

MY KINSMAN, MAJOR MOLINEUX

Robert Lowell

CHARACTERS

ROBIN	MAJOR MOLENEUX
BOY (his brother)	TWO REDCOATS
FERRYMAN	TWO BARBERS
MAN WITH MASK (Colonel Greenough)	TAVERN KEEPER
CLERGYMAN	MAN WITH LIBERTY BOWL
MAN IN PERIWIG	WATCHMAN
PROSTITUTE	CITIZENS OF BOSTON

THE SCENE

Boston, just before the American Revolution.

To the left of the stage, Robin, a young man barely eighteen, in a coarse grey coat, well-worn but caregully repaired, leather breeches, blue yarn stockings, and a worn three-cornered hat. He carries a heavy oak-sapling cudgel and has a wallet slung over his shoulder. Beside him, his brother, a Boy of ten or twelve, dressed in the same respectable but somewhat rustic manner. On the far left of the stage, the triangular prow of a dory; beside it, a huge Ferryman holding an upright oar. He has a white curling beard. Lined across the stage and in the style of a primitive New England sampler, are dimly seen miniature houses: a barber shop, a tavern, a white church, a shabby brick house with a glass bay window, and a pillared mansion, an official's house, on its cornice the golden lion and unicorn of England. The houses are miniature, but their doors are man-size. Only Robin, his Brother, and the Ferryman are lit up.

ROBIN Here's my last crown, your double price  
for ferrying us across the marsh  
at this ungodly hour.

FERRYMAN A crown!  
Do you want me to lose my soul?  
Do you see King George's face?  
judging us on this silver coin?  
I have no price.

ROBIN You asked for double.

FERRYMAN I'll take the crown for your return trip. (TAKES THE COIN.) No one  
returns.

ROBIN No one?

FERRYMAN No one.  
Legs go round in circles here.  
This is the city of the dead.

ROBIN What's that?

FERRYMAN I said this city's Boston,  
No one begs here. Are you deaf?  
(THE LITTLE HOUSES ON STAGE LIGHT UP, THEN DIM OUT.)

ROBIN (TO THE FERRYMAN.) Show me my kinsman's mansion. You  
must know him Major Molineux,  
the most important man in town.

FERRYMAN The name's familiar...Molineux...  
Wasn't he mixed up with the French?  
He's never at home now. If you'll wait  
here, you'll meet him on his rounds.  
All our important people drift  
sooner or later to my ferry landing,  
and stand here begging for the moon.  
You'll see your cousin. You're well-placed.

ROBIN I know it. My kinsman's a big man here.  
He told me he would make my fortune;  
I'll be a partner in his firm,  
either here or in London.

Seminario Multidisciplinario  
José Emilio González

SMJEG

Facultad de Humanidades  
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FERRYMAN Settle for London, that's your city, Boy. Majors are still sterling silver across the waters. All the English-born suddenly seem in love with London. Your cousin's house here is up for sale.

ROBIN He cares for England. Rule Britannia, that's the tune he taught me. I'm surprised he's leaving.

FERRYMAN He's surprised! He seemed to belong here once. He wished to teach us Rule Britannia, but we couldn't get it through our heads. He gave us this to keep us singing. (THE FERRYMAN HOLDS UP A BOILED LOBSTER.)

ROBIN You're joking, it's a lobster.

FERRYMAN No. Look, it's horny, boiled and red, it is the Major's spitting image. (ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STAGE, TWO BRITISH REDCOATS ARE SEEN MARCHING SLOWLY IN STEP WITH SHOULDERED MUSKETS. RULE BRITANNIA PLAYED FAINTLY.)

FERRYMAN (POINTING TO SOLDIERS.) Here are the Major's chicken lobsters.

ROBIN Our soldiers!

FERRYMAN We call them lobsterbacks. They are the Major's privates. Wherever they are gathered together, he is present. You'll feel his grip behind their claws. What are you going to do now: run home to Deerfield, take a ship for England, Boy, or chase the soldiers?

ROBIN Why, I'm staying here. I like soldiers. They make me feel at home. They kept the Frenchmen out of Deerfield. They'll tell me where my kinsman lives.

FERRYMAN The French are finished. The British are the only Frenchmen left. Didn't you say your cousin's name was Molineux?

ROBIN He's Norman Irish. Why are you leaving?

FERRYMAN Money. The soldiers make me pay them for the pleasure of shuttling them across the marsh. Run, Boy, and catch those soldiers' scarlet coat-tails, while they're still around. (THE FERRYMAN GOES OFF PUSHING HIS BOAT. ROBIN AND THE BOY ADVANCE TOWARDS THE SOLDIERS.)

ROBIN I need your help, Sirs.

FIRST SOLDIER (SMILING.) We are here for services, that's our unpleasant duty.

ROBIN I liked the way the soldiers smiled. I wonder how anyone could distrust a soldier.

BOY We've lost our guide.

ROBIN We'll find another.

BOY Why did that boatman gnash his teeth at Cousin Major?

ROBIN He was cold.  
That's how big city people talk.  
Let's walk. We're here to see the city.  
(AS ROBIN AND THE BOY START MOVING, THE MINIATURE HOUSES LIGHT UP ONE BY ONE AND THEN GO DARK. A BARBER COMES OUT OF THE BARBER SHOP, HE HOLDS A RAZOR, AND A BOWL OF SUDS. A TAVERN KEEPER ENTERS HOLDING A NEWSPAPER.)

BARBER (CUTTING AWAY THE SUDS WITH HIS RAZOR.)  
That's how we shave a wig.

TAVERN KEEPER You mean  
a Tory.

BARBER Shave them to the bone!

TAVERN KEEPER (POINTING TO NEWSPAPER.)  
Here's the last picture of King George;  
He's passed another tax on tea.

BARBER Health to the King, health to the King!  
Here's rum to drown him in the tea!  
(DRENCHES THE NEWSPAPER WITH HIS MUG.)  
(A CLERGYMAN, WHITE-WHIGGED, ALL IN BLACK, COMES OUT OF THE CHURCH.)

CLERGYMAN What an ungodly hour! The city's  
boiling. All's rum and revolution.  
We have an everlasting city,  
but here in this unsteady brightness,  
nothing's clear, unless the Lord  
enlighten us and show the winner!  
(A PROSTITUTE COMES OUT OF THE BAY-WINDOE HOUSE. SHE WEARS A RED SKIRT  
AND A LOW, FULL-BOSOMED WHITE BLOUSE.)

PROSTITUTE Here in the shadow of the church,  
I save whatever God despises—  
Whig or Tory, saint or sinner,  
I'm their refuge from the church.  
(THE PILLARED MANSION LIGHTS UP. A MAN COMES OUT IN A BLUE COAT AND  
WHITE TROUSERS LIKE GENERAL WASHINGTON'S. HE WEARS A GRAYISH MASK COVERED  
WITH POCKS. HIS FOREHEAD JUTS OUT AND DIVIDES IN A DOUBLE BULGE. HIS NOSE  
IS A YELLOW EAGLE'S BEAK. HIS EYES FLASH LIKE FIRE IN A CAVE. HE LOOKS  
AT HIMSELF IN A MIRROR.)

MAN WITH MASK My mind's on fire. This fire will burn  
the pocks and paleness from my face.  
Freedom has given me this palace.  
I'll go and mingle with the mob.  
(NOW THE HOUSES ARE DARK. ROBIN RUBS HIS EYES IN A DAZE, STARES INTO  
THE DARKNESS, THEN TURNS TO HIS BROTHER.)

BOY Who are these people, Brother Robin?  
We're in the dark and far from Deerfield.

ROBIN We're in the city, little brother.  
Things will go smoother when we find  
our kinsman, Major Molineux.

BOY Our kinsman isn't like these people.  
He is a loyal gentleman.

ROBIN We'll see. He swore he'd make my fortune,  
and teach you Latin.

BOY I want something.

ROBIN Let's see the city.

BOY I want a flintlock.  
(A MAN ENTERS FROM THE RIGHT. HE WEARS A FULL GRAY PERIMIG, A WIDESKIRTED  
COAT OF DARK CLOTH AND SILK STOCKING ROLLED UP ABOVE THE KNEES. HE CARRIES  
A POLISHED CANE WHICH HE DIGS ANGRILY INTO THE GROUND AT EVERY STEP.)

"HEM, HEM," HE SAYS IN A SEPULCHRAL VOICE AS HE WALKS OVER TO THE BARBER SHOP. THE TWO BARBERS APPEAR, ONE WITH A RAZOR, THE OTHER WITH A BOWL OF SUDS.)

MAN IN PERIWIG Hem! Hem!

ROBIN Good evening, honored sir.  
Help us. We come from out of town.

MAN IN PERIWIG A good face and a better shoulder!  
Hem, hem! I see you're not from Boston.  
We need good stock in Boston. You're lucky!  
meeting me here was providential.  
I'm on the side of youth. Hem, hem!  
I'll be your guiding lamp in Boston.  
Where do you come from?

ROBIN Deerfield.

MAN IN PERIWIG Deerfield!  
Our bulwark from the savages!  
Our martyred village! He's from Deerfield,  
Barber. We can use his muscle.

BARBER You can feel it.

MAN IN PERIWIG (SEEING THE BOY.) Look, a child!

BARBER Shall I shave him?

MAN IN PERIWIG Yes, shave him.  
Shave him and teach him to beat a drum.

BOY I want a flintlock.

MAN IN PERIWIG A gun! You scare me!  
Come on Apollo, we must march.  
We'll put that shoulser to the wheel.  
Come, I'll be your host in Boston.

ROBIN I have connections here, a Kinsman...

MAN IN PERIWIG Of course you have connections here.  
They will latch on to you like fleas.  
This is your town! Boy! With that leg  
You will find kinsmen on the moon.

ROBIN My kinsman's Major Molineux.

MAN IN PERIWIG Your kinsman's Major Molineux!  
Let go my coat cuff, Fellow. I have  
authority, authority!  
Hem! Hem! Respect your betters. You leg  
will be acquainted with the stocks  
by peep of day! You fellows help me!  
Barber, this man's molesting me!

FIRST BARBER (CLOSING IN.) Don't hit His Honor, Boy!

SECOND BARBER His Honor  
is a lover of mankind!

BOY Brain him with your cudgel, Robin!

ROBIN Come, Brother, we will see the city;  
they're too many of them and one has a razor.

(ROBIN AND THE BOY BACK OFF. BARBER SHOP GOES DARK.)

BOY Who was that fellow, Brother Robin?

ROBIN He is some snotty, county clerk,  
chipping and chirping at his betters.  
He isn't worth the Major's spit.

BOY You should have brained him with your stick.

ROBIN Let's go, now. We must see the city  
and try to find our kinsman's house.  
I am beginning to think he's out  
of town. Look, these men will help us.  
(THE TAVERN LIGHTS UP. A SIGN WITH KING GEORGE III'S HEAD HANGS IN FRONT.  
THERE'S A POSTER NAILED TO THE DOOR. THE MAN WITH THE MASK STROLLS OVER  
AND SITS IN THE CHAIR.)

CROWD Health to the rattlesnake. A health  
to Colonel Greenough! He's our man!

MAN WITH MASK A shine, men, you must shine my shoes  
so bright King George will see his face  
flash like a guinea on the toe.

CROWD Health to the rattlesnake!

TAVERN KEEPER (TURNING TO ROBIN.) You boys  
are from the country, I presume.  
I envy you, you're seeing Boston  
for the first time. Fine town, there's lots  
to hold you, English monuments,  
docks, houses, and a feet of tea-ships  
begging for buyers. I trust you'll stay;  
nobody ever leaves this city.

ROBIN We come from Deerfield.

TAVERN KEEPER Then you'll stay;  
no Indians scalp us in our beds;  
our only scalper is this man here.  
(GENERAL LAUGHTER.)

ROBIN Our massacre was eighty years  
ago. We're not frontiersmen now,  
we've other things to talk about.

BARBER He has other things to talk about.  
This boy's a gentleman. He is  
no redskin in a coonskin cap.

ROBIN I'm on our willage council. I've  
read Plutarch.

TAVERN KEEPER You ate an ancient Roman.  
You'll find you like our commonwealth.  
I crave the honor of your custom.  
I've whiskey, gin and rum and beer,  
and a spruce beer for your brother.

BOY I want a real beer.

BARBER Give them beer.  
(SHOUTING.)

TAVERN KEEPER Two real beers for the Deerfield boys,  
they have the fighting Deerfield spirit.

ROBIN I'm sure you'll trust me for your money.  
I have connections here in Boston.  
my kinsman's Major Molineux.  
I spent our money on this journey.

MAN His kinsman's Major Molineux:  
sometimes a boy is short of money!  
(LAUGHTER.)

MAN (BRINGING OUT A SILVER LIBERTY BOWL.) I've something stronger than beer.  
Here is the Bowl of Liberty.  
The Major dropped this lobster in  
the bowl. It spikes the drink.  
Man puts down his mug and lifts a lobster out of bowl.  
(CHEERS.)

ROBIN I know  
the lobster is a British soldier.

MAN Yes, there they are.  
(THE TWO REDCOATS MARCH ON STAGE AS BEFORE. SILENCE. THE MAN WITH THE  
MASK STARTS WRITING ON A BENCH. THE SOLDIERS SAUNTER OVER TO HIM.)

FIRST  
SOLDIER What are you writing, Colonel Greenough?

MAN WITH  
MASK My will.

FIRST  
SOLDIER Things aren't that desperate.

MAN WITH  
MASK I'm adding up my taxes, Redcoat.  
Just counting up the figures kills me.  
My bankers say I'm burning money.  
I can't afford your bed and board  
and livery, Soldiers. We'll have to part.

SECOND  
SOLDIER I've had enough. We ought to throw  
them all in jail.

FIRST  
SOLDIER Go easy.

ROBIN (WALKING SHYLY UP TO SOLDIERS.) Sir,  
I need your guidance, I'm looking for  
my kinsman, Major Molineux.

FIRST  
SOLDIER With your words!

SECOND  
SOLDIER Damn your insolence!

FIRST  
SOLDIER We'll haul you to the Major's court.  
(SHOTS AND SCREAMS OFF STAGE. SOLDIERS LEAVE ON THE RUN.)

MAN (POINTING TO ROBIN.) He's one of us.

SECOND  
MAN He is a spy.

CROWD Both boys are spies or Tories.

TAVERN  
KEEPER (DRAWING ROBIN OVER TO THE POSTER.) Look,  
do you see this poster? It says,  
"Indentured servant, Jonah Hudge:  
ran from his master's house, blue vest,  
oak cudgel, leather pants, small brother,  
and his master's third best hat.  
Pound sterling's offered any man  
who nabs and lodges him in jail."  
Trodge off, Young Man, You'd better trudge!

CROWD Trudge, Jonah Hudge, you'd better trudge!

BOY They're drunk. You'd better hit them, Robin.

ROBIN They'd only break my stick and brains.

BOY For God's sake stand and be a man!

ROBIN No, they're too many, little brother.  
Come, I feel like walking.  
We haven't seen the city yet.  
(LIGHTS GO OFF. ROBIN AND BOY STAND ALONE.)

BOY We haven't seen our kinsman, Robin.  
I can't see anything.

ROBIN You'd think  
the Major's name would stand us for  
a beer. It's a funny thing, Brother, naming  
our kinsman, Major Molineux,  
sets all these people screaming murder.  
Even the soldiers.  
(THE HOUSE WITH THE BAY-WINDOW LIGHTS UP. A WOMAN'S RED SKIRT AND BARE  
SHOULDERS ARE CLEARLY VISIBLE THROUGH THE WINDOW. SHE IS SINGING.)

WOMAN Soliders, sailors.  
Whig and Tories, saints and sinners,  
I'm your refuge from despair.

ROBIN (KNOCKS.) Sweete, pretty mistress, help me. I  
am tired and lost. I'm looking for  
my kinsman, Major Molineux.  
You have bright eyes.

WOMAN I know your kinsman.  
Everybody is my kinsman here.

ROBIN Yes, I am sure. You have kind eyes.  
My kinsman is a blood relation.

WOMAN You're my blood relation too then.  
What a fine back and leg you have!  
You're made right.

ROBIN Oh, I will be made  
when I find my kinsman. You  
must know him, he's a man of some  
importance in your city, Lady.

WOMAN The Major dwells here.

ROBIN You're thinking of some other major,  
Lady; mine is something more  
important than a major, he's  
a sort of royal governor,  
and a man of fortune. Molineux  
tea ships sail from here to China.  
He has a gilded carriage, twenty  
serving men, two flags of England  
flying from his lawn. You could hide  
your little house behind a sofa  
in his drawing-room.

WOMAN I know,  
your kinsman is a man of parts,  
that's why he likes to camp here. Sometimes  
his greatness wearies him. These days  
even kings draw in their horns,  
and mingle with the common people.  
Listen, you'll hear him snoring by  
the roof.

ROBIN I hear a hollow sound.  
My kinsman must be happy here.  
I envy him this hideaway.

WOMAN You mean to say you envy him  
the mistress of his house. Don't worry,  
a kinsman of the Major's is  
my kinsman. I knew you right away.  
You have your kinsman's leg and shoulders.  
He wears an old three-cornered hat  
and leather small-clothes here in the rain.  
Why, you are the good old gentleman,  
only you're young! What is this cloth?  
You've good material on your leg.  
(THE WOMAN FEELS THE CLOTH OF ROBIN'S TROUSERS.)

ROBIN It's deerskin. I'm from Deerfield, Lady.

WOMAN You must be starved. I'll make you happy.

ROBIN I'll wait here on your doorstep, Lady.  
Run up and tell the Major that  
his Deerfield cousins are in town.

WOMAN The Major'd kill me, if I woke him.  
You see, he spilled a little too much  
rum in his tea.

ROBIN I'll leave a note then. I must go,  
my little brother needs some sleep.  
(WOMAN TAKES ROBIN'S HAT AND TWIRLS IT ON HER FINGER.)  
What are you doing with my hat?

WOMAN I'm showing you our Boston rites  
of hospitality. The Major  
would kill me, if I turned you out  
on such a night. I even have  
a downstairs bedroom for your brother.  
I find a playroom comes in handy.

BOY I want to go with Robin.

WOMAN Oh, dear,  
children keep getting me in trouble.  
We have a law.  
(A BELL IS HEARD OFF STAGE.)  
Mother of God!  
(THE WOMAN DUCKS INTO HER HOUSE  
HER LIGHT GOES OUT.)

BOY Why did the lady slam her door?

ROBIN The bell reminded her of something.  
She has to catch up on her sleep.

BOY Has the Major left his mansion?  
Is he really sleeping here?

ROBIN How can I tell you? Everyone  
answers us in riddles.

BOY She said,  
the Major dwells here.

ROBIN That's her city  
way of being friendly, Brother.

BOY Robin, the Major could afford  
to buy the lady better clothes.  
She was almost naked.

ROBIN She  
was dressed unwisely.

BOY Isn't Eve  
almost naked in our Bible?



ROBIN Don't ask so many questions, brother.  
I wish I knew the naked truth.  
(A WATCHMAN ENTERS, DISHEVELLED AND YAWNING. HE HOLDS A LANTERN WITH  
A BELL TIED TO IT AND A SPIKED STAFF.)

WATCHMAN Stop, we don't allow this sort  
of talk about the Bible here.

ROBIN You are mistaken, Sir. I said  
I wished I knew the naked truth.

WATCHMAN You're in New England. Here we fine  
mothers for bearing naked children.  
You're leading this child into perdition.  
We have a fine for that. What's in  
your wallet, Boy?

ROBIN Nothing.

WATCHMAN Nothing! You've been inside then!

ROBIN Watchman, I'm looking for my kinsman.

WATCHMAN And you thought you'd find him in this house  
Doing his martial drill.

ROBIN You know him!  
My kinsman's Major Molineux.  
I see you know him, he will pay you  
if you will lead us to his house.

WATCHMAN (SINGING.)  
Your aunt's the lord high sheriff,  
your uncle is King George;  
if you can't pay the tariff;  
the house will let you charge.

ROBIN I asked for Major Molineux.

WATCHMAN Keep asking! We are cleaning house.  
The Major's lost a lot of money  
lately, buying bad real estate.  
He can't afford his country cousins.  
Hove, you filthy, sucking hayseed!  
or I'll spike you with my stick!

BOY Why don't you hit him, brother?

WATCHMAN I'll have  
you in the stocks by daybreak, Boy.

ROBIN We'll no, Sir. I'm your countryman  
learning the customs of the city.

WATCHMAN (GOES OFF SINGING)  
  
Baggy buttocks, baggy buttocks,  
The Queen of England's willing  
to serve you for a shilling  
And stick you in the stocks.

ROBIN We're learning  
how to live. The man was drunk.

BOY Our Deerfield watchmen only drink  
at communion. Something's wrong,  
these people need new blood.

ROBIN Perhaps  
they'll get it. Here's a clergyman,  
he'll tell us where to find our kinsman.  
(THE CLERGYMAN COMES ACROSS THE STAGE. HE IS AWKWARDLY HOLDING  
A LARGE ENGLISH FLAG ON A STAFF)

ROBIN Help me, I beg you, Reverend, Sir.  
I'm from Deerfield, I'm looking for  
my kinsman, Major Molineux.  
No one will tel me where he lives.

CLERGYMAN I have just left the Major's house.  
He is my patron and example.  
A good man it's a pity though  
he's so outspoken; other good men  
misunderstand the Major's meaning.  
He just handed me this British  
flag to put above my pulpit  
a bit outspoken!

ROBIN Our country's flag, Sir!

CLERGYMAN Yes, a bit outspoken. Come.  
I'll lead you to your kinsman's house.  
(THE MAN WITH THE MASK STRIDES HURRIEDLY ACROSS THE STAGE, AND UNROLLS  
A RATTLESNAKE FLAG, WHICH HE HANDS TO THE CLERGYMAN, WHO HAS DIFFICULTY  
IN MANAGING THE TWO FLAGS.)

MAN WITH MASK I have a present for you, Parson:  
our Rattlesnake. "Don't tread on me!"  
it says. I know you'd want to have one.  
Hang it up somewhere in church;  
there's nothing like the Rattlesnake  
for raising our declining faith.

CLERGYMAN I thank you, Sir.

MAN WITH MASK You'd better hurry.  
Think of the man who had no garment  
for the wedding. Things are moving.  
Man with Mask hurries off stage

CLERGYMAN (TO HIMSELF.) God help us, if we lose! (TURNS TO GO.)

ROBIN Sir, you're leaving! You promised me  
you'd lead me to my kinsman's house.  
Please, let me help you with the flags.

CLERGYMAN I'll see you later. I have to hurry.  
I have a sick parishioner,  
a whole sick parish! I have a notion  
one of these flags will cure us. Which?  
Everyone's so emphatic here.  
If you should meet your kinsman, tell him  
I'm praying for him in my church.  
(CLERGYMAN GOES OUT.)

(A LOUD "HEW, HEW" IS HEARD. THE MAN IN THE PERIWIG COMES JAUNTILY FOR-  
WARD FOLLOWED BY THE TWO BARBERS. HE GOES TO THE HOUSE WITH THE BAY-  
WINDOW AND RAPS WITH HIS CANE. THE LIGHT INSIDE THE HOUSE GOES ON. A  
RATTLESNAKE FLAG HAS BEEN NAILED TO THE DOOR. NO ONE SEES ROBIN AND THE  
BOY.)

FIRST BARBER Look, Your Honor, Mrs. Clark.  
has taken on the Rattlesnake.

MAN IN PERIWIG Good, this pricks my fainting courage.  
"Don't tread on me!" That's rather odd  
for Mrs. Clark.

FIRST BARBER Come on, your Honor.

SECOND BARBER There's always a first time.

FIRST BARBER Then a second.

MAN A PERIWIG Thank God, I've but one life to give  
my country.  
Lay on, Macduff! I owe this to  
my reputation, boys.

FIRST  
BARBER

He owes  
his reputation to the boys.

SECOND  
BARBER

Between the devil and the deep  
blue sea, Your Honor!

FIRST  
BARBER

His Honor likes  
the sea. Everyone loves a sailor.

MAN IN  
PERIWIG

Hurry! I'm in torture! Open!  
I have authority hem, hem!  
(MAN IN PERIWIG KNOCKS LOUDLY. THE WOMAN STANDS IN DOORWAY.)

WOMAN

(SINGING.)  
Where is my boy in leather pants,  
who gives a woman what she wants?

MAN IN  
PERIWIG

(SINGING IN FALSETTO.)  
Woman, I have a royal crown  
your countryman gave the ferryman  
a-standing on the strand;  
but money goes from hand to hand:  
the crown is on the town,  
the money's mine, I want to dine.  
Whatever we do is our affair,  
the breath of freedom's in the air.

FIRST  
BARBER

The lady's ballast's in the air.

SECOND  
BARBER

Two ten pound tea chests. The lady needs a little uplift from the clergy.

MAN IN  
PERIWIG

I'm breaking on the foamy breakers!  
Help! help!  
I wish my lady had a firm,  
hard-chested figure like a mast,  
but what has love to do with fact?  
A lover loves his nemesis;  
the patriotic act.  
(THE MAN IN THE PERIWIG GIVES THE LADY THE CROWN AND PASSES IN. THE LIGHTS  
GO OUT.)

BARBER

Once to every man and nation  
comes the time a gentleman  
wants to clear his reputation.

TAVERN  
KEEPER

Once to every man and nation  
comes the time a man's a man.

BARBER

His Honor's perished eon the blast.  
(THE BARBER SAUTERS OFF ALONG WITH TAVERN KEEPER. THE BOY TURNS TO ROBIN,  
WHO IS LOST IN THOUGHT.)

ROBIN

I think the Major  
has left. By watching I have learned  
to read the signs. The Rattlesnake  
means Major Molineux is out.  
A British flag means he's at home.

BOY

You talk in riddles like the town.

ROBIN

Say what you mean; mean what you say:  
that's how we used to talk in Deerfield.  
It's not so simple here in the city.  
The pillared mansion lights up. Robin and the Boy approach it. The Lion  
and Unicorn of England are gone. Instead, a large Rattle-snake flag is  
showing.  
Brother, we've reached our destination.  
This is our kinsman's house. I know it

from from the steel engraving that  
he gave us when he came to Deerfield.  
Our journey's over. Here's our mansion.

BOY Robin, it has a Rattlesnake.

ROBIN That means the Major's not at home.  
(THE MAN WITH THE MASK COMES OUT OF THE MANSION. HALF HIS FACE IS NOW  
FIERY RED, THE OTHER HALF IS STILL MOTTLED.)

MAN WITH  
MASK I am the man on horseback.

ROBIN No,  
you're walking, Sir.

MAN WITH  
MASK I am a king.

ROBIN The king's in England. You must be sick.  
Have you seen your face? Half's red,  
the other half is pocked and mottled.

MAN WITH  
MASK Oh I'm as healthy as the times.  
I am an image of this city.  
Do you see this colored handkerchief?  
(MAN WITH MASK DRAWS OUT A SMALL BRITISH FLAG.)

ROBIN Our British flag, Sir.

MAN WITH  
MASK Yes, it doesn't  
help my illness any more,  
when I try to cool my burning brow,  
or blow my nose on it.

ROBIN I know  
a man who used to own this house.  
Let's see if he's still here. Perhaps,  
my friend can help to heal your sickness.

MAN WITH  
MASK My face will be entirely red soon;  
then I'll be well. Who is your friend?

ROBIN A kinsman, Major Molineux.

MAN WITH  
MASK I have a fellow feeling for him.  
The Major used to own this house:  
now it's mine. I'm taking over,  
I've just signed the final deed.  
Do you see my nameplate on the gate?

ROBIN The Rattlesnake?

MAN WITH  
MASK The Rattlesnake.

ROBIN If I pick up the Rattlesnake,  
will it help me find my kinsman?  
I think he needs my help. We are  
his last relations in the world.

MAN WITH  
MASK The last shall be the first, my Boy.

ROBIN What do you mean? You talk like Christ.

MAN WITH  
MASK The first shall be the last, my Boy.  
The Major has a heavy hand;  
we have been beaten to the ground.

ROBIN My kinsman has an open hand.

MAN WITH MASK Ridden like horses, fleeced like sheep,  
worked like cattle, clothed and fed  
like hounds and hogs!

ROBIN I want to find him,

MAN WITH MASK Whipping-posts, gibbets, bastinadoes  
and the rack! I must be moving.

ROBIN Wait, I'll take up the Rattlesnake.  
Please, help me find my kinsman.  
(ROBIN TAKES HOLD OF THE MAN WITH THE MASK'S SHOULDER. THE MAN STEPS  
BACK AND DRAWS HIS SWORD.)

MAN WITH MASK Move!  
You've torn my cloak. You'd better keep  
a civil tongue between your teeth.  
I have a mission.  
(ROBIN RAISES HIS CUDGEL. HE AND THE MAN WITH THE MASK STAND A MOMENT  
FACING EACH OTHER.)

BOY Brain him, Robin.  
Mangle the bastard's bloody face.  
He doesn't like our kinsman, Robin.

ROBIN I only asked for information.

MAN WITH MASK For information! Information  
is my trade. I was a lawyer  
before I learned the pleasures of  
the military life. The Major  
was my first teacher. Now I know you!  
I met you at the tavern. You  
were short of cash then. Take this crown:  
drink to the Major, then a health  
to Greenough, and the Rattlesnake.  
To Grrenough!

ROBIN You're a fighter.

MAN WITH MASK I hate war, wars leave us whete  
they find us, don't they, boy?  
Let's talk about my health.

ROBIN Where can  
I find my kinsman?

MAN WITH MASK He owned this house.  
Men used to find him here all day,  
before the storms disturbed his judgment,  
He's out now ranging through the town,  
looking for new accommodations.  
Wait here. You'll meet him on his walk. (STRIDES OFF SINGING.)

The king is in his counting house;  
we're counting up his money.

BOY Why was that fellow's face half red now?  
He's changing color.

ROBIN I don't know.  
He is someone our of "Revelations" \_\_\_\_\_  
Hell revolting on its jailers.  
(THE CHURCH LIGHTS UP A LITTLE. ROBIN WALKS OVER TO IT, AND LOOKS IN A  
WINDOW.)  
Our church is empty, brother. Moonbeams  
are trembling on the snow-pure pews,  
the altar's drowned in radiant fog,  
a single restless ray has crept  
across the open Bible.

(TURNS TO A GRAVESTONE BY THE CHURCH.)

I'm lonely.

What's this? A gravestone? A grave? Whose grave?

I think the Major must have died:

everything tells me he is gone

and nothing is forever.

(TURNS BACK TO THE CHURCH.)

Brother,

the moon's the only worshipper!

(THE CLERGYMAN COMES OUT OF THE CHURCH. HE LAYS A WHITE CLAY PIPE ON THE STEPS AND HOLDS UP A LITTLE COLORED CELLULOID WHIRLIGIG.)

CLERGYMAN The wind has died.

ROBIN What are you doing?

CLERGYMAN I'm playing with this whirligig,  
and waiting to see which way the wind  
will veer. It's quite amusing, Son,  
trying to guess the whims of the wind.  
I am waiting for a sign.  
A strange thing for a modern churchman.

ROBIN My father says the Church a rock.

CLERGYMAN Yes, yes, a rock is blind. That's why  
I've shut my eyes.

ROBIN I see my father. He's the Deerfield  
minister, and Church of England.  
You remind me of my father.

CLERGYMAN Be careful, son. Call no man father:  
that's what we tell the Roman clergy;  
sometimes I think we go too far,  
they get their people out for Mass.

ROBIN Father, when I shut  
my eyes, I dream I'm back in Deerfield.  
The people sit in rows below  
the old oak; a horseman stops to water  
his horse and to refresh his soul.  
I hear my father holding forth  
tranksgiving, hope and all the mercies\_\_\_\_\_

CLERGYMAN Those village  
pastors! Once they used to preach  
as if the world were everlasting;  
each Sunday was longer than a summer!  
That's gone now. We have competition:  
taverns, papers, politics  
and trade. It takes a wolfhound now  
to catch a flock!

ROBIN Why are you waiting  
for the wind?

CLERGYMAN (TAKING UP TWO LITTLE FLAGS.) Do you see  
these two flags? One's the Union Jack,  
the other is the Rattlesnake.  
The wind will tell me which to fly.

ROBIN I'm thinking of the absent one.  
My kinsman, Major Holineux  
is absent. The storms have hurt his house  
lately. No one will help me find him.

CLERGYMAN Perhaps the wind will blow him back.

ROBIN I met a strange man, Colonel Greenough;  
Half of his face was red, and half  
was pocked. He said, "Wait here, and you  
will meet your kinsman on his walk."

CLERGYMAN You'd better wait here then. That red and pocked man tends to speak the truth.

ROBIN Why was his face two-colors, Father?

CLERGYMAN He is an image of the city.  
If his whole face turns red as blood,  
He'll have to fly the Rattlesnake.

ROBIN Say more about my kinsman, Father.  
You said he was your friend and patron.

CLERGYMAN Poor Holineux! he served the clergy  
somewhat better than this city.  
He had a special pew, you know.  
He used to set a grand example.

ROBIN He used to! You speak as if he were dead!

CLERGYMAN Men blamed me, but I liked to watch  
his red coat blazing like the sunset  
at Sunday morning service here.  
He was an easy-going fellow,  
a lover of life, no Puritan.  
He had invention, used to send  
two six foot Privates here to help  
with the collection. Yes, I had  
to like him. He had his flaws, of course.

ROBIN A red coat blazing like the sunrise,  
that's how the Major was in Deerfield;  
the gold lion of England shone  
on his gilded carriage. He had a little  
white scar like a question mark  
on his right cheek. He got it killing  
Frenchmen. He seemed to hold the world  
like a gold ball in the palm of his hand.  
Ours for the asking! All! We ate  
his last relations in the world!

CLERGYMAN No one will dispute your claim.

ROBIN The Major said he was the King's  
intelligence in Massachusetts.

CLERGYMAN No one will dispute his claim.  
What shall we do with people? They  
get worse and worse, but God improves.  
God was green in Moses' time;  
little by little though, he blossomed.  
First came the prophets, then our Lord,  
and then the Church.

ROBIN The Church?

CLERGYMAN The Church  
gets more enlightened every day.  
We've learned to disregard the law  
and look at persons. Who is my neighbor?  
Anyone human is my neighbor. Sometimes  
my neighbor is a man from Sodom.  
(GREAT NOISE OF SHOUTING. ALL FORMER CHARACTERS, EXCEPT THE MAN WITH  
THE MASK, PARADE ACROSS THE STAGE. MOST OF THEM HAVE RATTLESNAKE FLAGS.)

ROBIN Father, I see two clergymen,  
they're waving flags.

CLERGYMAN I see my sign. (SNAPS THE WHIRLIGIG WITH HIS THUMB.)  
Look, the wind has risen! Whenever  
the spirit calls me, I must follow.

CROWD Hurrah for the Republic!  
Down with Major Holineux!  
(THE PEOPLE SING A VERSE OF YANKEE DOODLE, AND DRAW COLONIEL GREENOUGH  
ON STAGE IN A RED, WHITE AND BLUE CART. HE STANDS UP AND DRAWS HIS SWORD.  
ONE CAN SEE THAT HIS FACE IS NOW ENTIRELY RED.)

MAN WITH MASK The die is cast! I say, the die is cast.

ROBIN Look at the Colonel, his whole face is red as blood!

MAN WITH MASK Major Molineux is coming.

CLERGYMAN Are you sure we're strong enough?

MAN WITH MASK Every British soldier in Boston is killed or captured.

CROWD Don't tread on me! Don't tread on me! Don't tread on me!

ROBIN What can I do to help my kinsman?

CLERGYMAN Swap your flag and save your soul.

ROBIN I want to save my kinsman, Father.

CLERGYMAN No, no, Son, do as I do. Here, hold this flag a moment, while I speak. (THE CLERGYMAN HANDS ROBIN HIS RATTLESHAKE FLAG, TOSSES AWAY THE WHIRLIGIG, BREAKS HIS CLAY PIPE, THEN TAKES A CHAIR AND STANDS ON IT WHILE HE ADDRESSES THE CROWD WITH BOTH HANDS RAISED. THROUGHOUT THE CROWD SCENE, ROBIN STANDS UNCONSCIOUSLY HOLDING THE FLAG AND SUFFERING.) How long, how long now, Men of Boston! You've faded the furious tyrant's trident, you've borne the blandishments of Sodom. The Day of Judgment is at hand, now we'll strip the scarlet whore, King George shall swim in scarlet blood, Now Nebuchadnezzar shall eat grass and die. How long! How long! O men of Boston, behave like men, if you are men! (THE PEOPLE CHEER AND TAKE THE CLERGYMAN ON THEIR SHOULDERS.) You've drawn the sword, Boys, throw away the scabbard! (THE CLERGYMAN DRAWS A SWORD AND THROWS DOWN THE SCABBARD. MANY OF THE PEOPLE, INCLUDING THE PROSTITUTE, DRAW SWORDS AND THROW THE SCABBARDS RATTLING ACROSS THE STAGE. THEY DRAW MAJOR MOLINEUX ON STAGE IN A RED CART. HE IS PARTLY TARRED AND FEATHERED; ONE CHEEK IS BLEEDING; HIS RED BRITISH UNIFORM IS TORN; HE SHAKES WITH TERROR.)

ROBIN Oh my kinsman, my dear kinsman, they have wounded you!

MAN WITH MASK Throw the boy from Deerfield out, he has no garment for our wedding.

CLERGYMAN No, let him stay, he is just a boy. (ROBIN, UNTHINKING, HOLDS THE FLAG IN FRONT OF HIM, WHILE HIS EYES ARE FIXED IN HORROR AND PITY ON THE FIGURE OF THE MAJOR. THE BOY, UNCONSCIOUSLY, TOO, MINGLES AMONG THE CROWD WITHOUT THINKING. SOMEONE ASKS HIM TO GIVE SOME DIRT TO THROW AT THE MAJOR AND HE UNTHINKINGLY PICKS UP SOME FROM A BASKET, AND HANDS IT TO THE TAVERN KEEPER, WHO THROWS IT AT THE MAJOR.)

ROBIN (WITH A LOUD CRY, BUT UNCONSCIOUSLY WAVING THE FLAG IN HIS GRIEF.) Oh my poor kinsman, you are hurt!

CROWD Don't tread on me! Don't tread on me! (THE MAJOR SLOWLY STAGGERS TO HIS FEET. SLOWLY HE STRETCHES OUT HIS RIGHT ARM AND POINTS TO ROBIN.)

MAJOR MOLINEUX Et tu, Brute!

TAVERN KEEPER The Major wants to teach us Latin. (THE CROWD LAUGHS, AND ROBIN, ONCE



MORE WITHOUT THINKING, LAUGHS TOO, VERY LOUDLY.)  
(TAVERN KEEPER GOES UP TO THE MAJOR AND HANDS HIM A RATTLESNAKE FLAG.)  
You're out of step, Sir. Here's your flag.  
(THE MAJOR LURCHES A FEW STEPS FROM THE CART, GRINDS THE RATTLESNAKE UNDERFOOT, THEN TURNS AND ADDRESSES THE CROWD.)

MAJOR  
MOLINEUX Long live King George! Long live King George!  
I'll sing until you cut my tongue out!

CROWD Throw the Major in the river,  
in the river, in the river!  
(WITH A GRATING SOUND, THE FERRYMAN APPEARS AT THE SIDE OF THE STAGE,  
PUSHING THE PROM OF HIS DORY. THE MAJOR STAGGERS TOWARDS THE FERRYMAN.)

MAJOR  
MOLINEUX (TO FERRYMAN.) Help me in my trouble. Let  
me cross the river to my King!  
(THE FERRYMAN STIFFENS. THE MAN WITH THE MASK THROWS HIM A SILVER CROWN.)

MAN WITH  
MASK Ferryman, here's a silver crown,  
take him or leave him, we don't care.

FERRYMAN (STILL MORE THREATENING.) The crown's no longer currency.  
(THE FERRYMAN KICKS THE CROWN INTO THE WATER.)

MAJOR  
MOLINEUX Boatman, you rowed me here in state;  
save me, now that I'm fallen!

FERRYMAN There's no returning on my boat.

MAJOR  
MOLINEUX (STRETCHING OUT HIS HANDS AND GRAPPLING THE FERRYMAN.)  
Save me in the name of God!  
(THE FERRYMAN PUSHES THE MAJOR OFF AND HITS HIM ON THE HEAD WITH HIS  
OAR. THE MAJOR SCREAMS, AND LIES STILL.)

FERRYMAN He's crossed the river into his kingdom;  
all tyrants must die as this man died.  
(ONE BY ONE, THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS COME UP AND LOOK AT THE MAJOR.)

CLERGYMAN He's dead. He had no time to pray.  
I wish he'd called me. O Lord, remember  
his past kindness to the church!  
all tyrants must die as this man died.

MAN IN  
PERIWIG (TAKING THE MAJOR'S EMPTY SCABBARD.)  
I have the Major's sword of office;  
hem, hem, I have authority.

FIRST  
BARBER His Honor has the hollow scabbard.

MAN IN  
PERIWIG They build men right in England. Take him all in all, he was a man;  
all tyrants must die as this man died.

TAVERN  
KEEPER (HOLDING A POSTER.)  
Look, this poster says the town  
of Boston offers a thousand guineas  
to anyone who kills the Major.  
I'll take his wallet for the cause.  
All tyrants must die as this man died.

PROSTITUTE (TAKING THE MAJOR'S HAT.)  
I'll need this hat to hide my head.  
They build men right in England. Take him  
all in all, he was a man;  
all tyrants must die as this man died.

MAN WITH MASK

(PLUNGING HIS SWORD IN THE MAJOR.)  
Sic semper tyrannis!

FERRYMAN

His fare is paid now;  
the Major's free to cross the river.  
(THE FERRYMAN LOADS MAJOR MOLINEUX'S BODY ON HIS BOAT, AND PUSHES OFF.)

CLERGYMAN

(COMING UP TO MAN WITH MASK.) Your hand! I want to shake your hand, Sir.  
A great day!

MAN WITH MASK

Great and terrible! There's nothing  
I can do about it now. (TURNS TO ROBIN.)  
Here, boy, here's the Major's sword;  
perhaps, you'll want a souvenir.  
(CROWD STARTS TO LEAVE. ROBIN AND BOY ALONE.)

BOY

The Major's gone. We'll have to go  
Back home. There's no one here to help us.

ROBIN

Yes, Major Molineux is dead.  
(STATS SADLY TOWARDS THE RIVER.)

CROWD

Long live the Republic! Long live the Republic!

BOY

Look, Robin, I have found a flintlock.  
(ROBIN LOOKS MISTFULLY AT THE CROWD, NOW ALMOST ENTIRELY GONE. HE PAUSES  
AND THEN ANSWERS IN A DAZE.)

ROBIN

A flintlock?

BOY

Well, that's all I came to Boston for, I guess.  
Let's go, I see the ferryman.

ROBIN

(STILL INATTENTIVE.) I'm going.  
(ROBIN TAKES HIS BROTHER'S HAND AND TURNS FIRMLY TOWARDS THE CITY.)

BOY

We are returning to the city!  
(ALL THE PEOPLE ARE GONE NOW, THE LIGHTS START TO GO OUT. A RED SUN SHOWS  
ON THE RIVER.)

ROBIN

Yes, brother, we are staying here.  
Look, the lights are going out,  
the red sun's moving on the river.  
Where will it take us to?...It's strange  
to be here on our own and free.

BOY

(SIGHTING ALONG HIS FLINTLOCK.)  
Major Molineux is dead.

ROBIN

Yes, Major Molineux is dead.

CURTAIN

20 de febrero de 1975.

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