

LOOSE, WET, PERFORATED

A Morality Play in Four Ordeals

By Nicholas Vines

Libretto Final Draft 1

L = Loose

W = Wet

P = Perforated

V = Various (Grand Master/Grand High Master,

Baker's Wife, Milkmaid's Milker, Emma of

Normandy/Local Tartlet)

I = Instrumentalists (tutti)

PREAMBLE

A mysterious sacred space, adorned for elaborate ritual.

Loose and Wet are facing the audience, hard left and

right, frozen. Perforated is behind the audience,

unnoticed until his vocal entry.

P:- *[from behind, as narrator]*

Saints, Sinners, All and Singular!

This is a morality play,

A play about morality,

A play against morality,

Whose two protagonists-

Loose, unfettered by conscience,

And Wet, enslaved by decency-

Embody sin and saintliness

In their eternal struggle.

Four Ordeals must they endure-

The Cross, Ingestion, Fire, Water-

Trials that show the emptiness

Of honest, upright conduct,

And reveal through contest

Who is worthy, and who is not,

Of the ultimate reward:

To be made whole.

P:- Loose and Wet must endure

An Ordeal of the Cross;

An Ordeal of Ingestion;

An Ordeal of Fire;

An Ordeal of Water;

For the chance

To be made whole.

L,W,V :- *(moving bit by bit towards the audience)*

To be made whole...

INTERLUDE I

A frenzy of activity in setting up Ordeal 1 – Part 1, as if behind the scenes before a political rally.

ORDEAL I – PART 1

Around the central podium of an ornate and decaying Guildhall. The Grand Master (V) has pride of place.

P:- *(a little closer to the action than before)*

This story concerns a Guild,

Whose Grand Master (or Mistress)

Is to decide the future
Of these two protagonists.

V:- Masters, Artisans, All and Singular!
As Grand Master...

P:- Or is that Mistress...?

V:- There falls upon my shoulders
The guardianship of our ancient craft.
And as Grand Master...

P:- Mistress...

V:- I bear this burden, be assured...

P:- I am!

V:- I bear this, be assured...

L,W,P,I:- We are, we are!

V:- Lightly. For this Grand Mastering...

P:- Mistressing...

V:- Would bend me down unto old age.

But I delight in youthful pleasures!

What are centuries to my belcheries?

P:- What indeed?

V:- What are generations to my fornications?

L,W,P,I:- What indeed?

V:- I would cast aside our ancient craft

And raise there up those carnal appetites

Of which I'm Grandly Master!

P:- Or is that Mistress...?

V:- Now I choose between these two...

P:- One Loose, One Wet...

V:- One loose AND wet, I hope and pray,

And so a perfect playmate for my frolics!

Which of these would service my perversities?

P:- Which indeed?

V:- Which of these would pamper my proclivities?

L,W,P,I:- Which indeed?

V:- A slandering contest...

L,W,P,I:- Slandering!

V:- ...will determine that.

These two shall pierce with sharpened words

L,W,P,I:- Sharpened!

V:- ...a saintly tale...

L,W,P,I:- Saintly!

V:- Till one is sickened; the other...

P:- Loose AND wet...

V:- Thus deemed the winner, is promoted then

From Artisan... To Master!

P:- Or is that Mistress...?

V:- As to how the scoring works,

Each time an artisan proves to be

More Sin than Art...

P:- More Loose than Wet...

V:- I'll rate that sinner, be assured...

P:- I am!

V:- I'll rate that, be assured...

L,W,P,I:- We are, we are!

P:- Highly.

ORDEAL I – PART 2

*A formal arrangement within the Guildhall, strangely
reminiscent of a game show.*

P:- *(a little closer to the action than before)*

So an Ordeal of the Cross,
Where the last one standing,
Being the more slanderous,
Wins promotion and glory!

V:- Are you ready, come what may?

W:- I am.

L:- Oh yes...

I'll come whatever way you say!

V:- Oo my, Crusinny!

L,W,P,V:- Slandering Contest!

P,V:- Round One.

V:- This story concerns a certain Saint Angilbert,

P:- Abbot of Centulum,

L:- Charlemagne's Bum Chum,

W:- Knight of the Adoration of the Cross,

V:- Whose union outside the sanctity of marriage

W:- With Charlemagne's daughter,

L:- One Bouncing Bertha,

P:- Though outwardly cunning,

W:- Was founded in truth on love...

L:- Of dimpled thighs and scrumptious dew flaps!

P,V:- Crusinny!

V:- Out of this union came two healthy sons:

W:- Nithard, a soldier and scholar,

L:- And Arnid, pointless and dumb,

W:- Both shining examples...

L:- Of bastards in birth and in breeding!

P,V:- Crusinny!

V:- As penance for their unholy trist,

L:- Bertha became a nun,

W:- While Angilbert took up an abbotship

V:- In the very same house of pray, so they might...

L:- Poke each other...

W:- No more...

L:- Than three or four times a day!

P,V:- Crusinifix!!

W:- (I could be good at this...)

V:- Are you sickened?

W:- Not yet!

P,V:- Round Two.

V:- Angilbert was sent as an envoy to Rome

W:- To give a good tongue-lashing...

L:- To the pinkliest parts of the Papal behind!

P,V:- Crusinny!

V:- The abbey meanwhile was hawking its relics

L:- For the gold of pilgrims,

W:- Enriching its coffers...

L:- But the local tartlets most of all!

P,V:- Crusinny!

V:- With this wealth was procured a priceless
treasure:

L:- Two hundred books...

W:- Of great learning...

L:- On pooh punching of ev'ry kind!

P,V:- Crusinifix!!

W:- (I'm not so good at this...)

V:- Are you sickened?

W:- Not yet!

P,V:- Round Three.

V:- Charlemagne charged his close friend with tutoring

L:- Pepin the Short, his son,

W:- A duty the abbot embraced...

L:- Along with the little man's short and curlies!

P,V:- Crusinny!

V:- This tutoring earned Angilbert the title...

W:- Of Primi...
 Cerius...
 Palatii...

L:- Which is to say, the Palace's...Comeliest...
 Pervert!

P,V:- Crusinifix!!

W:- (I'm really bad at this...)

V:- Are you sickened?

W:- I am.

P,V:- Crusinifixation!!!

L,P,V:- Crusinifixation!!!

L,W,P,V:- Crusinifixation!!!

ORDEAL I – PART 3

A private alcove, dominated by a greasy pole or some other seedy climbing apparatus.

P:- *(a little closer to the action than before)*

So Loose wins this Ordeal,
 But is troubled nonetheless
 By her consuming desire
 To succeed at all costs.

L:- I am this Ordeal's winner!

I am now a Master.

Crusinifixation!

Crusinifix!

Crusinny!

W,V:- Loose is this Ordeal's winner!

She is now a Master.

Crusinifixation!

Crusinifix!

Crusinny!

L:- *(low down, interacting with the pole)*

Why must I climb,
 Must I climb the greasy pole,
 The greasy pole?
 Why must I
 Climb it, caress it,
 Stroke it, Embrace it,
 Press it, greasy,
 Against my tits?

My childhood was quite a hoot,
Full of fabulous fun and games.
So why do I claim
My penniless youth,
That I only survived
By nibbling on mud
And foul-smelling crud,
Left me so deprived,
I now must climb fast and loose?

(higher, still interacting with the pole)

Why must I climb the greasy pole,
The greasy pole?
Why must I
Climb it, lick it
Taste it, suck its greasiness
From off my bits?
Why must I climb,
Must I climb the greasy pole?

My daddy was all but mute,
Impossibly shy and restrained.
So why do I claim
His constant abuse,
Having made quite a mess
Of my fragile mind
And girly insides,
Caused me such distress,
I now must climb fast and loose?

(high up, still interacting with the pole)

Why must I climb the greasy pole?
Why must I
Climb it, consume it,
Greasily devour it?
Why must I climb, must I climb the greasy pole?
To be made whole!
To be made whole!
To be made whole!

ORDEAL I – PART 4

*A private alcove near the edge of the stage, with the air of
a private study.*

P:- *(a little closer to the action than before)*

Wet meanwhile is wondering
How honest, upright conduct
Can have so much less value
Than indecent slander.

W:- So why would slander

Be rewarded?
Why would indecency
Be applauded?
Why would the crucifixion of a saint
Be that lauded?

P:- That can be answered...

Thusly!

Slander is seek laughing
Drissy drissmess crussinny

Oose infenny fennient
Lexsadoo insenkufees
Koox lurkinoolly nal freedoms
Oon ra skrenk crusinifix

W:- Huh? Wha'?

That's total nonsense!?

P:- Well, of course!

But surely nonsense
Is of meaning!
Surely absurdity
Is appealing!
Surely this celebration of our Loose
Is revealing!

W:- That is discounted...

Thusly!

Nonsense is the sense
Behind slander;
Absurdity is absolving
Of indecency;
Absurdity and nonsense then must be
Slander and indecency!

P:- Well...

If you want it wholly wholesome...

Go out into the world,
Give up your Artisanship,
Become a Journeyman,
Slander slander,

Denounce indecency,
Make sense of nonsense,
Abhor absurdity.
(He's giving up his rank
To go wander pointlessly
And leave our Loose unchallenged...)

W:- I'll go into the world,

Give up my Artisanship,
Become a Journeyman,
Slander slander,
Denounce indecency,
Make sense of nonsense,
Abhor absurdity.

W:- I'm giving up my rank

To go out into the world
And make it wholly wholesome!!

P:- He's giving up his rank

To go out into the world
And make it wholly wholesome!!

ORDEAL II – PART 1

A bucolic scene, stylised, as if from a fairytale. Wet is wandering around aimlessly.

P:- *(a little closer to the action than before)*

So Wet went a-wandering
And immediately
Met an unwhole someone
Wholly in need of help

V:- I am the local
Baker's wife
P:- (Who looks suspiciously like
The Grand Master...)
V:- With a tale
Of unwholesomeness
P:- (Retold here
In unhappy detail)
V:- In fenny fennient lexsadoo...
Insenkufees koox...
Oon ra skrenk...
W:- Hmm, sounds like...
A nasty yeast infection
V:- Will you then seek justice
On my behalf
As you journey, Journeyman?
W:- I will

Wet wanders aimlessly.

P:- So Wet once more wandered
Until he ran across
Another unwhole someone
Wholly in need of help

V:- I am the local
Milkmaid's milker
P:- (Who looks surprisingly like
The baker's wife...)
V:- With a tale

Of unwholesomeness
P:- (Retold here
In unholy detail)
V:- Is seek laughing...
Drissy drismess oose...
Lurkinoolly nal freed...
P:- Ugh, oh dear...
A shame she creamed so poorly
V:- Will you then seek justice
On my behalf
As you journey, Journeyman?
W:- I will

Wet wanders aimlessly.

P:- So Wet once more wandered
Until he realised he,
A humble Journeyman,
Could make no one whole.

W:- I must return
To the fold of my Guild,
And appeal
To Loose, my former peer,
For the justice
She as a Master can give.

ORDEAL II – PART 2

The Guildhall once again, with Loose seated prominently, clearly now someone of import. Wet enters with purpose and takes up an oratory stance. As he recounts it, Wet might also act out his tale, with the help of the Baker's Wife / Milkmaid's Milker (V).

P:- *(a little closer to the action than before)*

So an Ingestion Ordeal,
Where Loose must swallow whole
The sinfulness of the world,
Or choke in the attempt.

W:- Goodly Master,

I went out into the world
To make it wholly wholesome,
And uncovered
Injustices unholy;
Good people's lives unhinged
Through happenstance
Unhappy and unsought-for.
I tell their history now
So you might help-
Through your Masterful goodness-
To make lives made unhappy
Whole once more.

L:- Go on. (This should be fun...)

W:- Let's begin with our baker,

L:- (Oh, I've done him...)

W:- A fine bread-maker

Who filled bellies with wholesomeness.

L:- (And my hole with his dough...)

W:- One morning, his fresh sweetbread

Had a sour taste,

As if it were off,

L:- (From us doing it in the flour...)

W:- And those who'd eaten some

Found their bellies expanding,

Till the swelling

Became so extreme,

L:- (The way swellings should always be...)

They collapsed from the pain.

By sundown, the poor baker

Was in prison

For mass poisoning,

Leaving mounds of dough unleavened

L:- (And my buns underdone...)

W:- With the baker not baking

our staple bread,

The local milkmaid

Filled up stomachs with cheesiness,

L:- (And my mouth with her cream...)

W:- But those who ate her cheddar

Found both their thighs

Beginning to rot.

L:- (From VDs I'd given the cows...)

W:- And mad from the scratching,

They ran the comely milkmaid

L:- (Post-spanking...)

W:- Out of town for good.

L:- (Leaving me to cream-cheese myself...)

W:- So baker and milkmaid,

Both victims of unfair happenstance;

Will you help them

To win back their happy lives?

ORDEAL II – PART 3

Her internal conflict clearly visible, Loose makes her way towards the Guildhall's central podium.

L:- It is my fault

The rolled-in flour turned horribly sour

And the cows' udders ulcered.

It is my fault

The cheddar caused itchy, rotting thighs

And the sweetbread made bellies

Bloat extremely.

It is my fault the baker was gaoled

And the milkmaid ran off.

It is my fault

Their once happy lives are now unhinged.

It is my fault all now pine

For bread and cheese.

Having reached the podium, Loose furiously turns on Perforated. In his agitation, Perforated moves back and forth between diegetic and non-diegetic space.

How could you do this?!

P:- Who, me?

L:- How could you

Leave me to face my sins?!

P:- I would never!

L:- Let these words of truth

Ring on

In my ears?!

P:- I don't hear any truth!

L:- Leave me helpless

With the sign of light

Shining

In my eyes?!

P:- I don't see any sign!

L:- How could you let

Tales of bread and cheese

Pass so

Painfully

Through my gullet and throat

P:- It was all him!

L:- How could you leave me

Trembling

Timidly

Like a frail Aspen leaf

P:- It was all his idea!

L:- How could you let him

Vomit forth

My sins!?

P:- He alone forced on you...

L:- Those acts of mine

That have made the world...

P:- This trial...

L:- Unwholesome!?

P:- This Ingestion Ordeal!

Loose visibly calms down with Perforated's help.

Perforated eventually returns to his former, less diegetic position. Loose moves away from the podium..

L:- So baker and milkmaid

Both victims of their own haplessness;

It is their fault

They have lost their happy lives.

ORDEAL II – PART 4

Wet moves to his study-like alcove.

P:- *(a little closer to the action than before)*

So Loose wins this Ordeal,

Having stomached her sins,

Leaving Wet to bemoan

His misleading gut feelings.

W:- Slander is forever

Rewarded.

Indecency's always,

Against all moral reason,

Applauded.

Crucifixion of saints

Is lauded

By our Masters,

Against honest, upright conduct

Played out by bakers

For our Masters

Who don't uphold it.

Slander is forever

Rewarded.

Against what I thought I knew

Of morality and reason

Against what I had believed

Of honest, upright conduct

Against what I had pledged to do:

Make the whole world wholly wholesome.

Indecency's always

Applauded.

Crucifixion of saints,

Played out by milkmaids

For our Masters,

Is lauded

By a wholly unwholesome world

ORDEAL III – PART 1

The alcove with the pole. Perforated is close to being part of the action.

L:- How could he do this?

P:- I know!

L:- How could he

Force me to face my sins?

P:- He should suffer.

L:- I will make him

A lowly Apprentice

And myself

Grand Master.

P:- He'll be humiliated.

L:- And yet,

That's not enough.

P:- He should suffer more.

L:- But how?

P:- Take your favourite

Local tartlet...

V:- (Who looks shockingly like

The milkmaid's milker)

P:- A Master

V:- (Or Mistress)

P:- Of seduction,

Make her respectable...

V:- I'll call myself

Emma of Normandy!

P:- Send her off to tempt him

V:- Through flesh!

P:- And heart...

V:- And soul!

P:- And then,

When love's ambition

Has blossomed fully...

Reveal your cunning trickery!

L,P,V:- Once an Artisan

Then a Journeyman

Now an Apprentice

And on top of that,

Betrayed by love!

He will suffer dreadfully!

Peals of laughter from all.

ORDEAL III – PART 2

The bucolic scene. Wet is wandering aimlessly, unaware of the dramatic entrance of Emma of Normandy (V).

P:- So an Ordeal of Fire,

Where Wet must stay frigid

Before love's advances,

Or be flayed by the heat.

V:- Oh,

Most wondrous of Wets,

I've found you at last!

W:- Huh?

V:- I,
Emma of Normandy,
Love you beyond reason!

W:- What?

V:- Do you not love me?

W:- No,
I don't even know you.
I don't want to know you.
Right?

V:- Well,
Let me warm you now
With love's ambition!

W:- Wait...

V:- I'll love you like I loved
The saucy Peter Bartholomew:
Caressing, stroking,
Embracing your Holy Spear!
Are you not tempted
By my ravishing tits!?

W:- Once an Artisan,
Then a Journeyman,
Now an Apprentice:
I can't be tempted
By flesh's ambition.

V:- I'll love you like I loved
My husbands, Aethelred and Cnut:
Licking and tasting,

Sucking up wifely chores!
Are you,
Are you not tempted
By my conjugal bits!?

W:- Once a Journeyman,
Now an Apprentice:
I can't be tempted
By hearts' ambition.

V:- I'll love you like I loved
The wise Bishop of Winchester:
Consuming, devouring
Your moral authority.
Are you,
Are you not tempted,
Not tempted
By my holy writs!?

W:- Now an Apprentice:
I can't be tempted
By souls' ambition.

V:- I'll love you like I loved
Before tragedy ruined my life!
Thrice-ravaged, twice-widowed,
Abandoned by my children,
I'm now,
I'm now not tempting,
Not tempting,

I'm now not tempting,
Beyond tits, bits and writs.

W:- Oh,

Most pitiful Emma,
Love's found me at last!
Ah,
This,
Your sad patheticness,
Is compelling indeed!

V:- So,

You do now love me?

W:- Yes!

Flesh, heart and soul are naught
To melancholic spleen!

W,V:- Love!

Love!
Let's warm each other
With love's ambition!
Love!

ORDEAL III – PART 3

Same location. Loose enters, laughing with great abandon. Perforated appears to be part of the action now.

P:- So Loose wins this Ordeal,

L:- (*interrupting*)

Having taken revenge
On a self-righteous Wet
With a tartlet's false love

Ah yes,
Now love's ambition
Has blossomed fully,
I shall reveal our trickery!

L,P,V:- Her flesh is used up,
Her heart is hollow,
Her soul is for sale;
A local tartlet
Is your lover!
You'll now suffer dreadfully!

Peals of laughter from all except Wet.

W: Hollow, used up, for sale
Her affections might be,
But my love has no price,
And is given freely.
Love!
Love!
I'll warm her always
With love's ambition!
Love!

The conspirators are stunned into silence. Loose stares long and hard at Wet, then Perforated, then the Local Tartlet, looking for someone to blame...

1:- How could you do this?!

4:- Who, me?

1:- How could you...?

INTERLUDE II

Loose chases the Local Tartlet with murderous intent.

Wet makes some well-intentioned if insipid attempts to stop Loose, but she eventually catches and graphically murders the Tartlet.

ORDEAL IV – PART 1

The Guildhall once again, with the Grand High Master (V) seated prominently. Perforated enters, clearly now a full-blown participant in the action.

P:- So Loose has crossed a line,
According to Guild law,
With dire consequences
From which I must shield her.

Grand Master

(Who looks stunningly like
The local tartlet.)

V:- Now Grand High Master

P:- (Or Mistress...)

I plead for your help
On behalf of Loose

V:- Who is Loose?

P:- More Sin than Art...

V:- More Loose than Wet!

Yes, of course

P:- Who's tactlessly killed

A local tartlet

In the heat

Of love's ambition

V:- What carnality!

P:- And with that,

Guilelessly broken

The law of the Guild

V:- Which is naught

To ambition's whims!

Bring much-favoured Loose

Before me,

And I shall fashion

A defence for her.

Perforated gestures for Loose to enter, which she does, with Wet in tow. Suddenly, the Grand High Master is struck by a realisation. (S)he makes her way towards the Guildhall's central podium.

V:- Wait! You say

She tactlessly killed

A local tartlet

P:- That is true.

V:- Which local tartlet?

L:- Ravishing tits,

Conjugal bits,

P:- With a side of holy writs

V:- No, it can't be! Not

Emma of Normandy?

L,W,P,I:- That's the one.

V:- She's my favourite

Local tartlet,

A Master...

P:- (Or Mistress)

V:- Of seduction!

Having reached the podium, the Grand Master furiously turns on Loose.

How could you do this?!

L:- Who, me?

V:- How could you

Leave me without her sins?!

L:- I would never!

V:- Let my appetites

Wither,

Unsated?!

L:- It was all him!

V:- How could you leave me

Without such

Delights!?

L:- It was all his doing!

V:- Those acts of hers

That have made my world...

L:- His fault...

V:- So wholesome!?

L:- His spleen's ambition!

V:- One of you

Killed this local tartlet,

Prime source of my pleasure.

Judge and jury

I'll now be for the trial

Of Loose and Wet.

ORDEAL IV – PART 2

The formal, game show-like arrangement within the Guildhall.

P:- So an Ordeal of Water...

V:- (*interrupting*)

Where submersion of both

In love's heat and cold law

Will flush out the guilty.

Which of you,

Loose or Wet

Adored this local tartlet

Like I did?

From the Lex Salica...

From Vita Aethelstani's dooms...

I draw my judgment...

L:- In fenny fennient lexsadoo...

Insenkufees koox...

Oon ra skrenk...

V:- Both grasped at

The hearthstone of my love

Through boiling sentiment.

One untouched;
One writhing in pain
Burning with guilt.

And that one...
Is you, Loose!

Loose goes crazy. Perforated attempts to calm her down, while also appealing to the Grand High Master on her behalf.

L:- I'm not this Ordeal's loser
I have another chance.
Submerginisation!

W:- She is this Ordeal's loser
Loose needs no other chance.
Submerginisation!

P,I:- She's not this Ordeal's loser
Loose has another chance.
Submerginisation!

Loose regains her composure.

V:- Which of you,
Loose or Wet,
Upturned my pleasure's mandate
Through murder.

From Ur-Nammu's tablets...
From the Code of Hammurabi...

I draw my judgment...
L:- Is seek laughing...
Drissy drismess oose...
Lurkinoolly nal freed...

V:- Both held down
In icy depths of law
Welling out from my whims.
One untouched;
One thrashing about,
Drowning in guilt.

And that one...
Is you, Loose!

Loose completely loses it. Perforated attempts to calm her down, to no avail.

L:- I'm not this Ordeal's loser
I need another chance.
Submerginisation!

W:- You are this Ordeal's loser
You have no other chance.
Submerginisation!

P,I:- You're not this Ordeal's loser
You need another chance.
Submerginisation!

In her rage and panic, Loose throws Perforated to the ground. Wet tries to help him, but Perforated,

*humiliated, bites (at) him. Loose and Wet leave
Perforated where he lies and take up their positions from
the opera's opening.*

Embody sin and saintliness
In their eternal struggle.

REVELATION

L,W:- We, Loose and Wet, endured;

An Ordeal of the Cross;

An Ordeal of Ingestion;

An Ordeal of Fire;

An Ordeal of Water;

For the chance

L,W,V:- To be made whole...

L,W:- Only to find,

Like this sad creature here,

We are not whole

But wholly

L,W,V:- Perforated.

TRANSFORMATION

*As if in solemn ritual, Loose takes up Perforated's very
first position in the opera; Wet takes up Loose's first
position; Perforated takes up Wet's first position; and the
Grand High Master exits gracefully.*

POSTAMBLE

The original sacred space.

L:- Saints, Sinners, All and Singular!

This is a morality play,

Whose protagonists, Loose And Wet,