

THE YEOMEN OF THE GUARD - AUDITION PIECES

Lieutenant

A man of stature with no sense of humour.

Lieutenant But Heaven ha' mercy, whom wouldst thou marry?

Fairfax Nay, I am indifferent on that score. Coming death hath made of me a true and chivalrous knight, who holds womankind in such esteem that the oldest, and the meanest, and the worst favoured of them is good enough for him. So, my good Lieutenant, if thou wouldst serve a poor soldier who has but an hour to live, find me the first that comes – my confessor shall marry us and her dower shall be my dishonoured name and a hundred crowns to boot. No such poor dower for an hour of matrimony.

Lieutenant A strange request. I doubt that I should be warranted in granting it.

Fairfax There never was a marriage fraught with so little of evil to the contracting parties. In an hour she'll be a widow, and I – a bachelor again for aught I know!

Lieutenant Well I will see what can be done, for I hold thy kinsman in abhorrence for the scurvy trick he has played thee.

Fairfax A thousand thanks, good sir; we meet again on this spot in an hour or so. I shall be a bridegroom then and your worship will wish me joy. Till then farewell. (to guard) I am ready, good fellows.

Lieutenant He is a brave fellow and it is a pity that he should die. Now, how to find him a bride at such short notice? Well, the task should be easy.

Colonel Fairfax

Our hero, bold and brave with a touch of schoolboy humour.

Fairfax Two days gone, and no news of poor Fairfax. The dolts! They seek him everywhere save within a dozen yards of his dungeon. So I am free! Free, but for the cursed haste with which I hurried headlong into the bonds of matrimony with – Heaven knows whom! As far as I remember she should have been young; but even had not her face been concealed by her kerchief I doubt whether, in my then plight, I should have taken much note of her. Free? Bah! The Tower bonds were but a thread of silk compared with these conjugal fetters which I, fool that I was, placed upon mine own hands. From the one I broke readily enough. How to break the other!

Sergeant Meryll

A good man doing a difficult job. Friend of Fairfax and father to Phoebe and Leonard.

SERGEANT MERYLL

Meryll There's one hope yet. Thy brother Leonard, who, as a reward in saving his standard and cutting his way through fifty foes who would have hanged him, has been appointed a Yeoman of the Guard, will arrive this morning. And as he comes straight

from Windsor, where the Court is, it may be – it *may* be – that he will bring the expected reprieve with him.

And:

The deed is, so far, safely accomplished. The slyboots, how she wheedled him. What a helpless ninny is a love-sick man! He is but as a lute in a woman's hands – she plays upon him whatever tune she will. But the Colonel comes. I' faith, he's just in time, for the Yeomen parade here for his execution in two minutes!

Leonard Meryll

A brave heroic soldier (who only appears at the beginning and end), brother to Phoebe.

Leonard Phoebe, rejoice, for I bring glad tidings. Colonel Fairfax's reprieve was signed two days since, but it was foully and maliciously kept back by Secretary Poltwhistle, who designed that it should arrive after the Colonel's death. It hath just come to hand and it is now in the Lieutenant's possession.

Jack Point

A travelling player, second-rate clown, in love with Elsie.

Point Now observe. She said "Hands off!" Whose hands? Thine. Off whom? Off *her*. Why? Because she is a woman. Now had she *not* been a woman, thine hands had not been set upon her at all. So the reason for the laying on of hands is the reason for the taking off of hands, and herein is contradiction contradicted. It is the very marriage of *pro* with *con*; and no such lopsided union either as times go, for *pro* is not more unlike *con* than man is unlike woman. Yet men and women marry every day with none to say "Oh, the pity of it" but I and fools like me. Now wherewithal shall we please you? We can rhyme you couplet, triolet, quatrain, sonnet, rondolet, carole, pimpernel or Jumping Joan.

Wilfred

Head jailer and assistant tormentor. Lacking a few brain cells. In love with Phoebe.

Wilfred Lord, how she wooed me! I should be no mean judge of wooing, seeing that I have been more hotly wooed than most men. I have been wooed by maid, widow, and wife. I have been wooed boldly, timidly, tearfully, shyly, by direct assault, by suggestion, by implication, by inference and by innuendo. But this wooing is not of the common order. It is the wooing of one who must needs woo me if she die for it. Aye, if she die for it.

And:

Aye, I have a pretty wit – a light, airy, joysome wit, spiced with anecdotes of prison cells and the torture chamber. Oh, a very delicate wit! I have tried it on many a prisoner and there have been some who smiled. Now, it is not easy to make a prisoner smile; and it should not be difficult to be a good jester, seeing that thou art one!

2nd Yeoman No dialogue audition

Elsie Maynard

Our heroine. A travelling player and all-round good girl.

Elsie May it please you, sir, we are two strolling players, Jack Point and I, Elsie Maynard, at your worship's service. We go from fair to fair, singing and dancing and playing brief interludes; and so we make a poor living.

And:

Master Leonard! I am amazed! Is it thus that brave soldiers speak to poor girls? Oh, for shame! For shame! I am wed – not the less because I love not my husband. I am a wife, sir, and I have a duty and – oh sir! Thy words terrify me – they are not honest – they are wicked words and unworthy thy great and brave heart! Oh, shame upon thee! Shame upon thee!

Phoebe Meryll

Meryll's daughter. Rather a flirtatious minx. In love with Fairfax.

Phoebe Yes, that's all very well, but if Leonard is going to tell me that I may not do this and I may not do that, and I must not talk to this one, or walk with that one, but go through the world with my lips pursed up and my eyes cast down, like a poor nun who has renounced mankind – why, as I have *not* renounced mankind, and don't mean to renounce mankind, I won't have it – there!

And:

Jealous of thee? Bah! I'm jealous of no craven cock-on-a-hill who crows about what he'd do an' he dared! I am jealous of another and a better man than thou – set that down Master Wilfred! And he is to marry Elsie Maynard, the little pale fool – set that down Master Wilfred – and my heart is well-nigh broken. There, thou hast it all! Make the most of it!

Dame Carruthers

Housekeeper to the Tower. Keeps the men in order. Has hidden depths.

Carruthers Silence, you silly girl; you know not what you say. I was born in the old keep and I've grown grey in it, and please God, I shall die and be buried in it; and there's not a stone in its walls that is not as dear to me as my own right hand.

And: Tush in thy teeth, old man! As my niece Kate sat by her bedside, this Elsie slept. And as she slept she moaned and groaned and turned this way and that way. And – "How shall I marry one I have never seen?" quoth she. Then – "An hundred crowns" quoth she. Then – "Is it certain he will die in an hour?" quoth she. Then – "I love him not and yet I am his wife" quoth she.
Now, mark my words; it was of this Fairfax she spake, and he is her husband, or I'll swallow my kirtle!

Kate

No dialogue audition

Dame Carruthers' niece. Sings the top line in a quartet and has two lines of dialogue.

1st and 2nd Citizens No dialogue audition