

Matt's explanation from the wiki:

Not only is this a slight against gypsies, but in the act of saying this, Willmore also demonstrates a racist attitude towards the Jewish community. I wonder if this sort of attitude was prevalent during the restoration? This scene is also the epicenter of everything that happens within the piece, and acts as the launchpad for further events (even though this is but a part of the entire scene...The scene was very long).

Matt's "Setup" posting:

Essentially what has happened prior to this point is that the first scene of act one begins with Hellena asking her sister Florinda who she is most in love with. To this Florinda tells her sister that she is in love with Belvile (An English colonel who is also in love with Florinda), Florinda then goes on to say that her father is rather adamant that she marry Don Vicentio. Don Pedro enters and states his wishes that Florinda would listen to her father about who she should marry, at this Florinda refuses (with the support of Helena). Pedro then announces that he has a way for Florinda to escape her marriage agreements with Don Vicentio, and that is to marry the viceroy's son, Don Antonio on the morrow. After this Pedro exits and Florinda and Hellena (I believe) disguise themselves to attend the carnival.

At the beginning of act 2, Belvile enters with his compatriots Blunt and Frederick. Belvile is upset because he has been forbidden to marry Florinda by her brother Don Pedro. Willmore enters and greets the three men and they discuss the excitement they will experience that evening. After the warm exchange between the four men, entertainers enter, along with prostitutes. There is a comment made that "roses for every month" is written on papers attached (somehow) to the women's breasts. This is explained by way of Belvile explaining that courtesans in Naples are usually hired on a monthly basis, rather than a nightly.

After this, Florinda along with Hellena (her sister) and Valeria (her cousin) enter in disguise (dressed as gypsies) and tell the men that they will do some fortune telling. Florinda proceeds to read Belvile's fortune, but upon noticing Don Pedro coming her way, gives Belvile a letter and exits.

This portion of the scene not only features some telling instances about the moral constitutions of our characters, but it also serves as the launch pad for the rest of the play's events (instances such as being in disguise, or the events of each separate storyline within the overt plot, all originate here.)

The scene:

Lucetta. This is a stranger, I know by his gazing; if he be brisk he'll venture to follow me; and then, if I understand my Trade, he's mine: he's English too, and they say that's a sort of good natur'd loving People, and have generally so kind an opinion of themselves, that a Woman with any Wit may flatter em into any sort of Fool she pleases.

Blunt. Tis so -- she is taken -- I have Beauties which my false Glass at home did not discover.

[She often passes by Blunt and gazes on him; he struts, and cocks, and walks, and gazes on her.]

Florinda. This Woman watches me so, I shall get no Opportunity to discover my self to him, and so miss the intent of my coming -- But as I was saying, Sir -- by this Line you should be a Lover.
[Looking in his Hand.]

Belvile. I thought how right you guess'd, all Men are in love, or pretend to be so -- Come, let me go, I'm weary of this fooling. [Walks away.]

Florinda. I will not, till you have confess'd whether the Passion that you have vow'd Florinda be true or false. [She holds him, he strives to get from her.]

Belvile. Florinda! [Turns quick towards her.]

Florinda. Softly.

Belvile. Thou hast nam'd one will fix me here for ever.

Florinda. She'll be disappointed then, who expects you this Night at the Garden-gate, and if you'll fail not -- as let me see the other Hand -- you will go near to do -- she vows to die or make you happy. [Looks on Callis, who observes em.]

Belvile. What canst thou mean?

Florinda. That which I say -- Farewel. [Offers to go.]

Belvile. Oh charming Sybil, stay, complete that Joy, which, as it is, will turn into Distraction! -- Where must I be? at the Garden -- gate? I know it -- at night you say -- I'll sooner forfeit Heaven than disobey.

Enter Don Pedro and other Masquers, and pass over the Stage.

Callis. Madam, your Brother's here.

Florinda. Take this to instruct you farther.

[Gives him a Letter, and goes off.]

Frederick. Have a care, Sir, what you promise; this may be a Trap laid by her Brother to ruin you.

Belvile. Do not disturb my Happiness with Doubts. [Opens the Letter.]

Willmore. My dear pretty Creature, a Thousand Blessings on thee; still in this Habit, you say, and after Dinner at this Place.

Hellena. Yes, if you will swear to keep your Heart, and not bestow it between this time and that.

Willmore. By all the little Gods of Love I swear, I'll leave it with you; and if you run away with it, those Deities of Justice will revenge me.

[Ex. all the Women except Lucetta.]

Frederick. Do you know the Hand?

Belvile. Tis Florinda's. All Blessings fall upon the virtuous Maid.

Frederick. Nay, no Idolatry, a sober Sacrifice I'll allow you.

Belvile. Oh Friends! the welcom'st News, the softest Letter! -- nay, you shall see it; and could you now be serious, I might be made the happiest Man the Sun shines on.

Willmore. The Reason of this mighty Joy.

Belvile. See how kindly she invites me to deliver her from the threaten'd Violence of her Brother -- will you not assist me?

Willmore. I know not what thou mean'st, but I'll make one at any Mischief where a Woman's concern'd -- but she'll be grateful to us for the Favour, will she not?

Belvile. How mean you?

Willmore. How should I mean? Thou know'st there's but one way for a Woman to oblige me.

Belvile. Don't prophane -- the Maid is nicely virtuous.

Willmore. Who pox, then she's fit for nothing but a Husband; let her e'en go, Colonel.

Frederick. Peace, she's the Colonel's Mistress, Sir.

Willmore. Let her be the Devil; if she be thy Mistress, I'll serve her -- name the way.

Belvile. Read here this Postcript. [Gives him a Letter.]

Willmore. [Reads.] At Ten at night -- at the Garden-Gate -- of which, if I cannot get the Key, I will contrive a way over the Wall -- come attended with a Friend or two. -- Kind heart, if we three cannot weave a String to let her down a Garden-Wall, twere pity but the Hangman wove one for us all.

Frederick. Let her alone for that: your Woman's Wit, your fair kind Woman, will out-trick a Brother or a Jew, and contrive like a Jesuit in Chains -- but see, Ned Blunt is stoln out after the Lure of a Damsel.

Ex. Blunt and Lucet.