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*Dramatic Publishing*

A Play in Three Acts

by

DAVID ROGERS

# TOM JONES

Based upon the Novel by

HENRY FIELDING



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(TOM JONES)

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# TOM JONES

*A Comedy in Three Acts*

FOR THIRTEEN MEN, ELEVEN WOMEN, EXTRAS

*(Can be decreased to ten men, eight women\*)*

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## CHARACTERS

PARTRIDGE  
BRIDGET ALLWORTHY  
SQUIRE ALLWORTHY  
DEBORAH  
JENNY JONES (MRS. WATERS)  
CAPTAIN BLIFIL  
BLIFIL  
TOM JONES  
THWACKUM  
SQUARE  
MR. WESTERN  
SOPHIA WESTERN  
MISS WESTERN  
HONOUR  
JUSTICE DOWLING  
DOCTOR

\* The characters of Captain Blifil, Thwackum, Square and the Doctor : appear only in Act One and the actors who play them can easily double as the Highwayman, who appears only in Act Two, the Constable who is only in Act Three, and Fitzpatrick who is only in Acts Two and Three.

The characters of Bridget Allworthy and Deborah appear only in Act One. Mrs. Whitefield and Susan appear only in Act Two, Lady Bellaston and Nancy appear only in Act Three, and Harriet Fitzpatrick only in Acts Two and Three. These seven roles can easily be covered by four actresses, three if absolutely necessary.

The servants who are used to move furniture throughout the play can be the actresses playing Deborah, Honour, Susan and Nancy. Should the scenery be too difficult for women to manage, men can be dressed to appear as these servants, who do not speak.

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HIGHWAYMAN  
HARRIET FITZPATRICK  
FITZPATRICK  
MRS. WHITEFIELD  
SUSAN  
LADY BELLASTON  
NANCY  
CONSTABLE

THE SCENE: *England.*  
THE TIME: *About 1750.*

### SYNOPSIS

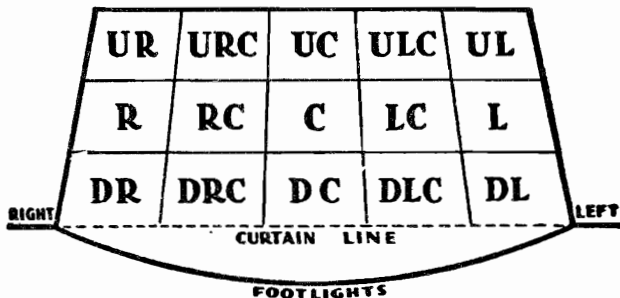
ACT ONE: *Somersetshire.*

ACT TWO: *The journey.*

ACT THREE: *London.*

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## CHART OF STAGE POSITIONS



### STAGE POSITIONS

*Upstage* means away from the footlights, *downstage* means toward the footlights, and *right* and *left* are used with reference to the actor as he faces the audience. R means *right*, L means *left*, U means *up*, D means *down*, C means *center*, and these abbreviations are used in combination, as: U R for *up right*, R C for *right center*, D L C for *down left center*, etc. One will note that a position designated on the stage refers to a general territory, rather than to a given point.

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NOTE: Before starting rehearsals, chalk off your stage or rehearsal space as indicated above in the *Chart of Stage Positions*. Then teach your actors the meanings and positions of these fundamental terms of stage movement by having them walk from one position to another until they are familiar with them. The use of these abbreviated terms in directing the play saves time, speeds up rehearsals, and reduces the amount of explanation the director has to give to his actors.

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## PRODUCTION NOTES

**SCENERY:** Since the play is episodic in nature and should move with movie-like speed, the scenery must be kept light and impressionistic. There is no representational scenery.

The entire play is performed before a blue cyclorama or neutral curtains at the back of the stage. There are set pieces for each act to suggest the locale.

**ACT ONE:** Somersetshire. Two small cutouts depicting English manor houses in miniature. Placed, one at U R and one at U L, they represent the homes of Allworthy and Western and should look like these houses seen in perspective.

**ACT TWO:** The Journey. A cutout of a tree at U L C and a moon hung on the back curtain.

**ACT THREE:** London. A cutout of London Bridge placed U C.

Other than these pieces, there are three movable doors required. They should be practical doors set in door frames and placed on rollers for easy movability. One works as the door to Sophia's room at the beginning of Act Two and all three are used for the Inn at Upton at the end of Act Two. Two are used again in the third act as front doors in London. If actual doors are too difficult to construct, window shades with doors painted on them, hung from wheeled frames resembling—or indeed, actually—clothes racks, may be used. In this case the actors must raise and lower the shades to suggest opening and closing doors.

The rest of the scenery is just furniture: heavier wood pieces for the first two acts which are set in the country and more delicate upholstered pieces for Lady Bellaston's home in London in Act Three.

**TEMPO:** Nothing adds more to the polish of a production than the quick picking up of cues. Unless there is a definite reason for a pause, train your actors to come in with their speeches "on the heels," so to speak, of the preceding speeches. When a production lags, audience interest likewise will lag. It is always advisable during the last week of rehearsals to hold one or more sessions during which the actors merely sit around in a circle and go through lines only, with the express purpose of snapping up cues.

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# ACT ONE

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SCENE: *When the audience enters the theatre, the curtain is up and the stage is bare except for a blue cyclorama or neutral curtains at the back. There is a small stool D R in front of the proscenium.*

AS PLAY OPENS: *When the play is to begin, as the house lights are lowered PARTRIDGE, a country man, humbly but neatly dressed, appears. With the help of two or three servants (male or female) dressed in appropriate costumes, he puts up the scenery. This consists of two small cutouts depicting English manor houses set up at back before the cyclorama, the one at the right representing Squire Allworthy's home, the one at L the home of Mr. Western. Next, the servants bring in a wooden table and two chairs which they set at R C. PARTRIDGE supervises this in pantomime and, when he is satisfied, he waves the servants off. By now, the house lights are off and he advances to the footlights.*

PARTRIDGE. Good evening, my lords, my ladies, gentlemen and gentlewomen and anyone else in hearing of my voice . . . though the Lord alone would know who that might be. Tonight we play "The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling." [*Remembering he must say this.*] Oh, set your minds at rest, good gentle people, I am not regularly an actor. Thank Heaven for small favors. I am your humble servant, Partridge, schoolmaster, surgeon and barber. [*Bows.*] I tell the story of Tom Jones because I know the facts, I have some small part in it, and I am told I have the wit to address so large and distinguished an audience as yourselves . . . but wit is a necessity in a barber. Many people said Tom Jones was born to hang and others called hanging too good for him. But I say, Tom was a paragon of virtue—misunderstood as the good so often are in this wicked world. Our story takes place more than two hundred years ago when the



world was, indeed, wicked, bawdy and licentious. In short, a time like any other. But, I am bound to protect innocence and as all here look pure in heart, I shall endeavor to launder the more indelicate passages of this history. [*If the play is not to be performed in costume, insert this line:*] Oh, one more thing. Though I, and the other characters in this history, were all born more than two hundred years ago, you will notice that we all dress in modern clothes rather than the costume of our period. This is a conceit of our director, Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, that not only encourages you to use your imagination, but also greatly lowers the cost of your tickets. So, please to imagine the gentlemen all in breeches and frock coats and the ladies in elaborate gowns. If you wish to save even more money, imagine us in wigs as well. . . . Tom Jones, the foundling, was born—or rather, found—in Somersetshire, one of the green counties of England, in the home—[*He points to it.*—]of Squire Allworthy.

[BRIDGET ALLWORTHY enters R. *She is plain, dressed somberly but respectably as befits the gentry.*]

PARTRIDGE. This is the Squire's sister, Miss Bridget Allworthy, a maiden lady of uncertain age. She is to be commended for her good qualities rather than her beauty.

BRIDGET [*to audience*]. I thank Heaven I have not the beauty of the ladies of fashion. Beauty leads a woman to misfortune.

PARTRIDGE [*to BRIDGET*]. Have no fear. [*To audience.*] And this is the Squire himself, returned this very night after an absence of some months.

[*The SQUIRE enters D L. He is a distinguished man, conservatively dressed.*]

ALLWORTHY [*to audience*]. I thank Heaven for my safe return from London where I can truthfully say they love me just as much as they do in the country for my wisdom, my godliness and my money.

BRIDGET [*crossing to him to begin the scene*]. Welcome home, brother.

ALLWORTHY. Thank you, sister. [*They embrace.*]

PARTRIDGE. The Squire, exhausted . . .

ALLWORTHY [*to BRIDGET*]. I'm exhausted.

PARTRIDGE. . . . retired immediately to his bed chamber—  
[*ALLWORTHY goes out D R.*]—from which instantly issued  
a great cry. [*PARTRIDGE sits on stool D R and observes the  
action.*]

ALLWORTHY [*off R*]. Merciful heavens!

BRIDGET [*calling off*]. Brother! What's happened?

[*DEBORAH, an elderly servant, rushes on from U R.*]

DEBORAH. What's happened to the master?

BRIDGET. I don't know. [*Calling off.*] What is it, brother?

[*ALLWORTHY enters, carrying a baby wrapped in a blanket.*]

ALLWORTHY. In my room! A baby!

BRIDGET [*shocked*]. A baby!

DEBORAH. La, Squire, wherever has it come from?

ALLWORTHY [*furious*]. From my pillow.

DEBORAH [*beaming*]. Congratulations!

ALLWORTHY. Nonsense. The child is not mine.

DEBORAH [*instantly serious*]. Of course not, but—[*Wisely.*]—  
many honest souls will delight in saying it all the same.

ALLWORTHY. What's to be done?

DEBORAH. Put it in a basket and lay it at the churchwarden's  
door. It's a good night—only a little wind and rain. . . .

It is two to one it lives till it be found in the morning.

BRIDGET [*taking baby*]. It is a sweet-looking child.

ALLWORTHY. It must belong to one of the servants.

DEBORAH [*insulted*]. Lud, sir!

ALLWORTHY [*calming her*]. One of the younger servants. Who  
else could have put it in my room?

BRIDGET. But which one? Polly? Katherine? Jenny?

ALLWORTHY. Yes. Which one, indeed!

DEBORAH. It was Jenny Jones, I'll warrant.

BRIDGET. Jenny Jones!

DEBORAH. She has been seen walking out with the schoolmaster, Mr. Partridge.

PARTRIDGE [*leaping up*]. That's a lie!

DEBORAH. The whole village knows. You've been seen.

PARTRIDGE. I was teaching her Latin and Greek.

BRIDGET. What need has a scullery maid of Greek and Latin?

PARTRIDGE [*piously*]. A knowledge of the classics improves the meanest soul.

ALLWORTHY [*to DEBORAH*]. Bring Jenny Jones to me! [*DEBORAH goes out U R.*]

PARTRIDGE [*to audience*]. It's true Jenny is a scullery maid but she has a good, inquiring mind.

ALLWORTHY [*to PARTRIDGE*]. I am afraid she has inquired too far.

[*DEBORAH returns U R, bringing JENNY, a pretty girl dressed in rags. Her face is covered with dirt, her straggly hair hangs over it. Since Jenny will appear again under a different name and unrecognized, it is important to cover her face, keep her faced away from the audience and to let her be seen as little as possible. DEBORAH pulls her into the room and throws her at Allworthy's feet.*]

ALLWORTHY [*sternly*]. Jenny Jones, are you the mother of that child?

JENNY [*humbly*]. Yes, sir.

ALLWORTHY. Don't deny it.

JENNY. I have not, sir. I brought him to you hoping you would give him a good home. Your kindness, sir, and your money are known throughout the county.

ALLWORTHY. But who is the father?

JENNY. I promise you faithfully one day you'll know, but I am under the most solemn vow to conceal his name at this time.

ALLWORTHY. I demand to know!

JENNY [*entreating BRIDGET*]. Speak for me, madam.

BRIDGET. I entreat you, brother, to help this unfortunate girl.

During your absence she attended me most faithfully in an illness which struck me while you were gone.

ALLWORTHY. For my dear sister's sake and with the goodness for which I am so deservedly known, I will give you the money with which to leave the county, escape your ruined reputation and build a new life elsewhere.

JENNY. Thank you, sir.

ALLWORTHY. And as for your child—[*Takes baby from BRIDGET.*]—I shall provide for him in a better manner than you can ever hope to do.

JENNY. You are too good, sir. [ALLWORTHY waves her away. DEBORAH pulls her out U R.]

DEBORAH [*as she goes*]. Too good by half.

BRIDGET. You are so good, brother.

ALLWORTHY [*accepting it as a fact*]. Yes. As for the schoolmaster, have him removed from the school and run out of the county or I'll have him strung up by the thumbs. [ALLWORTHY exits R; BRIDGET exits L.]

PARTRIDGE [*to audience*]. I was innocent! Innocent! As you shall see. [*Calls to the servants.*] You, there! Take these things away!

[*The servants enter and remove the furniture as he continues.*]

PARTRIDGE. But due to Squire Allworthy's goodness, I was banished from the county anyway. I lost my little school, and was reduced to becoming a barber—and surgeon—and I pulled a tooth now and then to help keep body and soul together. But my part returns to the story later. [*Pause.*] The Squire called the baby "Jones" after Jenny and "Tom" after his own whim. Tom Jones. Shortly after I was banished, a certain Captain Blifil became the guest of Squire Allworthy . . .

[CAPTAIN BLIFIL, a young man in his twenties, appears D L.]

PARTRIDGE. . . . and fell in love with his host's sister.

[BRIDGET appears to the left of the CAPTAIN and they hold hands.]

PARTRIDGE. He was certainly a gallant captain as Miss Allworthy was older than he and—to put it delicately—not the fairest of her sex.

CAPTAIN BLIFIL [*priggishly*]. Beauty is only skin deep and fades as a plucked rose. The deeper qualities such as money and property last forever.

PARTRIDGE. And so they were married—[CAPTAIN BLIFIL *slips a ring on Bridget's finger and they kiss.*—and a year later, blessed with a fine, bouncing baby boy. [BRIDGET *reaches into the wings and a baby wrapped in a blanket is slipped into her arms. She and the Captain coo at it.*] Not long after, tragedy struck the good captain, who died of an epilepsy or an apoplexy depending upon which doctor you asked. [CAPTAIN BLIFIL *drops his head on his shoulder to symbolize his death.*] Good-by, Captain Blifil.

CAPTAIN BLIFIL. But . . .

PARTRIDGE. You may go. Remember, there are no small parts—only small actors. [CAPTAIN BLIFIL *exits D L, followed by BRIDGET.*] And so the two boys grew to manhood. The fatherless Blifil, a serious, studious boy who saved his money and became the most virtuous man in the county, as he was the first to admit . . .

[BLIFIL *appears R C. He is serious, sallow, possibly with pimples. He is dressed in black.*]

BLIFIL [*reading from a book he carries*]. Sir Francis Bacon, 1561–1626, said, “Nobility of birth commonly abateth industry.” [*Looks up.*] I have proved him wrong. [*Continues to read.*]

PARTRIDGE. While the entirely parentless Tom was a cheery fellow more at home in the woods and fields than with books, who wasted his money in buying food for the starving villagers.

[TOM *appears D R, a good-looking fellow in breeches and shirt.*]

TOM. I'm a lucky fellow! The whole world is too good to me.

*[Takes some wood and a knife from his pocket, sits on the floor and whittles.]*

BLIFIL *[looking up for a moment, snarling at TOM]*. Foundling!

PARTRIDGE. The good Squire Allworthy engaged two gentlemen to educate his nephew and his ward. The Reverend Mr. Thwackum . . .

*[THWACKUM, a heavy-set, sanctimonious gentleman, enters R and stands behind TOM.]*

PARTRIDGE. . . . a gentleman of great learning and a severe disciplinarian.

THWACKUM. Human nature is the perfection of all virtue.

PARTRIDGE. And Mr. Square, a philosopher.

*[MR. SQUARE, a sour-looking man in black, enters R, above BLIFIL.]*

SQUARE. The human mind since the Fall is nothing but a sink of iniquity.

PARTRIDGE. Their contrary teachings did not confuse their pupils, as Mr. Blifil learned everything and could easily discourse on either side, pleasing both his tutors.

BLIFIL *[to THWACKUM]*. God is love.

THWACKUM *[pleased]*. Yes.

BLIFIL *[to SQUARE]*. Science is all.

SQUARE *[pleased]*. Quite.

PARTRIDGE. While Tom—*[SQUARE and THWACKUM move to around TOM.]*—listened to neither.

TOM *[still whistling, singing]*. Hey nonny nonny, hey nonny nonny, hey nonny nonny, no! *[THWACKUM and SQUARE both hit him.]*

PARTRIDGE *[pointing to Western's house U L]*. On the next estate to Squire Allworthy lived a Mr. Western, a gentleman much given to horses, hounds and hunting.

*[MR. WESTERN, a rather raffish gentleman in a sloppy dark suit and perhaps a mangy, over-curly wig, carrying a pistol, enters L.]*

WESTERN. Tally-ho!

PARTRIDGE. He became a good friend to Tom—[TOM rises, runs to MR. WESTERN. They assume a friendly pose.]—who had assisted him in a matter concerning poachers.

TOM [*pointing R.*]. Over there, sir! [WESTERN fires a shot. A man screams off R.]

WESTERN. Got him! That's the last pheasant that peasant will pluck from my preserve.

PARTRIDGE. Tom was a welcome guest at Western's table. Western often declared . . .

WESTERN. Tom Jones will make a great man with any encouragement. I wish I had a son with his parts.

PARTRIDGE. However, Mr. Western had no son. He had a lovely daughter, Sophia.

[SOPHIA, a very pretty young girl, enters L and stands beside her father.]

WESTERN. A sweet girl, I wouldn't trade her for the best pack of hounds in England.

PARTRIDGE. She was beautiful and modest. She played the pianoforte and sang beautifully . . .

SOPHIA [*singing*]. "Believe me, if all those endearing young charms . . ." [*She goes very flat on the word "charms."*]

PARTRIDGE. . . . for a girl educated in the country. Sophia's mother was long since dead and Western had occasional assistance in the rearing of his daughter from his sister, Miss Western—

[MISS WESTERN enters L. She is an older lady of commanding appearance, dressed in the more fashionable London manner.]

PARTRIDGE. Who, though a Londoner by preference, made frequent visits to the country to instruct her niece in the manners of the world of fashion.

MISS WESTERN. I am well versed in all the arts which fine ladies use when they desire to give encouragement or to conceal liking. I have instructed my niece in the whole long

appendage of—[*Giving examples of each.*]—smiles, ogles, glances and flirtation with her fan.

WESTERN [*annoyed with this*]. Zooks! I say a pox on your flirtation with the fan.

MISS WESTERN [*snapping her fan shut*]. Mr. Western, I think you daily improve in ignorance. [*Goes out L. THWACKUM, SQUARE and BLIFIL go out R.*]

PARTRIDGE. One day when young Tom had joined Mr. Western and his daughter for a hunt . . . [*Sounds of barking hounds, horses' hoofs.*]

WESTERN [*spying a fox, yelling*]. There she goes! After her! [*Runs, as if on horseback, a complete circle of the stage and then goes out L. SOPHIA follows him and TOM follows her, but they do not go off but keep circling the stage through the following.*]

PARTRIDGE. I ask you gentle playgoers to imagine them all on horseback. If you are willing to imagine the battle of Agincourt for Master Shakespeare, you can imagine three horses for me. [*Suddenly SOPHIA screams and runs faster.*] Miss Sophia lost control of her horse. Young Tom gave chase . . . [*TOM chases.*] . . . leaped off his horse . . . [*TOM pantomimes this.*] . . . the lady's horse reared . . . [*SOPHIA leaps up, then falls on top of TOM, both landing in a heap on the ground.*] Delicacy forbids that I overhear what followed. [*Goes out D R.*]

SOPHIA. Why, Tom, you saved my life! [*Looks at him a second, then kisses him.*]

TOM [*drawing away from her kiss*]. No, Miss Western, I cannot take such liberty. [*Rising.*] If I have saved you I am sufficiently repaid, though it cost me greater misfortune than I have suffered on this occasion.

SOPHIA [*also rising*]. What misfortune?

TOM [*phony brave*]. It's nothing. If I have broken my arm, I consider it a trifle compared with what I feared might happen to you. [*Doubles over in pain, groaning.*]

SOPHIA. Broken your arm!

TOM. Do not concern yourself, madam. No doubt it will heal.



[*Groans again.*] But you, you have a small scratch on your forehead . . . it must be attended to. I have a right hand yet at your service to help you to your father's house.

[WESTERN enters L.]

WESTERN. What, Sophy? Are you all right?

SOPHIA. Yes. Mr. Jones saved me . . . but he has broken his arm.

WESTERN. Saved my girl! [*Embracing TOM.*] I love you dearly, boy. [*TOM screams in pain.*] What? Does it hurt?

TOM. Only when you thank me.

WESTERN. I'm glad it's no worse. Come back to our house, boy, and if your arm's broken we'll get a barber to join it again.

SOPHIA. But we have no horses . . . and Mr. Jones is injured. Can you not send a carriage back for us?

TOM. Oh, no. Do not trouble yourself, I pray you. It's hardly two miles to your house and such a lovely day I'd rather walk. [*Gestures to SOPHIA, indicating she should go. She goes out U L. WESTERN throws an arm around Tom's shoulder, TOM cries in pain again, then smiles bravely, and they go off after her. A servant enters and places a bench D L and exits.*]

[SOPHIA enters L with HONOUR, her pretty, young maid.]

HONOUR. I've just come from the room, Madame. The surgeon has finished with Mr. Jones and Mr. Jones begs me to tell you he will attend you immediately.

SOPHIA [*sitting on bench; in a rapture of love*]. Oh, Honour, is he not the most handsome man you have ever seen in your life?

HONOUR [*being fair*]. Certainly the handsomest man without parents, madam.

SOPHIA [*regretfully*]. It's true he *is* base born . . . but when he smiles . . . he seems . . . almost noble.

HONOUR [*understanding Sophy's sentiments*]. Yes. I could

tell your ladyship something . . . but I'm afraid it might offend you.

SOPHIA. About Mr. Jones? Prithee, tell me. I will know it this instant.

HONOUR. Why, madam, when I came into the room where Mr. Jones and the surgeon were, I had with me this very muff—[*Holds it up.*]—your ladyship gave me but yesterday . . . and to be sure, Mr. Jones took it up and kissed it. I hardly ever saw such a kiss in my life as he gave it.

SOPHIA. And what did he say?

HONOUR. He screamed in pain, madam.

SOPHIA. Screamed?

HONOUR. The surgeon pulled his arm . . . but then he said it was the prettiest muff in the world.

SOPHIA [*fishes*]. I suppose he did not know it was mine?

HONOUR. "La, sir," I said, "you've seen it a hundred times." "Yes," he cried, "but who can see anything beautiful in the presence of your lady but herself?"

SOPHIA. Oh, Tom!

HONOUR. I hope your ladyship won't be offended, for to be sure, he meant nothing by it.

SOPHIA. No . . . nothing, of course. [*Looks at her own muff.*] Honour, my new muff is odious. It is too big for me, I can't wear it. [*Takes it off.*] Till I get another, you must let me have my old one again and you may have this.

HONOUR [*switching muffs*]. An it gives your ladyship pleasure. [*Goes out L. SOPHIA looks at the muff, kisses it.*]

SOPHIA [*rapturously*]. Oh, Tom . . . Tom . . .

[TOM enters L, looking weak, his arm in a sling.]

TOM. Yes?

SOPHIA [*startled*]. Oh! Mr. Jones! Are you well?

TOM. Never better, madam. [*Reels a little.*]

SOPHIA. Your arm?

TOM. A slight—but painful—sprain. It will be better in an hour's time. [*Totters.*]

SOPHIA. You'd best sit down. [*Rises and forces him down on the bench.*]

TOM [*objecting*]. No . . . no . . .

SOPHIA. You would lessen my obligation at having twice risked your life for me.

TOM. Twice?

SOPHIA. Can you have forgotten the day—[*Sits beside him.*]  
—before I went to stay with my aunt in London . . . that day when you first accompanied Squire Allworthy to my father's house? You brought me a little bird that you had captured from its nest. A beautiful bird who sang so sweetly.

TOM. I remember . . .

SOPHIA. In that instant, I loved—[*Catches herself.*—the bird. And then, young Blifil, through some misguided sentiment, set it free. In that instant I hated Blifil. The bird flew to a topmost branch beside the brook, you stripped off your coat and climbed the tree, recapturing my little bird. And then the branch broke and you fell with it into the stream.

TOM. My only sorrow is that the water was not deeper that I might have given my life for you.

SOPHIA [*both are a bit over-dramatic*]. Oh, no! You cannot have such contempt of your own life . . . as I regard it highly.

TOM. Oh, Miss Western, can you desire me to live?

SOPHIA. Yes, yes, with all my heart.

TOM. Miss Western . . . Sophia . . . [*Rising and taking her hand.*] My heart overflows. Pardon me, if I am too bold.

SOPHIA [*also rising*]. Mr. Jones, I will not affect to misunderstand you. I understand you too well. But for Heaven's sake, if you have any affection for me, let me retire to my room before the excitement your strong words have caused makes my heart fly quite out of my breast.

TOM. I fear I've said too much.

SOPHIA. Too much . . . too little . . . and too well.

[*HONOUR runs in from L.*]

HONOUR. Mr. Jones! [*They jump apart guiltily.*] Mr. Jones,