



Women Beware Women
Thomas Middleton

Isabella is the daughter of Fabritio, who arranges Isabella's marriage to the young and foolish Ward. Prior to this speech, Isabella has just seen the Ward and is not happy with the prospect of marrying him. She reflects on her position as a woman destined for an unhappy marriage.

ISABELLA: (*Aside.*) Marry a fool!
Can there be greater misery to a woman
That means to keep her days true to her husband,
And know no other man! so virtue wills it.
Why; how can I obey and honour him,
But I must needs commit idolatry?
Of miserable maids, where love's enforc'd!
They do but buy their thraldoms, and bring greater portions
To men to keep 'em in subjection,
And glad of a good usage, a good look
Yet honesty and love makes all this happy,
A fool is but the image of a man,
And that but ill made neither. Oh, the heart-breakings
The best condition is but bad enough:
When women have their choices, commonly
As if a fearful prisoner should bribe
The keeper to be good to him, yet lies in still,
Sometimes; by'r lady, no misery surmounts a woman's!
Men buy their slaves, but women buy their masters:
And, next to angels, the most bless'd estate.
That providence, that has made ev'ry poison
Good for some use, and sets four warring elements
At peace in man, can make a harmony
In things that are most strange to human reason.
Oh, but this is marriage!

Act 1, Scene 2