scene is Brussels.

The play begins in the morning and ends at noon on the following day.

THE CROWNED BOOT

A Farce

PROLOGUE

Let us introduce Charles: not with the weapon in hand,
Which repelled the great Turk from Viennese land;
Nor with the Saxon fiend in his triumphal car:
No, such greatness doesn't suit these days by far;
It's Shrove Tuesday: time for joy and sweet farce;
Time for singing and playing and dancing and masque.
This makes tragedy fall silent on these boards
To go in disguise to the cobblers with this lord of all lords.
He himself does not fear the stink of old shoes or feet,
In the hope that with them he a capon can eat.
It is true that of those people sat here most
Will smell this stink and not enjoy the roast.
The number is too great, so I ask, friends be at peace
With the smell of such a tasty beast.
If perhaps Teunis or Maey make your mouth thirst
Don't take food or drink from their hands first,
Lest Teunis should beat you with his leather,
Or mad Maey should chase you out of her cellar.
Above all, I ask, do not bring shoes for repair,
Whilst this lusty boss feasts with his lads in their lair.
On this day he's holding his Shrove Tuesday repast
So it would be a great sin to touch leather or last.
Before long, you will see him becoming irate,
As Emperor Charles comes with his boots, so late.
This request would have caused the ruler to be cursed,
If he had not immediately opened his purse.
With this he calms Teunis and all his mates,
Who, because he is generous, let him eat from their plates.
How things turn out we soon will learn:
Watch and laugh: here comes the cobbler, Teun.

ACT ONE

Teunis gets up, and prepares himself for the feast. He gets into an argument with Jaquelijjn and Maey about Kosen and Joren; finally he orders them to go to the market to buy what is required.

Teunis: *(Enters alone, coughing and rasping, tying up the laces on his shirt, with slippers on his feet and baggy stockings.)* Spit out, you phlegm-filled fool! What! It makes me so sad. My lungs are like bunged-up pipes. I'm rasping and spitting, but nothing's coming out. I've been blowing my dry nose for almost an hour: My head is so bunged up, that I can't get anything out. What a pain it is to be old! It's dribbling, blowing your nose, wheezing, and however much you dribble and blow and rasp and spew, it's always just as bad... *(He gets out a bottle).* My heart's so tight... I think I'm going to have a nice glass of brandy... But I have to make sure old Maey doesn't smell my breath: she's the grumpiest woman I ever saw. I bet that if she found out about this, she would bellyache about it all day... But bellyache or not, no bellyache goes down as well as this draught. *(He drinks).* That'll make my legs strong. It's as if I've become another man... *(He coughs up phlegm).* There's that tough old phlegm, that sat in my throat, as thick as a thumb... I feel better thanks to these strong herbs; the best medicine for old people like me and those like me... Nothing from the chemist's would make me feel as fresh as this draught does... *(He sits down on a stool, and pulls his stockings up).* But what's wrong with my finch? Is the little beast still asleep? That's not usual. *(He whistles and talks to it).* Why are you yawning, my sweet little thing? *(He whistles).* Now, just do what your master does, my little man... Why are you so sad today? From first thing in the morning, you always used to tweet. *(He whistles).* O dear little bird! The best of all animals. *(He whistles).* Be strong... Come on then... What do you need? More drink... More seed... What then...? You make my heart sad... I don't think you were eating yesterday like you normally do... Or has the plantain seed been forgotten again? There's no doubt that... the animal's got a fever in his stomach. That's the reason, why it's sitting there so sad. But, I'll take care of it, as soon as I'm dressed. *(He calls out).* Where are you, Jaquelijjn? *(Jaquelijjn enters).* You must always be ready, as soon as you hear the first cough from your dad!

Jaquelijjn: Hello, dad.

Teunis: Jaquelijjn, very well then, come along. Bring me my best shoes. That's good... Give me my breeches.

Jaquelijjn: Come here, dad.

Teunis: So, how are things...? Are you not thinking of Kosen any more? Where's your tongue? What is it? It seems to me that you're sulking. Be careful, that my hand doesn't get up to any mischief on your hide. Not talking?

Hey?

Jaqueliijn: Oh! I'd rather be sent to a bridewell.

Teunis: A bridewell? Who? You? You make my blood boil. No daughter of a man like me ends up there.... (*Jaqueliijn cries*). Stop crying, or I'll beat you as hard as I've ever beaten a new sole on the last... What are we to do?... Do I still have to teach you how to live? I know what your problem is: It's Joren you're pining for, and that's why you're angry about Kosen... But I want you to follow my orders, and not your silly ideas: and if you make me angry, you'd better fear my slipper... Go and bring me my best collar. (*Jaqueliijn exits. Teunis on his own*). I'm having a feast of goose today with the people in this house. So, as is the custom, I shall celebrate the feast with my best clothes and linen, freshly starched, as they should be... But isn't it sad that young people never follow the will of their parents, and always want to marry according to their whim. I should singe my whiskers out of sorrow... My Jaqueliijn, so swift in hand and foot, a beautiful girl in whom men can find happiness, would she really have been brought up to marry that pauper at such a young age?... It's true the lad is bright and, although he talks like there's no tomorrow, his tongue doesn't stop him from mending shoes. But, what's the use of being clever if he's got no dosh? You only have to look at my neighbour, who's still a poor fool, and hasn't got enough money to buy pitch or leather. That's why I want her to let go of Joren, and offer Kosen what an honest man can expect, quite rightly, from his bride-to-be. Although he's not a looker, his purse is full of coins, which a woman can use to make a prosperous household. Where are you, Jaqueliijn?

Jaqueliijn: (*Entering*) My mum couldn't open the clothes-chest.

Teunis: Has that head of her's gone all fuzzy again? Women get so easily confused with little things: as much fuss as if a woman were about to give birth, just to roast a goose, or a capon: with that sort of thing, an old wife feels she's under more pressure than Charles the Bold was to suppress the people of Liège.

Jaqueliijn: (*Laughing*) But, dad...

Teunis: Well? You're laughing! Do you prefer to talk about these things rather than Kosen?... Now, you're making that face again. Listen Jaqueliijn, don't put your trust in that Joren, and don't think about him chasing you, because if you do, I know how to deal with your stubbornness. I'm only giving you to Kosen. It's Kosen I prefer, so just put Joren right out of your mind. (*Exits*).

Jaqueliijn: (*Alone*) In the name of Christ! Even if I have to sell my clothes for bread, or do the washing for a living, or wander the streets, I still won't want Kosen. My father can do what he likes. I'd rather be roasted and flayed, chopped up into a stew, than marry that clumsy oaf. If dad wants to go on like that, we'll both regret it. When you're not in your right mind, you'll do anything, and pay for it later with great sorrow... My mind is in such a

spin that I don't know where to turn... I swear, if it weren't for my honour... I'd play such a trick on him, that he'd complain ten times at having forced me into that marriage. Me, marry that oaf?... Me, Jaqueliijn, with Kosen? That fool?... That weed?... That coward?... That impotent man?... With me?... With Jaqueliijn?... I don't need a man, who needs a footwarmer to stop getting cold... With Kosen, me, Jaqueliijn? I'd rather not have been born than give up my Joren for Kosen... Oh Joren! I'd leave ten Kosens like that for you. And if you wanted, I'd rather go with you to Cologne on the Rhine, or wherever you want to go, than give in to that tyranny. But, imagine if Joren didn't want to, and respected my dad so that henceforth he wouldn't make any mention of love?... so that he wouldn't come and stand at my door any more?... so that he would give his Jaqueliijn the push?... The push? To me? His love?... His consolation?... His soul?... His heart?... But those are just words, that suitors, in their pain, say without thinking. The tongue speaks of what has never been in the heart. On the outside everything is sweet, but you only discover what lurks on the inside when you get married, and when the suitor becomes the master. Then all you hear is: wife, be ready... stay there... go... follow my orders... so long at the market?... So long here?... Then there?... Wash these breeches... clean my shoes... comb my hair... where are you, you cow? Have you stiffened my collar?... Be good... are you grumbling, you silly woman?... Don't argue with me, or you'll get this fist right in your face... Oh! Would it be like that with Joren, who promises to worship me?... and to honour me as his mistress?... Would he pretend to do that, until he got me in his marriage net? Then I'd rather be dead... (*She cries*).

Maey: (*Entering*) What's the matter with you, Jaqueliijn?... What's up?... Speak to me... Are you not going to open up to me? The one who loves you as the apple of her eye?...

Jaqueliijn: (*sobbing*) Oh, mum!...

Maey: Dear girl!...

Jaqueliijn: Oh! Have compassion on me!...

Maey: What about?... Oh, Jaqueliijn, what grief has been afflicting you?

Jaqueliijn: Oh! Dad wants Kosen and me to...

Maey: No way... Is that why you're crying?... Stop, dry your cheeks... Over my dead body... Who? Him, playing the boss? Him, tying the knot between my Jaqueliijn and a bloke, who hardly knows the difference between a man and a woman? Would I, as your mum, have cherished you for so long, and clothed you from top to toe in wool and linen... for that? Would I have taught you so diligently, as befits our position?... Would I have provided you so well with all sorts of nice things? With rings on your hand, and earrings in your ears, with collars without creases and handkerchiefs trimmed with lace?... Is it really for that numbskull that you are in the flower of youth? If it was offered to Kosen on a plate like

that, then luck would only have eyes for that deluded fool. No, my daughter, keep calm, and as long as I live, you have no need to fear that that will ever happen: I'd rather see you dead before my eyes, or even divorce your dad, than have to suffer that. What right has that old joker got?... Which of us, me, or him, has got a bigger say in what happens to you? Me, who bore you in my womb so full of pain (and I still remember how I suffered); who gave birth to you with even more pain; brought you up with my milk; kept you out of harm's way; washed you and made you like myself right up until today; or him, who never saw to you, however much you complained; who never put out his hand to rock your cradle at night; and when you cried only spoke to you with the utmost impatience?... By God! Does he dare to speak even after all that? I wish that the thunder...

Jaquelijjn: Oh!

Maey: I'm so wound up, I'm going to boil over with anger...

Teunis: (*Entering*) What's all this howling?... What's the reason for all this shouting and screaming?

Maey: Come here, honourable Teunis. Did you choose Kosen to be your dear son-in-law?

Teunis: Who else?

Maey: Did you already give him your word?

Teunis: With good reason.

Maey: Did you prefer him to Joren and Steven?...

Teunis: That's right.

Maey: Did you want to tie Jaquelijjn to that bloke?...

Teunis: Of course.

Maey: Did you want to force her into that marriage?...

Teunis: I do confess.

Maey: Did you threaten her with swearing and smacking?...

Teunis: Yes, I did.

Maey: And did you do all this without asking me?...

Teunis: I don't deny it.

Maey: And you're well aware that I don't want it.

Teunis: I can't refute it.

Maey: Me, your wife?

Teunis: I'll not say a word...

Maey: Her mum?...

Teun: And I'm her dad?...

Maey: You chose a wife for your son. And I want to marry Jaquelij, my daughter, as I see fit!

Teunis: And I want her to remain obedient to me.

Maey: And I refuse this for her on pain of death.

Teunis: Shut up... By the sacrament, you will shut your gob, or...

Maey: Don't threaten me, or I'll take Jaquelij away, and leave you here alone, with Kosen, your boss, then if you want to eat, you'll have to cook for yourself.

Teunis: Stop all this racket, and make sure you don't speak about this anymore today, or I shall make the mother pay for the whims of the daughter... Go to the market now and buy what we need, unless you want to feel the leather of my belt. *(Exits)*.

Maey: Get lost, you old grump: we'll just laugh at your threats. Come on, let's go, Jaquelij, my consolation, made in my likeness. Don't think about dad's surly manner; we'll give that wimp a good kicking all in good time.

Jaquelij: Oh, mum! Without you, my hope would be crushed.

Maey: I shall make that stiff neck bend to my will.

ACT TWO

Ambroos watches closely to see where Maey goes, carrying a capon back from the market. Kosen is lamenting Jaquelij. He meets her and is fooled into thinking that she loves him; he disappears when Joren arrives, whom Jaquelij is happy to listen to. Ambroos, who has come back from his reconnaissance, gives his report.

Ambroos: *(Laughing as he enters)*. Who has ever done such an extravagant thing!... I have personally never read or heard that such strange desires have taken hold of a great ruler. But, I do believe that such a thing can happen.

Although this miracle seems strange, I don't doubt it for a moment. Just now I was coming through the market with his Majesty, who, whilst we were walking along, saw a woman in the middle of buying a capon; he wanted to have this tasty morsel for his own table. His desire was so great: but at the market it's not the one who wants it who gets it, but the one who pays for it first. The woman, who, so it seemed, did not want to hang around, spoke into the ear of the farmer's wife and gave her the money. The emperor was somewhat dumbfounded as a result of this, and because he really wanted to eat the capon, he ordered me to follow this woman, to find out where she lived, so that he could get a bit of that meat down him. Truly, a strange desire: they speak of pregnant women who brew many strange desires in their bodies, and have to have what their heart craves; but as far as the greed of my lord goes, I don't know what that should be ascribed to: first of all, nothing is troubling him, as it does pregnant women; he's not lacking for power: the best food in the land is prepared every day for his ready teeth; and if he fancied eating capon meat, then he could have three or four of them on his skewers straightaway... What is it, then, that drives him to seek in a craftsman's house, amongst cobblers or even more odious scum, what he can enjoy at home with his lords? What more, you might say, could an emperor want, than what his great empire and abundance offer him? He can enjoy whatever he wants and as much as he wants of it. Will a craftsman's house provide tastier food for him? Or will cobblers' gossip or chat be more enjoyable than conversation amongst princes? I don't know what the answer is. But I do know this, that you cannot satisfy the heart even with the greatest empire; no rank, however exalted, can satisfy man's heart enough. No one has ever been content with abundance, but only with what is satisfying; that's what's fulfilling... Where does satisfaction abide? Is she absent from the dwelling of a great ruler, a king showered with blessings? Has this man not got enough, who, if he simply commands it, can see the treasures of east and west before his feet? If he is lacking anything, then to give him his fill, you see people loading ships up with animals and fruit and veg. The truth is that in this abundance of honour, riches, power and all sorts of goods, he lacks much... How much?... Just as much as he can desire. Whoever wants to be satisfied must first suppress his desires; as long as he desires, he will always lack something, even though he may sit on the throne of the greatest empire. Common people are more content than great rulers, when they don't thirst for everything beyond their rank: no riches will tempt the poor man, who is content; as long as he doesn't desire anything, he is the lord of all. Emperor Charles will perhaps be happier today with simple townsmen's fare, than he ever was up to now with Emperor's food... But, I've been standing here for too long... Look, there's the woman with our capon, coming along with her daughter. (*Ambroos stands to one side. Maey and Jaqueliijn enter*).

Maey: What do you think of our purchase?

Jaqueliijn: In all my life, I've never seen a tastier capon. Hey, mother, let me carry it, before you get tired.

- Maey: No need.
- Jaqueliijn: When you made that purchase, you got the money out of your purse just in time, because an important gentleman was creeping up on us from behind, no doubt intending to nip in front of us. He seemed somewhat upset, when you left the stall with it.
- Maey: That makes me laugh, because I like to eat a nice piece of meat, too, just as much as those gentlemen, all dressed-up, who often stand in splendour wearing other people's clothes: let everyone wear and eat what they have paid for. As for me, I've never bought anything on credit and I would feel really bad if I ate on borrowed money. The pleasure of the common people has always made the rich sad: but, making him sad or not, I'll make fun of that gentleman; your father may mend shoes, but he has no mouth of leather. The capon will taste as nice for him as for an emperor. But, we still need something else to make our meal. Go to the vegetable market and buy some red beetroot, and cabbage, and those greens that your father loves to eat. (*She gives her money*). Get some onions there as well; a basket full of fresh turnips, five or six pounds of chestnuts to stuff our capon, some pears to cook. As you know, that's the usual way to celebrate this day.
- Jaqueliijn: I know what we need; just let me do it my way.
- Maey: But don't start getting chatted up by men on the way, Jaqueliijn. Go straight to the market.
- Jaqueliijn: I'll come back quickly. (*Exits*).
- Maey: (*Alone*). I'll go back, along this road, to my old man, who will no doubt be happy to see me back, although he seemed to be really having a go at me just now. Whenever you bring something back, you're always popular. (*Exits*).
- Ambroos: I'll keep a close eye on where this woman crawls into. (*Exits*).
- Kosen: (*Enters alone*). Tell me, Kosen... is it worth you suffering so much pain day and night for your Jaqueliijn, for such a flibbertigibbet? I think you're really mad. If you want to go out, go out with the glass or pot, they give you pleasure; they'll never give you the elbow; and if they're ever empty, then you can fill them again. What do you get from love, apart from a sick heart and headaches? It's always sadness, pain, distress, anxiety and fear and a hundred thousand woes, that continually threaten to strangle me. When I don't see her, I have lots of heartache, and when I do see her, she sends me to an early grave: she curses me as if I were wearing stinking, old leather. It's "well, spineless Klaes, who's tied your shoelaces? Who laced up your trousers? Why are you looking like that again, you messy thing, you oaf, you driveller. Go somewhere else to blow your germ-filled nose; you make my stomach sick. You slob!... There's lots of men younger than you who are hanging outside on the gallows!... Get out of here at once!" That's the pleasant reception my

sweet love gives me nearly every day: and were it not for her father, I think I would have been sold long ago to Jan the Woodturner, to make balls for Joos Potter's bowling alley. Well? Why does she have to welcome me with such taunts? I'm just as much of a man as her young man, Joren. Even though he talks more than me, even though he knows how to tickle her ears, and sometimes play the fool; even though he wears a strip of satin on his necktie; even though he goes daily to Pier the Dancer's school; even though he fools around a lot for his dear Jaqueliijn; should he be ahead of me for all that?... People shouldn't look at who speaks or laughs best, me or him, but at who knows how to mend slippers, shoes and boots: you don't feed children and women with words. But, the way things are at the moment, all the girls look for now in young lads is nice hair and a handsome body: who can make the best conversation, to put himself in a good light, give out a sigh, give her the eye and look embarrassed. Even if he left this town at night, because of debts, he would please those fickle people more than local lads. That's what all the young girls looking for love are after now. There's no talk of virtue, even if he's a Turk or a barbarian: if all he can do is boast, then everything is sorted for him. Imagine if my limbs were rather heavy, and senses slow, would my purse not be valuable enough for her to love me? The purse that seduces everything?... There are more than ten of them who'd gladly see me because of it... In the name of Christ, I don't want to be as crazy as I am for her. If she turns me down one more time, I don't want to be Kosen if I speak to her again.

Jaqueliijn: (*Coming up from behind*). Well Kosen, my chum!

Kosen: Oh!

Jaqueliijn: How come I find you moping around here on the street!

Kosen: Oh, Jacqui, are you really asking that?

Jaqueliijn: (*Aside*) I've got to flirt with the fool... What's the matter then? It looks as though you were standing there crying.

Kosen: Oh, dear! I see you're not bothered that I'm sad.

Jaqueliijn: Me? Why do you say that?

Kosen: As if you didn't know.

Jaqueliijn: Know what?

Kosen: That the heart of your Kosen thaws again when it sees you, no matter how frozen it was.

Jaqueliijn: Well... Kosen's heart is thawing!...

Kosen: It burns, my Jaqueliijn, as soon as it just gets a peek of your friendly face.

Jaqueliijn: Frozen, and thawed, and straightaway it burns!...

Kosen: (*Aside*). She never spoke so sweetly to me; her friendship seems to be growing.

Jaqueliijn: What does my dear friend say?

Kosen: That you are so loving, that without you my heart will never be happy.

Jaqueliijn: That is love!

Kosen: That I'd rather eat no porridge than forget my Jaqueliijn for an hour.

Jaqueliijn: O great passion!

Kosen: That Kosen would rather be without his hat than without your faithfulness.

Jaqueliijn: I'd never have believed it.

Kosen: That for all my life, I shall call you Jacqui, if you just give me a yes.

Jaqueliijn: O name as sweet as sugar!

Kosen: That when we are married, you will have everything that I have saved up.

Jaqueliijn: When will that day be?

Kosen; That, when you have a baby, I shall feed it myself and change its nappy.

Jaqueliijn: An angel of a man.

Kosen: That, when you have your first child, you will have the best pair of second-hand slippers.

Jaqueliijn: Your generosity is too great.

Kosen: That I shall never wake you at night, when the child is crying, but I shall rock the cradle myself.

Jaqueliijn: How fortunate I shall be!

Kosen: That from early in the morning until the evening I shall never go to the pub without you.

Jaqueliijn: That's being faithful!

Kosen: That Kosen will never eat, unless you are sitting on a stool next to him.

Jaqueliijn: You're stealing my heart.

Kosen: That I shall never go where a faithful husband is easily led astray.

Jaquelijjn: What a life that shall be!... O Kosen!... Dear Kosen.

Kosen: O dearest Jaquelijjn!

Jaquelijjn: Your words are like roses; you tongue as sweet as honey, your speech is like a tasty morsel; who would not be seduced by a friend like you?
(Joren enters in the distance)

Kosen: Who do I see over there? I think it's our Joren!

Jaquelijjn: Well, if it is Joren: no Joren can come between us.

Kosen: It's true, but nevertheless, it's best that he doesn't know what's gone on between us.

Jaquelijjn: Do you fear some heartache?

Kosen: No, but he might be jealous.

Jaquelijjn: How will that be when we are married?...

Kosen: Then, the matter's settled: I'll go off, my Jaquelijjn, keep Kosen in your heart.

Jaquelijjn: Stay, I don't know why you're so shy.

Kosen: I'll come and find you in a while at your father's.

Jaquelijjn: *(Alone when Kosen exits)*. Awkward coward. I wish you'd be blown away by the North wind... He thinks he's fit for marriage? Just look at that creature. What would a young heart do with an oaf like that? Me, marry that owl, that oaf, that fool: I'd rather be married to a soldier... But here's Joren ... *(She addresses him)*. Where have you come from so early?

Joren: I got some tin plates made early this morning by Pieren, our neighbour, just like the ones you see on the shins of old drunkards.

Jaquelijjn: You're full of pranks... I think you're going mad. What do you want with those plates made of tin, Joren?

Joren: I want to protect my shins against anything that hits them.

Jaquelijjn: Have you got black and blue shins?

Joren: I get so many kicks and blows to one or other leg, that I can't stand the pain anymore on my shins.

Jaquelijjn: Be off with you lad. You'll never stop playing tricks.

Joren: I don't know anything about tricks. But what I do know is that an awful

kick to my leg has almost exposed my shinbone.

Jaquelijjn: Who gave you that kick?

Joren: Your dad's favourite, Kosen.

Jaquelijjn: Is that all? You're speaking like someone who's lost his mind.

Joren: Yes, I've heard that...

Jaquelijjn: What have you heard?

Joren: How much your dad has been seduced by Kosen's purse. How forcefully he is ordering you to indulge him as your boyfriend.

Jaquelijjn: And what did mum say?

Joren: Even if your mum's in a rage, the boss doesn't take any notice; I've seen that myself... To avoid any more pain and difficulties, I am tying these plates to my breeches... (*He ties them tight*). That's good. Now I don't fear anything... Come on, Kosen... Come and hit me, Kosen. Thump, hit, kick me from behind with your hobnail shoes; these plates will protect me from your violence.

Jaquelijjn: Now you look just like Jeroon the cooper, with his bright red nose; that drunk who steals into beer cellars, whose shins are coloured just like overripe cheese.

Joren: Just let Kosen kick and hit...

Jaquelijjn: Joren, are you mad?

Joren: Whether I'm mad or wise, I don't want to go round with blue shins, even if I have to spend all my money on tin.

Jaquelijjn: Oi!... Stop this madness.

Joren: What?... Madness?... No Jaquelijjn, I don't want to be kicked for all the money in the world.

Jaquelijjn: Again?... I'm ordering you to stop this stupidity...

Joren: So, you want me to get lots more kicks, then?

Jaquelijjn: What I want you to do is take off those plates.

Joren: I am the lowest of your slaves, your servant, your subject. Let your will be done... Listen up, shins, don't complain; even though you'll have to take so many kicks, blows, hits and strikes, remember, in your pain, that's what will make this beautiful Jaquelijjn happy. That sweet girl, that flower in a hundred; that crème de la crème at whom all Brussels marvels; that pearl of youth, that dear pledge of love, that rose, that daisy,

that beautiful tulip.

Jaqueliijn: Now your tongue has become detached.

Joren: That sweet Angel... My consolation, my refuge, my help, my lover, my seed, my turtledove, my dear, my heart, my lamb, my refuge, my sugar pot, my youth, my fire, my flame. Now she's pleased that Kosen hits and thumps; suffer shins, suffer, and keep quiet, even if you have to split.

Jaqueliijn: My mind is confused with all this crazy talk.

Joren: But, tell me now how things stand for me: is there nothing in which Kosen is second to Joren?

Jaqueliijn: If you could have heard my dad's orders clearly, then you would also have heard what Jaqueliijn said.

Joren: Can I be certain of that?

Jaqueliijn: You're too forward for my liking. I have to go home. Be off with you: else my mum might scold me. (*Exits*).

Joren: Oh! Are you going Jaqueliijn! You make my heart grow cold. (*Exits*).

Ambroos: (*Enters on his own*). I'd never have guessed... the woman who purchased the capon is a cobbler's wife; I never saw a stranger creature in all my life in Donkey Street in Bruges. Was it for her that my lord had to control his appetite, even when it was so big... What will you say about Jan the Cobbler, that rusty awl, that shrivelled-up sot, that old leather-face, whose throat rasps with tobacco-smoke, who knows how to do just as well for himself as the gentlemen... The way things are now, however bad times are, however much people are scraping around for money, however scarce money is, you never see them giving the market a miss. Everyone goes there proudly with money in hand... "How much is that roast pig? That chicken?... That pair of ducks?... That pheasant?... That turkey? How much are those quails?... Those wood-snipes... Those partridges? How much is that Bruges capon?" And they try to outbid each other so that it becomes expensive... Lots of them hold the game in their hands and stand there with an open purse, ready to pay for a tasty morsel, which fills their heart's desire, in exchange for silver. Nothing seems too dear for them, in order to satisfy their desires: whether it's a merchant or tradesman, a rich or poor chap, everyone's after tasty food... They say, it tastes as nice to me as it does to a rich man, and if I can get it, I won't let my stomach complain of hunger... Odious desire, which causes trouble throughout the world. Where have the times gone, when people fed on boiled carrots and mashed turnip, with winter carrots and parsnips and greens and herbs; not to tickle people's taste buds, but to keep the body healthy? Why am I racking my brains about this? Those times are long gone: people don't think anymore about what can make the body strong, but about what can satisfy their taste buds. People don't give consideration any more to their family, rank or ruler. Everyone follows

the desires of his stomach to excess and laughs at the old customs of days and times gone by... You see, a cobbler can't make himself happy unless he sees capon meat on his table.... The emperor will be so surprised, when I explain to him, what the circumstances are of the people, with whom he wants to eat tonight. I saw the wife going down into a cellar, like a hole, from which a stink hit me of old and burnt shoe-leather! It seemed to me like a hell in which the sorcerers and witches celebrate the annual feast of Vulcan. The master of the family looks like Doctor Faustus, with his pointy chin, gaunt appearance, hollow face and hollow cheeks... That repulsive sight nearly caused me to throw up, and my heart turned like a top that's been spun. But, let's tell this all now to Emperor Charles, and we'll see whether or not he still wants to go into such a hovel for a capon. If I know him well, then he's the sort of man, who can stomach anything. Nothing bothers or burdens him, when he does something like this for a laugh. Exceptional people are the same as the golden sun: it too sometimes leaves its midday position and falls into fog. Likewise, the emperor will perhaps leave his imperial surroundings today to enjoy himself at a cobbler's table.

ACT THREE

Joren is complaining about the pain of love. Maey is busy cooking. The Emperor is on his way to Teunis along with Ambroos. He is let in and spoken to rudely, but in the end gets to the table. When his hosts become sleepy, he leaves. Joren mocks the drunken Kosen and becomes drunk himself, too.

Joren: (Alone). A little awl is very sharp, and makes a little hole, but often many infections follow; that happened to my mate, Klaes. When he was mending shoes, as he was driving the awl through the sole, he let it slip and it went right through his finger; after that there was such a swelling, that death was at his door, ready to bury him in the grave. Oh! Something much less sharp has pierced my chest so violently that no pain or agony of our Klaes can compare with it: an agony, a pain so great, so difficult to heal that no chemist's salve or plaster can help me. I thought in the beginning, that that experienced doctor Jan, who, they say, can pull men half-dead out of the grave, and through whose wonderful skill my mate was cured, I thought that he could cure my infection with his salves: so I went to consult him. First, he felt my hand; then he asked, "Have you got a pain in the throat or on the inside? Or is there a problem with your sides, or loins or joints? Or have you perhaps picked up something nasty in Antwerp from the girls in Spoon Street?" I went red behind my ears at that question, and said "no". Then he spoke again and said, "What plague might be afflicting you?... When do you feel more pain: lying down, sitting, bending down or standing?... When?... During the day?... At night?... Where is the pain? Show me with your hand..." I took his hand

and put it right on my heart and cried: there, doctor Jan... He opened my jacket, looked, touched, pushed and shouted, "You're drunk, I think, Joren, or else you're not all there." Meanwhile, he twirled up his Spanish tache, and asked when the pain had first struck me. I replied, "It's a year now, since I fell for our Jaquelij. She gave me a look, and since then I've just been on cloud nine." I'd hardly uttered the words "Jaquelij" and "look", before fire and brimstone seemed to fill his face, and he bawled, "Run back to your Jaquelij, you blackguard, and ask her for your medicine." That booming voice felt like thunder in my ears; I ran home as if driven on by spurs: I thought that that skeleton that stood in his shop, and all the animals and monsters that hung in a circle from the ceiling, I thought they were all hot on my heels. So I ran, without turning round, along three or four streets like a dog that's got a bottle tied to its tail. Never was I so afraid. In that tight spot, I came to the street corner, where the Mannequin Pis, like Cupid, completely starkers, shows us his tackle, and pees without stopping, as if he wanted to cool the fire of everyone's passion with that liquid. Then I thought that that Cupid had shot his arrows into me, with Jaquelij's glances; I held my mouth open and drank in as much as I could of the water, that he pours out from his cool spring: but oh! However much I drank and downed, the fire stayed in my heart and would not leave it. So, then I decided to see whether Doctor Jan had given me good advice; it was correct to the extent that the closer I got to Jaquelij, the greater the pain and hurt I felt in mind and limb; if she gave me a friendly look, then my heart was overcome with joy; but if she gave me an unfriendly look, then my heart was overcome with despair... Oh! It would have been better for ten awls to stab me than to be looked at like that just once by Jaquelij.

Maey: (*From offstage*). Hey, Joren, Jaquelij, Teunis, Kosen... Is no one there? Let the devil call the people; no one's bothered. (*Enters*). When everything's ready, everyone suddenly comes to eat, but no one to look after the pots, pans, skewers... Hey, Joren, are you there?

Joren: Can I help you, madam?

Maey: Come and lay the table... Draw some beer... Put some firewood on the hearth... Turn the spit... Come quickly, and cut some red cabbage... Come on... quickly...

Joren: What shall I do first?

Maey: What you were asked to do.

Joren: Even if I had another body and seven pairs of hands, how would you expect me to do all that at the same time?

Maey: Who said anything about the same time? First, one thing, then the other. Come on, follow me... Listen, it's striking six... Quick, we'll help each other. (*They both exit*).

Emperor: (*Entering with Ambroos*). Your gentle humour pleases me so much,

Ambroos, that I chose you, out of all the court, in order to have a laugh; I'm going to have some fun today, as a cobbler.

Ambroos: Your guards will be watching, at the corner of the street, ready to be at your service, in case of any danger.

Emperor: I know your faithfulness and concern for me, but in this city I only need them for show, not for protection: in the daylight, or in the dark, with a guard or without, I'm safe everywhere. To a ruler, who inspires love and fears no misfortune, every subject is like a guarantee for his life: the throne to which God's grace has raised me, power, riches, splendour, government, glory, majesty; all of these satisfy my soul less than the certainty of my subjects' faithfulness: I would sleep peacefully in the arms of the least of these citizens, without carrying any weapons. They love me so much, that each of them sees me not as a ruler and emperor, but as his dad. But tell me, what do you think of these "fashionable" clothes?

Ambroos: My lord, you are like one of those noble men, who, in the region of Waas, perform the duties of sheriff or bailiff.

Emperor: It's true, Ambroos, but tell me, could you then be a sheriff's servant? For if I want to be a sheriff, think about it, you must serve me, as you did previously.

Ambroos: Most gladly, lord, I have all the right characteristics; I have a face as hard as marble, my fingers are all bent and crooked: I run like a hare. I watch like a hawk: I fear neither muck nor mud: and just to show you, let me be your servant; then you'll see horses being seized by the dozen.

Emperor: In a while, but first let's seek out that fat capon.

(Joren and Kosen enter, carrying jugs full of beer. Emperor Charles and Ambroos stand to one side.)

Ambroos: Look at those two blokes carrying so much that their breeches are groaning under the weight. Ouff! They stink of old leather. They're some of the people you are going to eat with, my lord.

Emperor: Quiet, let's listen, Ambroos...

(Joren and Kosen rest for a bit and look at the jugs of beer.)

Kosen: What do you think of these beer jugs? Hey! Joren! No one knows how much we're going to enjoy filling our faces with them... By God's blood! Each one of them holds at least a gallon.

Joren: That one's for me and this one's for the boss.

Kosen: And for Kosen?

Joren: Are you the boss, you slob?...

Kosen: I didn't hear what you said, Joren.

Joren: I know you could attach a couple of jugs to your ears; there's no beer belly in the land like your's. I bet you could down two gallons, just like that.

Kosen: Would you throw in tobacco and pipes?

Joren: That's enough. I'm not going to be had. We know you too well, my friend.

Kosen: So? Don't you want to see if I can drink a pot of beer?

Joren: Just one pot? Now, if you say ten, then you'll be as sober as a sober judge.

Kosen: Oh, Joren, is that it? You're a right loudmouth.

Joren: Now, just shut your gob, and drink as much as you want today.

Kosen: (*Hugging the jug*). O my joy! My consolation! My desire! My hope!...

Ambroos: (*Aside*). What's this bibbler babbling about?...

Emperor: Ambroos, keep your trap shut.

Kosen: My dear, my refuge, my greatest pleasure.

Joren: Do you love the jug even more than Jaquelijjn?

Kosen? Who? Your bride-to-be?

Joren: My bride-to-be? You're having a laugh. She loves you more than her best collar.

Kosen: Is that possible! Can she really love me so much?

Joren: It's for you that she sighs night and day.

Kosen: For me?

Joren: For you.

Kosen: Oh, mate! You make me so happy!

Joren: For you...(*aside*) Because it's for you that Teunis is bullying her.

Kosen: O my dearest Jaquelijjn! Don't worry anymore about me. You can be assured of my faithfulness.

Joren: But, Kosen, if you want to have her as your wife, from now on you won't be able to drink beer or brandy.

Emperor: (*Aside*). He's a right joker.

Kosen: Why?

Joren: She's can't bear the stench of any strong drink; or tobacco.

Kosen: Tobacco, too? That's my favourite. How will I be able to live without beer, or tobacco?

Joren: If you love Jaquelijjn, you'll have to give all that up. Wouldn't you want to stay away from those pleasures for such a girl?... You know... You're a real lout. In the name of Christ, if I could please her as much as you, I would deny myself breakfast for her love.

Kosen: Breakfast?...

Emperor: (*Aside*). I never saw such an ugly customer in my life.

Kosen: Breakfast, Joren? That's enough...

Joren: Yes, and what's more, I'd always let her eat half the soup before she served it.
(*Jaquelijjn enters and listens*).

Kosen: I certainly do love Jaquelijjn, but I have to fill my guts; otherwise my love would be directed at something of little worth.

Jaquelijjn: (*Coming forward*). That's fine, you red-nosed drunk, you coward, you capon, I'll send you packing to the pipe and glass.

Ambroos: (*To the Emperor*). There's the jewel.

Kosen: My dear...

Jaquelijjn: Away with you, you beer lover...

Kosen: Oh, don't be angry.

Jaquelijjn: Out of here... Take these jugs of beer. Help, Joren, dad is dying of thirst...

Joren: Quickly, Kosen.

Kosen: Jaquelijjn, are you still angry with Kosen?

Jaquelijjn: That Kosen is going to carry on drinking brandy and beer from Mechelen, until it runs out of his blue nose.

Kosen: But my dearest...

Jaquelijjn: Be quiet, I say, before I vent my spleen.

Joren: *(To Kosen)*. You're going the wrong way about it. You'll inflame her spleen even more.

Jaqueliijn: Here, you drunkard, carry so much that your legs break. *(Exits)*.
(The Emperor and Ambroos laugh).

Emperor: No, in all of Brussels, there's no one else like Jaqueliijn.

Ambroos: My sides are splitting.

Emperor: Follow me: this waiting is hurting me: I just have to listen to that lovely company talking together. Where do they live, Ambroos?

Ambroos: Here, in the next street. *(They exit)*.

(The curtains behind open; the scene is the cellar, with Teunis, Joren, Kosen).

Teunis: So! Welcome to anyone who brings us anything... as long as it's from a full barrel.

Joren: Yes, master.

Teunis: Pour some out, let's see... It's as clear as the sun... *(He drinks)*. It tastes as good as Spanish wine... Come, Jaqueliijn... Maey... Where are you? Bring the food, all this waiting is making my stomach turn.

Maey: *(Offstage)* If you're in a hurry, you go ahead.

Teunis: What patience a man needs with a wife like that... You'll hurry up, or I'll come and get it myself.

Jaqueliijn: *(Enters)*. There's the salad...

Teunis: That's good; sit down and call mum without delay.

Jaqueliijn: She's just coming, so you can start, dad....

(There is a knock at the door).

Joren: Quiet. I hear knocking at the door, boss.

Teunis: We don't mend shoes at night: let them knock... Is the door properly shut?

Joren: Yes, and bolted.

Teunis: Good. *(There is louder knocking at the door)*. What... are those donkey hooves? They're trying to break the door down... Joren, see who's there.

Joren: I wish he'd hang his head on the gallows at the old port... Who's there?

Who's there?...

Emperor: (*From offstage*). Open the door...

Kosen: I wished that joker had drowned yesterday.

Emperor: (*Entering. Ambroos stands to one side*). Oh master, please put a patch on this boot. It's making my foot wet.

Teunis: Why have you come to disturb us at candlelight? It's far too late to mend boots.

Emperor: I really want to get to Aalst tomorrow morning, I beg of you, help me, I'll give you what you ask in payment.

Joren: (*Aside*). May the devil strike that bloke down.

Teunis: Nothing, neither your money, or your character, or Aalst, or your journey, or whatever else you might say, will make me take off my napkin tonight; take your boots away....

Kosen: Here, here, boss, well said.

Joren: And if you raise the slightest objection...

Emperor: Oh, friends, I'm sorry that I have come to bother you, but it really is an emergency.

Teunis: Go on, kick him out, Joren.

Emperor: I'm begging you.

Joren: Are you still moaning, you bald noble? Go on, get out or....

Emperor: Where do you expect me to go?

Teunis: Anywhere but here, whether there's a hailstorm ...

Kosen: Rain or wind...

Ambroos: Is that the sauce of that beautiful capon?

Emperor: But friends. Don't be so quick tempered. If hunger is tormenting you, I shall wait: eat, and don't be so put out; or if you will tolerate me as a friend at your table, I shall order ten pitchers of wine to be brought and I'll pay for them. (*They all stand up from the table*).

Teunis: Where are you, Maey, Jaquelij, come here... What does my lord say?

Emperor: I shall give you ten pitchers of wine, if you allow me to sit down with you.

(*Maey enters*).

Teunis: Indeed, my lord, you do us a great honour.

Ambroos: How quickly this promise appeases the anger of the cobblers!

Maey and Jaquelijjn: (*Together*). You are most welcome, my lord...

Teunis: Shove up, lads, shove up, make room.

Joren: The arguing's over now.

Kosen: We're the best mates in Brussels.

Ambroos: Big mates, as big as elephants: what generous servants the Emperor has got there!

Teunis: Come, my lord, sit down on my left; you, Maey, on my right.

Emperor: Don't bunch up just for me. I've got enough room.

Ambroos: Yes, as much room as in a cooper's barrel; it's just as if he were sitting on a boiler.

Teunis: Jaquelijjn, give him a napkin.

Ambroos: (*Still standing at the side*). It's made from that fine damask. At least bring a bowl for him to wash his hands.

Emperor: Oh, and don't make a fuss; we'd best get started on eating.

Jaquelijjn: (*Bringing in the capon*). Here is our festive food.

Teunis: The dogs can bark all they want and anyone can knock at the cellar door, but we won't be listening.

Ambroos: I'd say that as well as you, if I were sitting down with nobles.

Emperor: (*Giving money*). Look master; use this to get wine that's to your taste.

Teunis: Take it, Kosen...

Kosen: Me?... Of course...

Joren: You stupid sot... Give it here, boss; I'll take it next door to the Half Moon.

Teunis: That Fransje next door draws from a full tap. Tell him it's for me.

Joren: Fine. (*Exits*).

Ambroos: What's that gabbler going on about?

Teunis: Joren, go and tell Fransje that it's for Teunis the cobbler.

Maey: What do you think, my lord, of that capon from Waasland.

Emperor: I never ate better.

Kosen: It's the feast of the old shoe.

Ambroos: If I had only put on my old shoe today, perhaps I could also have tasted these morsels.

Emperor: Jaquelij, a glass of beer.

Teunis: That's what I like to hear my lord... So, do you like it?

Emperor: Look, it's going right down the shute.

Ambroos: He doesn't seem to be the Emperor anymore, but rather Teunis' mate.

Joren: (*Entering with the wine*). This is from the best barrel.

Teunis: Come on, Joren, pour out a round quickly. This one is to your health, my lord.

Emperor: Let's do it again, to your well-being...

Ambroos: I wish that fattened animal had been sold in the region of Kempen. I wouldn't be thirsty at all then, whilst those cobblers pig out.

Teunis: What do you think about this wine?

Emperor: You have a fine palate.

Teunis: People often say that, my lord: when I was young, I mended shoes with Paskier, a mate of Klaes the cooper, and I made many a secret visit to his cellar; I got to know wine there, too.

Emperor: You seem to me, master, to be of good city stock.

Teunis: A long time ago, my father made shoes for the emperor Maximilian; sometimes I had the honour of fitting shoes on the feet of Prince Philip. But when that young prince had to leave quickly for Spain, to get a Spanish wife for himself, because no one in our family could speak Spanish, we were left behind, and a foreign shoemaker was taken on instead. My dad was so overcome with sadness that he died, and left behind four youngsters as orphans. The taxes, for their part, were so high at that time that we became so poor, that I, as the son of a shoemaker, was forced to mend shoes, just for a pittance. They wanted to make me into a mercenary; but, always having loved town life, I was too honest to turn my hand to that: the noble awl seemed more attractive to me.

Ambroos: Who does this cobbler think he is?

Emperor: Let's have another before you go on.

Maey: I'm going to fall asleep if this carries on any longer.

Ambroos: And I'm dying of thirst.

Joren: So, Kosen, just pamper your cold old chest.

Kosen: (*To the Emperor*). I drink to your health, my good friend.

Ambroos: Hmm. "Good friend" from that gob! Oh, does that lovely wine really have to go down that stinking shute?...

Emperor: (*To Kosen*). Kosen, I drink to you again.

Jaquelijjn: My lord sheriff...

Ambroos: Isn't that what I said?

Jaquelijjn: My mum drinks to you.

Emperor: I drink to your mum, too.

Teunis: Come on, open your mouth.

Joren: To your friendship, my lord.

Teunis: Let's have another round.

Emperor: By your leave, master, I beseech Jaquelijjn, your daughter, to drink a glass of wine with me... I drink to you, Jaquelijjn.

Jaquelijjn: God bless you, my lord.

Maey: You dimwit, do you have to act like that in front of people?

Ambroos: That's the pot calling the kettle black...

Kosen: (*Takes Joren's glass away from him*). I'll drink to you.

Joren: I'll drink to you when I'm ready.

Ambroos: By the devil, can't I down a glass as well as this oaf?... My empty guts are bursting, my stomach is aching like a sow full of milk... Oh, may God strike me down! I can see such a lovely draught there in front of Kosen. (*Ambroos empties the glass without being seen*).

Kosen: (*To the Emperor*). Good friend, have you drunk my wine?

Ambroos: (*Creeping away*). Could be, good friend.

Emperor: The glasses are wide open. It might have evaporated.

Joren: Come on, Kosen, have another.

Emperor: Come on then, master Teunis, you're just sitting there picking at bones, wash your mouth out with some wine.

Teunis: It's strange. Old gnashers like nothing more than picking and pecking.

Ambroos: Just like cripples always want to walk... But over there another clear glass is smiling at me; I must empty it, even if the emperor finds out. (*Ambrose empties the glass in front of Maey, and a plate*).

Maey: Well, daddy Teunis, those really are low tricks; don't you like me drinking? Haven't you had enough yet?

Ambroos: The heart of a sparrow's young never beat as fast as mine...

Teunis: What are you saying, Maey?

Maey: I seem to have wrongly accused my husband.

Emperor: Perhaps your drink has flown away in the wind, too. Joren, fill her up again...

Ambroos: (*Eating from his ill-gotten gains*). Boy, that's a tasty bit, and good enough for the guard of Emperor Charles to eat.

Maey: Right, Joren, take a turn at dancing with my Jaquelijjn to the honour of our guest.

Joren: Come on: sing that song for the Scottish jig.

Maey: Come on. (*Maey sings; they dance. Instruments can be played*).

Emperor: That's worth half a ball at court.

Ambroos: Well, I'll be blown, Joren is dancing like an English horse.

Emperor: Come on friends. Everyone raise their glasses once more; and then I'll go back to where I came from.

Joren: But your boots, my lord.

Emperor: I'm not thinking about boots any more.

Teunis: Come on, long live the old shoe, and you too, my lord. (*Everyone repeats this and drinks up*).

Ambroos: The shoe must be mentioned first, that's ten times more than reasonable. But before we depart, I shall just grab another one. (*Ambroos empties another glass*).

Emperor: Now friends, good night. I thank you for the feast. (*Exits*).

Maey: Teunis, show the man out, then.

Teunis: I can't stand any more...

Maey: You animal! You pig!...

Ambroos: No pig has ever drunk so much wine. I shall follow the Emperor's example. (*Exits*).

Jaquelij: Just listen to Kosen snoring.

Maey: Come on, Joren, help us take your master to his bed.

Joren: How much does that old body weigh? (*They drag Teunis out*).

Maey: I've had enough of being lumbered with this drunkard... So, I'm going to bed too... Follow me, Jaquelij, there's nothing more to gawp at.
(*They exit*).

Joren: (*Alone with the drunken Kosen*). What pig ever lay so deep wallowing in the mud as Kosen lying here... (*He pushes Kosen*). Up, pig... He's like a corpse. He's lost his sense of smell and taste; no more eyes, nor ears, nor even feeling... Up, Kosen, sit next to Joren and fill your guts with wine and beer up to your neck... Why am I shouting?... Mute, deaf, drunk; they're all the same. Even if someone let off a cannon, he wouldn't move an inch.... Listen to his bunged up throat and drunken nose snoring; it's as if the rumbling pot were sitting in his windpipe.... But I must just pour into his ear some of the liquid that he has poured so greedily into his stomach. (*He pours wine into Kosen's ear*). He's moving less than a stone does... he's completely closed up, or rather, filled-up... I'm going to have a drink now, at my leisure, before I creep into my hammock... I'll drink to you, Kosen... Oh, that's a strong draught... Just one more of the same to make my heart glad. That tastes like biscuits... Frans, you are worth your weight in gold. To you! (*He drinks*). A glass of wine is worth more than a jug of beer. (*He sings and dances*). That's strong... that's excellent... I'll have to have another glass... (*He sings...*) And another... (*He drinks again*). That makes my throat sound like a bell... (*He tries to sing and dance some more, and begins to sway*)... Steady, feet, keep standing. How come you're swaying so much?... Am I not Joren, then?... What is it that's turning like that?... The cellar?... It seems to be... Or is it my skull? (*He feels it*). No, that's still in place... Stand still... Or are you making fun of me?... Stand still, cellar... Where?... Why?... That isn't the cellar... No... What is it, then?... Kosen?... No... It's the glass... There, hey, look. It's spinning like a top... I'll have to drink it to finish it off; otherwise it might jump up into my face. (*He drinks*). Have courage, Joren, you're the cock of the walk... Where's the boss?... Where's my Jaquelij gone?... My Jaquelij... that girl... that sweet hussy... Oh, if she were with me now, I'd give her such a smacker... (*He stumbles and falls on Kosen*). Are you that Jaquelij? (*He takes Kosen by the hip*).

It's her, I can smell it... (*He gropes*). It's my Jaquelijjn... (*He strokes Kosen with the hand*). I can feel her soft skin ... beautiful Jacqui, beautiful... you will marry Joren... Me, Jaquelijjn's husband... Jaquelijjn, Joren's wife... With Joren ... Joren is... Jaquelijjn... tomorrow... come... bride... Joren... Jaquelijjn... I... she... the bridegroom...

ACT FOUR

Ambroos goes off to summon Teunis and those round him to the court. Joren and Kosen are still after Jaquelijjn. Teunis then comes along, chastises his daughter and speaks in favour of Kosen. Ambroos comes into the cellar, and shocks all of them with his summons. Kosen leaves his boss in the lurch and departs. Joren remains faithful.

Ambroos: (*Enters alone, dressed as a bailiff*). How annoying that capon's been. It's transformed my lord, and me, today and yesterday, in so many ways; he changed from being emperor into a county sheriff in order to eat some of that animal: and I, who stood yesterday cold and rigid before the door, whilst it was being eaten, today go to summon the august inhabitants of that subterranean castle as a bailiff for the emperor... How do my dagger and halberd suit me? I think I'd have had good reason yesterday to seek employment with the sheriff as a servant, for all this servant gear really suits me. Be afraid, Teunis, Maey, Jaquelijjn, I'm coming for your hides; Be afraid, Joren, Kosen, be afraid: there are April showers over your heads: the warm southerly wind is becoming a cold northerly one. Yesterday it was "help yourself, cut, pour, drink up." Today, we're changing words and sounds; today we'll see you down in the mouth, and your hands in your hair, screaming and crying, so that next time, when you're full of joy, you might have a thought for impending trouble. For how does it happen that people, who want luxury and wealth, always give full rein to their desires without control and without moderation?... That's the reason no one thinks about the aftertaste, which usually follows unbridled indulgence. When wine and beer are poured down your throat, and your belly is bulging, and your stomach has had what it fancies, then the heart nods off, so happy, so peaceful, censed with the dew of Bacchus' sweet scents, as if the time of jollity should last forever. People chase concern, fear, worry out of their minds, so that humans can play the role of animal, with more freedom, and indulge their desires. Anteon, who yesterday lay submerged up to his neck in drink with his guests, will be able to see today how much everyone should flee all excess, when I frighten him and fill his mind with fear, and summon him and his household before Emperor Charles. Not that that great emperor wishes him ill... No, the time of year means that everyone enjoys themselves according to their rank. Perhaps today you'll see Teunis, after being unnecessarily frightened, come back full of joy; but whether that will last,

I don't know. That's why it's a wise person who in moments of good fortune foresees how quickly a good wind can change direction... The generosity of fate is just like the favour of great lords, or like a beautiful day, a handful of smoke and wind, a bird in the air, a little laugh from a child: one moment she appears poor and faint, then she shines like a miracle; what was down rises and what was on top goes down; there is no rank, whether great or small, high or low, which at some point does not experience how fragile everything is here. But in giving this moral sermon, I am forgetting the emperor's orders: have I gone from being a bailiff to a preacher?... What do you expect?... This shortcoming does not only apply to me: to scoff at the common people seems to be something everyone does, and whilst everyone continues to scoff at the common people, then no-one improves either in heart or morals: everyone says "the common people...the common people..." and no-one explains to them that they're involved in the common good, too. One person says, "My neighbour should do this in that way, and not do that; my neighbour's wife should hold her tongue more, and speak less." A second one scoffs at someone else's hair, clothes, or beard; he mocks his neighbour when he is wasteful and he grumbles when he saves. Many people praise what they like as wisdom, and consider what they don't like as foolishness: if it doesn't please them, it stinks, even if it's made of gold; it smells better than the scent of the civet cat when it is to their taste. So, sniffy noses, does your sense of smell rule? So, blockheads, does your judgement give the seal of approval? Before you make such a judgement about your fellow man's shortcomings, stick your nose in your own musty cubby-hole, where perhaps you'll find worse smells than in the best hall or room of your neighbours. But, why am I worrying about this arrogant sort of people, who mock me just as much as many others? Let them laugh if they want to, I won't mind, although they'll have donkey's ears, like Midas, until the day they die. I'm going to Teunis, and will summon him to a court, where no Midas ever got the slightest praise. (*All the curtains open. Joren and Kosen appear*).

Joren: (*After gaping and yawning*). Oh!... I can't raise my head... I have to stretch so much... My eyes are closed... Who's coming to wake me so early? It can only just be midnight... By the devil, my whole body has swollen up... Both my legs are so stiff. It's as if I'd been lying in the frost in front of the door... Where am I lying?... I can't even see myself very clearly... Is that my bed?... Is that my pillow? (*He gropes around and grabs Kosen by the collar*). Ssh, it's alive, it's moving...

Kosen: Ouch! Ouch!

Joren: (*Jumping up*). Oh! Ah! All my bones are shaking, is it magic or a ghost?... Oh Joren! Poor Joren! Where are you?... Have you lost yourself?... Are you not Joren? Me, Joren?... Yes, that's me... I'm Joren himself... Yes, but where have I ended up? (*He looks around to Kosen and the table*). Well... there's the table from yesterday; that's Kosen lying there, like a block of ice. I used his body as a pillow... Yes, Shrove Tuesday... Yes, our neighbour Fransje... Yes, capon!... Yes, French

wine... My head, my loins, my torso, my neck, my coccyx really do feel like I spent the night lying on the floor: you made me so happy and I was under your influence so much that I didn't think of crawling into my bed... But, didn't there used to be a bottle with brandy in it here? A toddy would be good to cure my hangover... It must be here somewhere, for Teunis, our boss, uses that precious dew to drive the water out of his bladder... *(He looks for it)*. I've got it... *(He takes a swig)*. That will bring me back to myself. Hey, Kosen, are you still sleeping? You numbskull... *(He pours a little brandy into a glass, and as he lifts Kosen's head, he puts it under his nose)*. Smell this, smell it...

Kosen: O sweet smell!...

Joren: Now, just swig this, you spineless Jan.

Kosen: Oh, what a lovely drink...

Josen: Get up... Come on, Kosen...

Kosen: I can't get up...

Joren: Get up, I tell you.

Kosen: Just let me carry on sleeping for a bit...
(Noise from offstage).

Joren: Quiet. What's that I hear. Who's trying to catch us by surprise so early in the morning? *(He puts the bottle away)*. By God's blood, if our boss had seen me with his bottle, I'd be lost... Oh!... He's come to spy on me.

Jaquelijjn: *(Enters)*. So Joren, how did you enjoy our goose feast?

Joren: A lot, my dear Jacquelijjn.

Jaquelijjn: *(Seeing Kosen)*. What? Is that drunken animal still drowning and suffocating in his drink?

Joren: Just as you see, my dear.

Jaquelijjn: Ugh! What a foul smell's coming from his mouth... Get up, you drunkard, up, you pig, you glutton. *(She kicks him)*.

Kosen: Oi! Oi!

Jaquelijjn: Hurry up, Joren, get a piece of birch or oak wood, so that I can give this foul glutton a good beating...

Kosen: *(Crawling and falling)* Oi! Oi!

Jaquelijjn: I don't know why I don't get someone to drag you out of the cellar by the hair.

Kosen: (*Kneeling*). Have mercy, Jaquelijjn! If I've done something wrong, I beg you, forgive me for it.

Jaquelijjn: Out of here, you slob, get out of my sight, crawl into a dark corner, so that I don't see you or hear you for a whole week.

Kosen: How can your heart be so upset at Kosen? Oh! Oh!

Jaquelijjn: Surprising, isn't it? You're so horrendously lovable.

Kosen: Please take back that judgment...

Jaquelijjn: Get out of here, you clumsy oaf.

Kosen: (*As he departs*). My heart is so troubled. I feel as if I should go and hang myself.

Jaquelijjn: Tell me if you do want to hang yourself, and I'll get someone to give you the rope.

Joren: That's well said. What's more fitting than the gallows for such a dirty beast, such a filthy greedy guts? But, Jaquelijjn, this does not make my heart any less sad, whilst your father is so concerned with his purse. Damned purse.

Jaquelijjn: What do you want me to do? It's painful enough for me.

Joren: I'm worrying myself to death. What? For a handful of money, will that boorish Kosen, that odious slob, be chosen instead of Joren? Instead of me? Instead of Joren, who loves you as he loves his soul and will always love you?... Is it because of money that he gains an advantage and I'm cast off? I wish that the first man to mint coins had been submerged in the ground by silver and gold, before he'd used his hammer to strike that devil's money, that devourer of virtue and honour! Is that the reason why people get married, or it is to bring up children in honourable circumstances?

Jaquelijjn: I choose the latter.

Joren: Why do people strive so much for money?

Jaquelijjn: Because without money, you can't eat.

Joren: You can't eat without money?... That may be true, but I'm going to show you another way right now. Can I not pay the baker or the brewer by mending shoes?... And if that can happen, why are people always concerned with damned money?

Jaquelijjn: Well, do we need nothing more than beer and bread?

Joren: I wish that I could be added to the number of the dead right now; I'm not myself anymore, when I think about it... That money, that god of the

world, the consolation, the will, the requirement of all people, which fills many coffers, and which lots of people have too much of!... Jaquelij, I'm going crazy, because I don't have that devil's money, which you hold so dear... Can I serve you with my blood, my soul? Speak! Why are you so crazy about what I can't give you? Oh! If that's how it is, I don't want to live another moment; I know a way to find death... Go on then, marry, marry Kosen, with his money, his silver, and his gold and his beer belly too... (*Trying to leave*).

Jaquelij: (*Grabbing hold of him*). You fly off the handle too quickly. I value Kosen's gold, because of what Kosen is like, less than dirt, but what I make of you, you'll see in due course.

Teunis: (*Entering*). So, Jaquelij, you skivvy. I see you are up to your neck in courting; with your fool, your dearly beloved Joren.

Jaquelij: Oh dad!

Teunis: Shut your mouth.

Joren: But boss...

Teunis: Get out of here, and get to work. You've started a fire that really will set Jaquelij alight... Where are you, Kosen?

Kosen: (*Offstage*). Boss!

Teunis: Where's Kosen speaking from?

Kosen: I'm coming, boss, I'm coming...

Joren: (*Aside*). I'm going to be angry.

Teunis: My dear Kosen, come here... How are things? Have you not got a headache?

Kosen: No, boss.

Joren: (*Aside*). Have you not got toothache in your guts?

Teunis: Why are you looking like that, then?

Kosen: I was still asleep, boss.

Teunis: Oh dear! The lad went to bed too late last night.

Joren: (*Aside*). Weighed down with two or three jugs of beer and I don't know how much wine.

Teunis: My Kosen, do sit down; Come on, Kosen, sit next to Teunis: you are as dear to me as my oldest son.

Joren: (*Aside*). Not you, but your purse.

Teunis: Jaqueliijn, sit down there. Next to Kosen.

Jaqueliijn: I'm not tired.

Teunis: I don't want to have to say it again.

Jaqueliijn: Pooh!... He smells like a rotting carcass.

Joris: (*Aside*). But his money doesn't smell.

Teunis: Enough of this stupidity, I tell you, sit down.

Jaqueliijn: I'm sitting... So what now?

Teunis: Give him your hand.

Kosen: Oh, Jacqui.

Joren: (*Aside*). I'm dead.

Teunis: Don't put up any resistance, or else...

Joren: (*Aside*). Can he be the priest and the father all at once?

Jaqueliijn: Be careful, dad. He can't say the Lord's prayer.

Teunis: That doesn't matter. Just give me your hand.

Joren: (*Aside*). Do I have to see this?... No, I would rather be dead.

Teunis: Well. What's going to happen? (*Joren sneaks up from behind, and pulls the stool from under Kosen, and runs off*).

Kosen: Oh, master! Help me! Help...

Teunis: What the devil... Is this place haunted?

Kosen: Oh! Oh! My limbs.

Jaqueliijn: (*Aside*). I wish he'd broken his neck.

Teunis: How the devil did you fall over like that?

Kosen: Oh! Oh! My hip, my limbs!...
(*Maey and Joren enter*).

Joren: (*To Maey*). Oh! Without you, we'd be separated from each other forever.

Maey: What's going on here?

Jaquelijjn: Oh, mum!

Maey: Oh, Jaquelijjn! My girl! My dearest child!...

Jaquelijjn: Oh! Help me escape my pain.

Kosen: Oh, Maey...

Maey: Get out of here, you odious oaf.

Teunis: I say he stays.

Maey: I say he won't.

Teunis: Be quiet, or I'll shut your mouth ...

Maey: You show me. Come on, just try...
(Ambroos comes into the cellar).

Joren: Oh, boss! Oh, mistress! A bailiff is coming in!

Ambroos: Where's the one, who earns money,
From shoes and old leather,
You stinking smoker,
Making fire from old soles...
Lend your ears, lend your ears
To what the emperor makes known
To you, full of anger and wrath...
Because you dared
To violate his laws,
Disdain and dishonour
His command and desires;
Because you have violated
His will with rascals
Both inside and outside
This mighty place,
You will, without fail,
Delay or lingering,
Appear at the court
With Maey, and Jaquelijjn,
In order to account for

What you have done wrong...

Teunis: My lord! My lord!

Ambroos: Because of what you stinking fools
Have dared to do,
Against the honour
Of the imperial throne,
And sceptres and crowns...
Creep out of your hovel,
With Maey and that skivvy,
And set off to be at court
By about nine o' clock;
Then you shall be informed,
In a few lines,
Of what punishment
Your crimes and acts
And sins deserve.
And if you are found wanting
In what I proclaim,
You will be dragged away
Tied and bound.
The time is close, take care and all of you follow me.
(*Ambroos exits*).

Teunis: (*Sitting down*). Oh! What have I done?

Maey: Oh, Teunis!

Teunis: Oh, Maey!

Jaquelijjn: Oh, dad!

Joren and
Kosen: Oh, boss!

Teunis: Oh, lads! I give up... Give me some vinegar... My heart is giving way ...
Oh! Oh!

Maey: Oh, hurry up, Jaquelijjn... My husband! My dear Teunis...

Teunis: (*Coming back to himself*). But what have I done wrong?... Wretched
thing!...

Maey: Oh! Look at his old hands shaking... My dear! My soul-mate!

Jaquelijjn: Oh dad! Be strong...

Joren: Have courage, boss.

Teunis: Fear is seizing my lifeblood.

Maey: Oh! God! What's going to happen?...

Teunis: Put me in chains and stick me in prison! Flog me or hang me at my old age?... (*They all cry together*). Have I lived so long and so honourably for that? (*They cry*). Trembled respectfully before strict justice?... (*again*). Borne this grey head honourably and virtuously for so long?... (*again*). If only death had taken me in my younger days!... (*again*)

Jaquelijjn: Oh, my heart is full of sorrow.

Maey: My heart is breaking with grief.

Joren: I'm like a stone...

Maey: Oh, my dear husband!

Teunis: Oh, my wife!... Who will act for me, speak for me in this time of need? Lads, come with me...

Kosen: Me? Get involved in that business? No... You got yourself into it: you get yourself out of it.

Teunis: Oh, Kosen! Stand by me; my closest mate! Open your purse for me now, open your coffers.

Kosen: No, that can't be done...

Teunis: I'm placing my hopes on you; perhaps things can be put in order with a small sum.

Jaquelijjn: Oh, Kosen! Help my dad, in his hour of need, with your money; just do it for me.

Kosen: With money?... No, Jaquelijjn. If I let go of that money, I'd be drowning in sorrow!... This matter is nothing to do with me.

Teunis: At least come with us...

Kosen: No, I'm getting out of here, with chest, purse and bed, and the rest of my things, before my goods are seized, and I'm implicated in your wrongdoing and misery. (*Exits*).

Teunis: Oh Kosen, are you going away?...

Maey: Let that traitor go.

Joren: Boss, I shall stand by you till the day I die: I shall go with you to the court: and don't be afraid. If necessary I shall give my life as a pledge for you.

Teunis: Oh Joren! My consolation.

Maey: Our help, our refuge.

Jaquelijjn: Our hope!

Teunis: Without you, I'd be helpless.

Joren: I shall show you I am faithful till my last breath.

Teunis: Oh Joren! How can I repay you for this?

ACT FIVE

Joren comforts Teunis, as he and those around him are on their way to the Emperor. When he comes before the Emperor, he becomes very confused. Finally, when Teunis is reassured by the Emperor's kindness, the latter asks him what he wants in return for the meal. He asks for and gets the honour of carrying the crowned boot in his guild in the procession. Overjoyed by this, he promises his daughter to Joren.

Joren, Teunis, Maey, Jacquelijjn

Joren : Have courage, my boss. Things always turn out better than you think.

Teunis: That bailiff has diminished my courage and heart so much that I can see nothing but the law court and the gallows before my eyes.

Maey: Oh, my lord! How will things turn out?

Joren: Those deluded ideas come out of nothing but fear; calm down and chase away the fear that is troubling you; there is nothing on your conscience that you should be afraid of.

Teunis: It's true, I've never taken anyone else's goods; I have never sold horse leather as cowhide; I've never worked with a poor quality sole or edge of a hide; nor turned a blind eye to cheating apprentices. I've never criticized the emperor, as far as I know, nor ever refused to pay tax, fees or duty, nor (isn't this true, Maey?) ever charged too high a price for mending shoes.

Maey: Yes, my husband, even though I didn't like it.

Teunis: And I haven't beaten my wife unreasonably either. You know that yourself.

Maey: That's got nothing to do with the law or the emperor.

Teunis: I am in no one's debt, apart from the neighbour's wife, Griet, for beer and brandy, if I remember rightly, four and a half stuivers.

Joren: So, why are you shaking so much, and whining? You only shake and whine and fear and take fright and cry and rant if you're rotten on the inside.

Teunis: How do I know if Passchier the rope-maker, who's become so very angry towards me, isn't playing a trick on me to get his revenge?

Maey: What can he do? He's only a man like you.

Teunis: That's true, but he's much better at playing tricks than me, and if he intends to vent his anger, he can do so with false allegations.

Joren: With false allegations?

Teunis: Yes, because many people are ready to swear a false oath for little gain these days. They would sell our Lord as Judas himself did, even if they were only promised half the reward Judas got.

Maey: I don't think there are two such bad people in Brussels.

Teunis: Oh Maey! There are many people who put on an appearance. Passchier could easily tell lies about me with people like that.

Joren: But do you think that the emperor would allow himself to be deceived so easily? He is too shrewd for that when dealing with matters of justice; he thinks about and reflects on everything each person says: he judges nothing except according to the rules of justice, and he never stamps his seal before the truth becomes clear. No self-interest, no friend, or relationship, no difference in social status, no turning a blind eye; none of these comes into play when he sits in judgment. If you rely on that judge and on your clear conscience, you will go to the court at peace and not afraid.

Teunis: Oh Joren! Faithful lad! How you comfort my spirit; Come on then, in the name of the Lord, let's go to the court.

Maey: Have courage, Teunis, God will reveal your innocence.

Jaquelijjn: So, dad, be brave, no harm will come to us.

Joren: If necessary, boss, you will see Joren's faithfulness.

Teunis: O my faithful lad.

Maey: O my dear Joren!

Jaquelij: So, Joren, lead the way.

Maey: You were born for us.

(They exit).

(All the curtains go up. The scene is the imperial court. The emperor, Ambroos, and a courtier are present).

Emperor: So you have summoned our Teunis to court: how did he conduct himself?

Ambroos: He sighed, he cried, he groaned and moaned, as if he were being arrested for murder by the bailiff and going to be hanged tomorrow in the market-place.

Emperor: You should not have frightened him so much. That was not my order.

Ambroos: I took pleasure in his pain, because it was based on such flimsy grounds. Maey, Jacquelij and whoever else was there, they were so frightened when I came screaming down the stairs with halberd in hand, with a harsh, angry face, and the hullabaloo of a court official, as if the most frightening devil stood before them, who ever saw Teunis' patron-saint, Antony the Abbot, in his cell. My affected speech was like a thunderbolt, my eyes full of lightning, to that downhearted old man. He's coming with Maey and his daughter and close friends to the court, frightened to death in his soul.

Emperor: You are a sly and cunning rascal: why are you making that old man so afraid?

Ambroos: Why did he receive you so rudely?

Emperor: He did not know me: but in due course, I shall test your mettle because of what you are making him suffer and see whether you will be any less afraid than him.

Ambroos: As you please, my lord; but if you make me afraid, it must be in that manner, too.

Emperor: Perhaps in a worse one. Away with you, and see whether or not Teunis is already in the hallway. If he dillies and dallies, I won't be able to hear his case today; so if he is there, bring him in immediately with Joren, and wife and daughter.

Ambroos: Your wish is my command. *(Exits).*

Courtier: Your majesty prepares us for a pleasant game.

Emperor: It is right for carnival time: the best way to be happy is to have jokes and japes without pretence.

(Ambroos enters with Teunis, Jaquelij, Maey and Joren).

Ambroos: Here is the cobbler, who loves to taste wine so much.

(All of them fall down on their faces, and cry 'Have mercy!')

Emperor: Is that Teunis, who was up till midnight, stuffing his face?...

All: Have mercy!...

Ambroos: That's right, my Lord.

Emperor: Who drank glass after glass of the best wine and goblets by the dozen?

All: Have mercy!...

Ambroos: It is he.

Emperor: Is that that nice Maey, who knew how to turn such a tasty capon on the spit?

All: Have mercy!...

Ambroos: Yes, it is she.

Emperor: Is that that Jaquelij who always had to be at the side of her Joren yesterday?

All: Have mercy!...

Ambroos: It is that skivvy.

Emperor: Is that that chaste Joren, who was always whispering in Jaquelij's ears?

All: Have mercy!...

Ambroos: It is that fellow, that self same clown.

Joren: *(Aside)*. Is that Emperor Charles himself, or a sorcerer?

Emperor: Anteunis, answer me, but be careful not to lie, for neither you nor anyone else can deceive me in that regard.

Joren: *(Aside)*. I don't understand what the devil is going on.

Teunis: *(Raising his head along with the others)*. Ask what you want to ask, my lord.

Emperor: Was there no one other than these people sitting with you at the table?

Teunis: Another man, my lord, who ran away, when you summoned us, because he feared being punished.

Emperor: No one else?... Watch what you say...

Teunis: A stranger came in, whilst I was sitting with the rest of the people in my house.

Ambroos: (*Aside*). He's calling his cellar a house.

Emperor: What did this stranger say?

Teunis: He wanted me to put a patch on his boots. But I was somewhat dismayed at this, because I was thirsty and hungry, and (I'll say it straight out, my lord) got really angry.

Emperor: Did this man sit down with you at the table?

Teunis: So that he could eat with me, he gave us eight pitchers of wine.

Emperor: Do you not know this generous stranger?

Teunis: He looked like a sheriff...

Joren: (*He looks at the emperor*). Oh, Master Teunis, just look, it's the emperor, before whom we bowed, who ate with us yesterday.

All: (*They all look up, and falling down full of surprise, they cry...*) Have mercy!... Show compassion...

Emperor: Get up, Teunis, get up, Maey, Jaquelijjn, Joren, get up; it's only fair that you receive something in return after you fed me so well yesterday. For all the time I've been on this throne as emperor, I've never had such a tasty capon.

Maey: It was certainly good, your lordship.

Emperor: Yes, indeed.

Jaquelijjn: I prepared it.

Emperor: You're a good girl.

Joren: How did Frans the publican's Bordeaux wines taste, my lord?...

Emperor: Very good.

Ambroos: (*Aside*). How these cobblers harp on. They're becoming good chums with the emperor.

Emperor: It was all excellent; salad, beer, wine, roast meat, good company. The best of everything.

Teunis: I can't say how happy I am.

Emperor: But tell me, Teunis, I don't want to leave the feast at that; it's only fair that I should pay you what I owe you: tell me what you want from me for such a good feast.

Teunis: *(After having given the matter some consideration)*. So that people should remember for all time the honour that your Majesty has shown a cobbler, please grant our guild permission to carry on its feast day, a boot, with a crown on top.

Ambroos: *(Aside)*. A true cobbler's request.

Emperor: Permission is granted to you.

Teunis: I thank your Majesty.

All: Long live the Emperor!

(The curtains are closed. Teunis, Maey, Jaquelijjn and Joren remain on stage).

Teunis: In the name of Christ, such an honour was never given to the guild.

Maey: I'm so overjoyed, I don't know myself anymore.

Jaquelijjn: It is worthwhile serving food to such a guest.

Maey: Where's that Kosen, now, who didn't dare come along with us... if I had him here now, I'd scratch his nose and cheeks open.

Teunis: Oh, Maey, don't speak about that fool any more; I let myself be seduced all too easily by his purse; but now all my heart is for our faithful Joren. And because the Emperor has granted us his favour so generously, I want you, Joren, to share in the joy that I am having here; I know your heartache. So today, I'm giving you my daughter Jaquelijjn, in honour of the Boot, as a reward for your loyalty; I accept you as my son, take Jaquelijjn to be your wife.

Maey: You speak, my worthy husband, a word that pleases me.

Jaquelijjn: Oh, dad!...

Joren: Oh, my boss!...

Teunis: I shall love you until I die, and before the day is over I want you to make your marriage vows with my Jaquelijjn.

Joren: Oh, Jaquelijjn, my love!...

Jaquelijjn: Oh, Joren!

Teunis: That's all in order, then... But to further this feast of celebration and happiness, go Joren in my name as master of the guild of cobblers, proclaim the favour of the Emperor, which was granted today at my request, to all the guild; such an extraordinary blessing and marvel demands that everyone puts down his tools: I'll give them three guilders each to spend on drink at the Half Moon.

Joren: I shall go to tell everyone of your kind command.

Teunis: When you return, bring a notary with you, so that there's a written record of your intention to marry: then you'll be a bridegroom, and Jaquelyn your bride.

Joren: I'll go right away, master.

Maey: Go, but come back quickly.

Teunis: Long may the boot be crowned to the honour of ancient leather.

EPILOGUE

Everyone should follow the example of what has happened today.
Many laugh very loudly at our Teunis' request, and say
If the emperor had given me that choice,
I would now be free from worry for the rest of my life.
A proud man, with ambition in his heart,
Calls out: I would have been the lord of the castle in Ghent.
A miser: if the emperor wanted to thank me like that,
I would have asked for interest on a loan at the Antwerp exchanges...
What a ridiculous decision! Anteun needs nothing,
Neither the lordship of a castle or interest... he stays with his shoes,
And if he were to go elsewhere to offer his services,
It would be like an ape being clothed in silk and gold.
What concern is money or honour to a cobbler, who lives happily
With his awls, and is satisfied with little,
If he can eat a capon just once a year,
And forget all his former cares and work.
Being happy is important, being happy is more important
Than all the treasures and fame of a crowned lord,
Who, in his abundance, still wants to strive for more.
Let all misers and proud men despise Teunis,
But his answer shows us clearly, that he lives happily,
And so possesses more than honour and riches can give.
Happy Anteun! You will sleep more peacefully,
Than a rich king served by hundred servants;
Than a rich man, who has his chests full of money,
And worries about them by day and all night.
You spend the night with old leather, free of a thousand worries,
Not fearing any thief, until daybreak:
Your cellar, your Maey, and your meagre dwelling
Satisfy your desires, and fulfil your wishes;
And if you were to show some ambition on this day,
It would not be to crown your head but a boot instead.
As long as Brussels' court and walls shall stand,
Your crowned boot will process with the guild in this land.

To the greater glory of God
And of the Holy Archangel Michael
17 April 1706

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Prologue:

The great Turk refers to the Ottoman Emperor, Suleiman the Magnificent (1494-1566), who besieged Vienna in 1529, before being defeated by Emperor Charles.

The Saxon fiend: John Frederick I, Elector of Saxony (1503-1554), whom Emperor Charles defeated at the Battle of Mühlberg in 1547, and held prisoner until 1552.

Act I:

p. 6: Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy (1433-1477), took the town of Liège in 1468, after a revolt there.

Act II:

p. 16: Donkey Street (*Ezelstraat*) was one of the busiest streets in Bruges.

Act III:

p. 17: Spoon Street (*Lepelstraat*) was in the red-light district of Antwerp in the seventeenth century.

p. 19: The region of Waas is an area in North-East Flanders between Gent and Antwerp.

p. 23: Aalst is a town twenty miles North-West of Brussels.

p. 25: Kempen is a region of Belgium to the East of Antwerp.

p. 25: The Emperor Maximilian (1459-1519) was the grandfather of Emperor Charles; Prince Philip is Philip the Fair (1478-1506), who was the son of Emperor Maximilian; The Spanish wife of Philip the Fair was Joanna of Castile (1479-1555), nicknamed Joanna the Mad.

p. 27: To dance like an English horse is to dance like a clodhopper.

Act V:

p. 39: Four and a half stuivers. The 'stuiver' was a coin. The original text has '6 blancken' (6 blanks), where a 'blank' was worth three-quarters of a 'stuiver'.

p. 40: Anthony the Abbot (3rd-4th c. AD) was a Christian saint who was tormented by devils in a cave in which he sought refuge.

About the author

Michiel de Swaen was born in Dunkerque on 20 January 1654. He received an education from the Jesuits, and their use of drama as a pedagogical tool was to have a formative influence on him. He trained as a doctor and by 1678 had become the “town doctor” in Dunkerque. He married twice and had eight children in all. He died, aged 53, on 3 May 1707. Later, the nineteenth-century Flemish poet Guido Gezelle held De Swaen in such high esteem that he called him the “Vondel of Dunkerque”.

During the seventeenth century, Dunkerque was at the centre of a power struggle between a number of European nations. Until 1646, it had been part of the Spanish Netherlands, but in that year the French occupied the town, and they remained there until 1652. It then returned to Spanish hands, but was once again captured by the French on 24 June 1658. The young Louis XIV entered the town on the same day and promptly handed it over to the English, as had been agreed. When Charles II returned from exile in 1660, he was short of money, and in 1662 he sold Dunkerque to the French for five million pounds. The town has remained in French hands until today.

Despite the intervention of these foreign powers, and indeed his own admiration of the French, De Swaen wrote all of his literary works in Dutch. He was a member of the Rhetoricians’ Chamber called the *Carsouwe* (daisy) in Dunkerque. These Rhetoricians’ Chambers are primarily associated with the Low Countries, and even after the French took possession of Dunkerque, competitions continued to be held between the Dunkerque Chambers and others in the Spanish Netherlands. In 1687, De Swaen was elected “Prince” of his Chamber and on Shrove Tuesday 1688 his play, *The Crowned Boot* (*De Gecroonde Leersse*), was performed for the first time.

About the play

The play takes its inspiration from a collection of stories about Emperor Charles V (1500-1558), published in 1674. In one of these stories, the emperor sees a cobbler’s wife buying a tasty capon at the market in Brussels. He finds out where she lives and that evening goes to her house to get his boots repaired. The cobbler refuses to repair them because he wants to celebrate the end of carnival. However, his mood changes when the emperor provides those present with wine, and he is invited to share a feast, including the capon, with the cobbler and his household. On the following day, the cobbler is summoned to the emperor’s court and asked what he would like as a reward for the meal. He asks for permission to carry a crowned boot in the procession of the cobblers’ guild, and the emperor grants him this wish.

De Swaen uses this story as the framework for his play, but adds to it in a number of ways. The cobbler, Teunis, has a daughter, Jaquelij, whom he wants to marry off to one of his apprentices, Kosen, because he has money. But, Jaquelij hates Kosen and would much prefer to marry her father’s younger, but poorer, apprentice, Joren. She has the support of her mother, Maey, in her pursuit of Joren. And so, the story becomes one about two basic aspects of human existence; love and money. But, as it is set on Shrove Tuesday, at the end of carnival, a time when people traditionally dress up, wear masks and mingle with those of different social classes, it is also a play about transformation and the age-old notion that appearances can be deceptive. Commentators note that the play also manages to marry formal elements of French classical dramaturgy with themes and characters commonly found in Low Countries

farces. There is a clear moral dimension to the play, but it is also great fun and there is no doubt that it represents one of the high points of drama in the Golden Age.

The Translation and Acknowledgements:

The whereabouts of the manuscript of this play have unfortunately not been known since 1967. However, a number of transcriptions of the work were made in 1928, and I have used one of these as the basis for my translation. A printed version of the play was published in 1718, and this includes a significant number of variations from the manuscript, particularly in relation to stage directions. Where appropriate, I have inserted these variations in the translation.

One of the particular challenges of translating this play is that much of the dialogue is in De Swaen's local dialect, and so it has been useful to be able to refer, when necessary, to a version of the play, which updates much of the dialogue in modern standard Dutch, published by Prof. dr. Hubert Meeus (University of Antwerp) in 2003. I am also grateful to Prof. dr. Meeus for his help in unpicking some of the trickier phrases from the text and to Dr. Ton Harmsen (University of Leiden) for similar assistance.

Further reading:

Werken van Michiel de Swaen, Vol. 1, eds. V. Celen et al. (Antwerp : De Sikkel, 1928)

Michiel de Swaen, *De Gecroonde Leersse*, ed. Jozef Smeyers (2 vols.) (Brussels: FUSL, 1989)

Michiel de Swaen, *De Gekroonde Laars*, ed. and trans. Hubert Meeus (Amsterdam: Athenaeum, 2003)

Karel Porteman and Mieke B. Smits-Veldt, *Een Nieuw Vaderland voor de Muzen: Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse Literatuur 1560-1700* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2008), pp. 748-749.

A Literary History of the Low Countries, ed. Theo Hermans (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2009)

Web: http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/swae001verh01_01/

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