

**Harriet Harlowe: the Harlot of Marlowe**  
in  
**The Harlot and the Hypocrite**

*a 10-minute haggle and harassment for harlot and priest*

by Jeff Goode  
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*(Outside a bawdy parlour in Devon Street, Marlowe. Enter from the harlot's house, HARRIET HARLOWE and ABBOTT FILCHER, after an assignation. She counts her money.)*

HARRIET

'Tis a business doin' pleasure with ye, Abbot Filcher.

FILCHER

Little more business than it used to be.

HARRIET

I said I was sorry about that rate increase. It's the times, don't ye know? Economics is hard on all of us. An' a ha'farthing don't go as far as she used to.

FILCHER

She goes about the same, she just charges more for it.

HARRIET

I only ask what the market will bear. And vice versa. I gave you the clergymen's discount, didn't I?

FILCHER

Aye, but I don't like to mix me business and pleasure. *(draws a dagger)* So I'll be wantin' a refund.

HARRIET

Abbot Filcher!

FILCHER

No offense, Harriet, but I'd like to keep our relationship unprofessional. I am, after all, a man of God, and it wouldn't be seemly to be seen coming and going with a known bawd.

HARRIET

Y'mighta said something about it before we got to the going.

FILCHER

Must have slipped me mind. Now, hand me over the money.

HARRIET

Would ye deprive me of me livelihood? Me hard-earned shillings?

FILCHER

A better question is whether you'd deprive the village orphans of their hard-earned Christian charity? For the poor box is where those shillings come from.

HARRIET

Abbot Filcher! Don't tell me ye robbed from the waifs to give to the whores?

FILCHER

No, I am robbing the town harlot, to get the orphan money back in the church coffers before one of my parishioners finds out its missing.

HARRIET

I don't like to tell a man his own business, Abbot Filcher, but: "Thou shalt not steal."

FILCHER

And I don't like to tell a harlot hers, but: "Less teeth, more tongue."

HARRIET

Och! Ye wouldn't be crying "dissatisfaction" now, after the howlin' I just gave ye? 'Tis a slander! And I've a reputation to upkeep. Or downhold. Depending who's on top.

FILCHER

Your reputation's but slanders to begin with, Harriet. You oughta be used to it by now.

HARRIET

I didn't hear you complaining when ye was rollin' in my sheets.

FILCHER

I don't like to look a gift horse in the nethers. But just because I'm a missionary don't mean I have nae heard o' the other positions.

HARRIET

Oh, I've heard of 'em, too. But I like to keep both eyes on me customers, so they don't try to take advantage.

FILCHER

Ye're a known harlot. How many more advantages are there?

HARRIET

Oh!

*(She draws her dagger and attacks. They fight.)*

HARRIET

Ye are a foul-mouthed, filthy-minded, sticky-fingered, man o' the cloth. And ye oughta have at least one of 'em cleaned. I suggest the fingers.

*(Harriet defeats Abbot Filcher and holds him at knifepoint.)*

FILCHER

Mercy! Have mercy, sweet Harriet! As ye hope to see salvation, dinnae harm me for my wee transgression!

HARRIET

'Tisn't your wee that's crossed a line, this time, Abbot Filcher. Ye oughta be ashamed o' yourself.

FILCHER

Oh, I am! I am gripped with self-loathing over the avarice that has so suddenly seized me. Merciful heavens! Merciful Harriet! Merciful eye-witnesses! *(glances around for help)*

HARRIET

I doubt a bout o' temptation came upon you unprovoked, Abbot. I am no expert, but your sins strike me as premeditated.

FILCHER

Have a pity, dear Harriet! I meant nothing by it.

HARRIET

You meant to rob me!!

FILCHER

Help! Murder!

HARRIET

All right, calm yourself, Abbot, or you'll soil your cassock. I'm not gonna hurt you. And the last thing you need are witnesses. But I will be havin' my money back.

FILCHER

Of course, here ye go.

HARRIET

All of it, Abbot.

FILCHER

But the orphans—

HARRIET

I'm an orphan myself, so you won't go beggin' down that road.

FILCHER

They're going to want an explanation.

HARRIET

Send 'em to me, then, why don't ye? I'll gladly tell 'em the facts o' life: "Y'see, orphans, when a man loves a woman...and a woman loves a pearl necklace..."

FILCHER

*(offended)* Oh! Have ye no propriety? I don't have to listen to this filth.

*(He tries to storm out. She cuts him off.)*

HARRIET

No, but you do have to settle your account. Now let's have it and don't stint.

FILCHER

Here, take it, then.

*(He gives her the money)*

FILCHER

Take this. And this. ...And this!

*(He sucker-punches her. They fight. This time, Abbot Filcher beats her.)*

FILCHER

Now if you don't mind, I'll have my refund back.

HARRIET

And if I do mind?

FILCHER

Then I'll have my refund anyway. And here's a handkerchief to cry in.

*(He tosses a handkerchief at her.)*

FILCHER

Now ye needn't glare, Harriet. It only rouses me affections. And I really haven't time for another go round this Sabbath. But I will see ye next Sunday. And ye can pout for me then, if ye like.

HARRIET

Ye better not think ye'll be comin' back to me lovin' arms.

FILCHER

Fear not for that, Harriet. I've no need of a dagger in me back. But though ye've lost a loyal customer, ye've gained an even more devoted business partner.

HARRIET

Business partner?

FILCHER

I'll be by once a week to collect the church's share o' your doings and absolve you of your sins.

HARRIET

Not meanin' to be thankless, but this is a bawdy house, Abbot. I don't see as you bring much to the table. Or the bed chamber. Or the sawhorse in the basement.

FILCHER

On the contrary. 'Tis a sinful establishment you're runnin'. And in such a God-fearing community, I'm the one man can make sure ye're not excommunicated for it. And then burned as a witch.

HARRIET

I am no witch!

FILCHER

And I will do my best to convince my parishioners of that. But it's going to cost ye thruppence on the shilling.

HARRIET

So that's how it works, is it? Ye hold our souls over our heads. And we pay through the nose to get 'em back.

FILCHER

I don't care what ye pay through, Harriet. Just as long as ye pay timely.

HARRIET

Doesn't the good book say, "Thou shalt not commit extortion"?

FILCHER

The Holy Scriptures are strangely silent on the subject of protection money. (*pointedly*) But they are very clear on witches.

HARRIET

Well, if that's how it's gonna be, then I'm right glad I decided to steal your other pouch while you were lost in the throes of carnal ecstasy.

FILCHER  
Other pouch?

HARRIET  
The one where you keep the gemstones you've extorted from the Jewelers Guild.

FILCHER  
What?! How do you know about that?! ...alleged pouch?

HARRIET  
People are such terrible gossips, Abbot. They will moan all manner of half-truths when they are caught up in a fit of passion. Especially a jeweler. Of course, I did not want to believe, at first, the repeated rumors that our very own Abbot was soliciting overgenerous donations from hardworking goldsmiths, under threat of excommunication. But now I see it is your modus operandi. Which is Latin for "He only knows one position."

FILCHER  
There's no proof of that!

HARRIET  
No, but neither is there a better explanation for the sudden remodeling you've done on the new wing of the Abbey. Or the way you jingle when you are consummating a luncheon. I always wondered why you were so dead set against folding your trousers neatly on the nightstand like a civilized philanderer. But if you thought that keeping your purse on your person would prevent me from relieving you of your ill-gotten gains, then you've quite forgotten how nimble I am.

FILCHER  
No! You couldn't have.

*(He fumbles with his belt.)*

HARRIET  
Take your time, Abbot. I know how those square knots give you trouble when you're in a vigorous state.

FILCHER  
Shut up, harlot!

*(He reaches in his pants and pulls out a pouch of gemstones.)*

FILCHER  
Ah! Aha! You see, here it is! Safe and sound.

*(He kisses his pouch. He realizes where it's been and wipes his tongue on his sleeve.)*

FILCHER

Ugh.

HARRIET

Do you take me for a amateur, Abbot? Of course, I would take the time to refill your pouch with worthless stones after I rob you. This is not my first filching.

FILCHER

With worthless—? (*jingles the pouch*) No! No, my jewels! My babies!

*(He fumbles with the purse strings and frantically dumps the contents out on the ground.)*

FILCHER

No—Wait—What?

*(The gemstones seem to be genuine. He laughs.)*

HARRIET

What is your game, Harriet? You did not rob me in my throes. These are not worthless stones.

HARRIET

You must be dreadful at confessions, Abbot Filcher, if ye listen no better than this. I said I decided to steal them while you were in throes of ecstasy. And the stones will be worthless... after I rob you.

*(Harriet draws a dagger.)*

FILCHER

What? When—? No!

*(Abbot lunges for the gems. Harriet stomps on his hands. They fight. Harriet defeats him and holds her dagger to his throat.)*

FILCHER

Please, no! As you believe in angels and miracles, have mercy, sweet Harriet!

HARRIET

I've heard this tune before, Abbot. Though I admit I quite like the refrain.

FILCHER

Sweet, sweet, beautiful, kind, merciful Harriet!

HARRIET

That's enough. I would think with a knife at your throat, you could be less tedious.

FILCHER

What will ye kill me?

HARRIET

Now, why would I do that, Abbot? You just became my best customer.

*(She picks up the gems.)*

HARRIET

But it's a pity you taking advantage of the poor, unsuspecting, faithful like that.

FILCHER

I did not, heaven judge me. They gave me those willingly. Every one of 'em.

HARRIET

I don't doubt it. Under pain of purgatory, what man wouldn't divest himself of all his worldly treasures? They probably consoled themselves in the knowledge that at least in your hands, their precious gemstones were going to a worthy cause.

FILCHER

And they will be. On my faith, Harriet, everything I've done has been in service of church.

HARRIET

Aye, the church must be very proud.

FILCHER

I admit I may have overstepped in my zealousness. But if you let me have my stones again, I will see that they are returned to their rightful owners.

HARRIET

There's no need for you to trouble yourself. I know where the jewelers live.

FILCHER

Yes... well... Perhaps that's best. Ye've taught me a valuable lesson today, Harriet, and one I won't soon forget. I can promise you that.

HARRIET

I suspect your promises are as good as the air they're written on.

FILCHER

You see how low I am humbled, and still you doubt me?

HARRIET

No, I have complete confidence in you, Abbot. You are nothing if not predictable. And I do believe you won't do it again.

FILCHER

I won't, you'll see.

HARRIET

Not after I take these gems back to the jewelry district this afternoon. And go on a spending spree.

FILCHER

You what?

HARRIET

I'm going shopping. Did I mention there's a pearl necklace I've had my eye on?

FILCHER

But—but—the jewelers—

HARRIET

I know. They're not going to be happy to see where their money's gone. But ye must look to the bright side.

FILCHER

What's that?

HARRIET

It's going to be harder henceforward to hold their souls hostage, as I don't believe anyone's ever been excommunicated by a defrocked lecher.

FILCHER

What's bright about that?!

HARRIET

Didn't I tell ye? I'm getting a pearl necklace.

FILCHER

Harriet, please! You will bankrupt me.

HARRIET

No, Abbot, you were quite bankrupt enough before ye came to see me. But I think this will put your pocketbook more in line with your morals.

FILCHER

You can't.

HARRIET

I can.

FILCHER

You mustn't!

HARRIET

But I want to.

FILCHER

Oh God.

HARRIET

Oh, yes.

FILCHER

Oh God!!

HARRIET

Yes, Abbot, yes!

FILCHER

Nooooooo!!!

*(He collapses, blubbing.)*

HARRIET

Oh, and here's somethin' to cry in.

*(She tosses the handkerchief at him.)*

HARRIET

All right, go on, then. Get up. Get out of here.

FILCHER

I can't.

HARRIET

Why not?

FILCHER

I think I've soiled myself.

HARRIET

Oh, Abbot. I'll get you a towel.

*(She heads off into the house.)*

HARRIET

It's a real business doing pleasure with you.

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