Mrs Hardcastle, Tony, Mr Hardcastle

MRS. HARDCASTLE. Oh, Tony, I'm killed! Shook! Battered to death. I  
shall never survive it. That last jolt, that laid us against the  
quickset hedge, has done my business.  
  
TONY. Alack, mamma, it was all your own fault. You would be for  
running away by night, without knowing one inch of the way.  
  
MRS. HARDCASTLE. I wish we were at home again. I never met so many  
accidents in so short a journey. Drenched in the mud, overturned in a  
ditch, stuck fast in a slough, jolted to a jelly, and at last to lose  
our way. Whereabouts do you think we are, Tony?  
  
TONY. By my guess we should come upon Crackskull Common, about forty  
miles from home.  
  
MRS. HARDCASTLE. O lud! O lud! The most notorious spot in all the  
country. We only want a robbery to make a complete night on't.  
  
TONY. Don't be afraid, mamma, don't be afraid. Two of the five that  
kept here are hanged, and the other three may not find us. Don't be  
afraid.--Is that a man that's galloping behind us? No; it's only a  
tree.--Don't be afraid.  
  
MRS. HARDCASTLE. The fright will certainly kill me.  
  
TONY. Do you see anything like a black hat moving behind the thicket?  
  
MRS. HARDCASTLE. Oh, death!  
  
TONY. No; it's only a cow. Don't be afraid, mamma; don't he afraid.  
  
MRS. HARDCASTLE. As I'm alive, Tony, I see a man coming towards us.   
Ah! I'm sure on't. If he perceives us, we are undone.  
  
TONY. (Aside.) Father-in-law, by all that's unlucky, come to take one  
of his night walks. (To her.) Ah, it's a highwayman with pistols as  
long as my arm. A damned ill-looking fellow.  
  
MRS. HARDCASTLE. Good Heaven defend us! He approaches.  
  
TONY. Do you hide yourself in that thicket, and leave me to manage  
him. If there be any danger, I'll cough, and cry hem. When I cough,  
be sure to keep close. (MRS. HARDCASTLE hides behind a tree in the  
back scene.)  
  
  
Enter HARDCASTLE.  
  
  
HARDCASTLE. I'm mistaken, or I heard voices of people in want of  
help. Oh, Tony! is that you? I did not expect you so soon back. Are  
your mother and her charge in safety?  
  
TONY. Very safe, sir, at my aunt Pedigree's. Hem.  
  
MRS. HARDCASTLE. (From behind.) Ah, death! I find there's danger.  
  
HARDCASTLE. Forty miles in three hours; sure that's too much, my  
youngster.  
  
TONY. Stout horses and willing minds make short journeys, as they say.   
Hem.  
  
MRS. HARDCASTLE. (From behind.) Sure he'll do the dear boy no harm.  
  
HARDCASTLE. But I heard a voice here; I should be glad to know from  
whence it came.  
  
TONY. It was I, sir, talking to myself, sir. I was saying that forty  
miles in four hours was very good going. Hem. As to be sure it was.   
Hem. I have got a sort of cold by being out in the air. We'll go in,  
if you please. Hem.  
  
HARDCASTLE. But if you talked to yourself you did not answer  
yourself. I'm certain I heard two voices, and am resolved (raising his  
voice) to find the other out.  
  
MRS. HARDCASTLE. (From behind.) Oh! he's coming to find me out. Oh!  
  
TONY. What need you go, sir, if I tell you? Hem. I'll lay down my  
life for the truth--hem--I'll tell you all, sir. [Detaining him.]  
  
HARDCASTLE. I tell you I will not be detained. I insist on seeing.   
It's in vain to expect I'll believe you.  
  
MRS. HARDCASTLE. (Running forward from behind.) O lud! he'll murder  
my poor boy, my darling! Here, good gentleman, whet your rage upon me.   
Take my money, my life, but spare that young gentleman; spare my child,  
if you have any mercy.  
  
HARDCASTLE. My wife, as I'm a Christian. From whence can she come? or  
what does she mean?  
  
MRS. HARDCASTLE. (Kneeling.) Take compassion on us, good Mr.  
Highwayman. Take our money, our watches, all we have, but spare our  
lives. We will never bring you to justice; indeed we won't, good Mr.  
Highwayman.  
  
HARDCASTLE. I believe the woman's out of her senses. What, Dorothy,  
don't you know ME?  
  
MRS. HARDCASTLE. Mr. Hardcastle, as I'm alive! My fears blinded me.   
But who, my dear, could have expected to meet you here, in this  
frightful place, so far from home? What has brought you to follow us?  
  
HARDCASTLE. Sure, Dorothy, you have not lost your wits? So far from  
home, when you are within forty yards of your own door! (To him.)   
This is one of your old tricks, you graceless rogue, you. (To her.)   
Don't you know the gate, and the mulberry-tree; and don't you remember  
the horse-pond, my dear?  
  
MRS. HARDCASTLE. Yes, I shall remember the horse-pond as long as I  
live; I have caught my death in it. (To TONY.) And it is to you, you  
graceless varlet, I owe all this? I'll teach you to abuse your mother,  
I will.  
  
TONY. Ecod, mother, all the parish says you have spoiled me, and so  
you may take the fruits on't.  
  
MRS. HARDCASTLE. I'll spoil you, I will