

Cocktails for Your Everyday Dramas

SHAKESPEARE,
Not Stirred



Caroline Bicks, PhD, and Michelle Ephraim, PhD



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A PERIGEE BOOK



PERIGEE

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INTRODUCTION

Is This a Daiquiri Which I See Before Me?

If you're wondering what Shakespeare ate and drank when he was living it up in 1599 London, this isn't the book for you. The same goes for all you historical reenactment fans out there. We don't dress up like wenches and go to Renaissance Faires, or serve up foot-long Henry VIII–style turkey legs at our neighborhood block parties.

But we do love Shakespeare. In fact, we've devoted our adult lives to learning as much as we can about his works and his world. We get a geeky thrill out of researching things like sixteenth-century virginity tests and Bible translations. And we never get tired of talking to our students about the themes and moral dilemmas that Shakespeare explores.

We're also close friends who love getting together over a good drink. It's the perfect way to decompress from our everyday dramas—whether it's academic politics, spousal standoffs, or home lice infestations. Frankly, besides Shakespeare, these few hours of high-quality confab are the only thing we *don't* need a break from.

One night, at ye olde Cheesecake Factory, we had an epiphany: the characters we analyzed all day were starting to feel very familiar. And not just because we'd been teaching and writing about them for twenty years. The more we talked, the more we saw ourselves and our problems in *their* comedies, histories, and tragedies. Shakespeare's insights into jealous siblings, shifty coworkers, and aging libidos were smarter than anything we could ever come up with on our own. And a whole lot cheaper than therapy.

Huh, we thought. This dead guy totally gets us.

Shakespeare never had to worry about hitting Reply All by mistake, or sending someone's kid to the ER because of a stray peanut trace. But it felt like he was right there with us, sucking down a Factory Peach Bellini and feeling our pain.

We knew right then and there that we'd found our destiny: to write a cocktail book that would pay forward, Shakespeare-style.

So we got to work, searching every corner of Shakespeare's canon and our liquor cabinets to find the perfect drinks to match our favorite plotlines. We poured, shook, and tasted. Pondered and punned. We were obsessed with our plan—just like the regicidal Macbeth when he hallucinates a murder weapon floating before him. Except our ambitions involved daiquiris, not daggers.

The final product is what you see before you: a book that mixes equal parts booze and Bard to help you through your everyday ups and downs. It's like having him right there in your living room, downing a great drink, and putting your crappy day in perspective.

Each of our cocktails connects Shakespeare's characters to your daily predicaments. And we've paired the drinks with hors d'oeuvres, which we call "Savory Matters." It's our way of repurposing

Hamlet's snobby comment about popular entertainment and the commoners who consume it. According to him, ~~those people only want "matter savory"~~—cheap, spicy jokes and sleazy plotlines. Well, we've got news for you, Hamlet: Shakespeare would have loved Bravo and buffalo wings as much as we do.

Like the editors of the 1623 First Folio, we've organized our Shakespeare into genres—some comical, some tragical, some historical. For example, *Girls' Night Out*, *Drowning Your Sorrows*, and *Recapturing Your Youth*. And if you want to learn more about the plays or the time period, you can raid the Mini-Bards in each chapter for a quick shot of context and commentary. Or not. Unlike Hamlet, we don't judge. The point is, if you want to brush up on your Shakespeare, and maybe learn some things that you didn't know before, fabulous. If you just want to eat and drink, go for it.

Now some of you may be thinking: Booze? Professors? Isn't this why we need to get rid of tenure? But hear us out. Shakespeare wasn't just interested in Fate, Revenge, and Tragic Flaws. His plays are saturated with alcohol-related themes, and it's our job to know about them. Some of these are pretty negative, like (1) Booze and booty don't mix, especially if you're a guy. As the drunken Porter in *Macbeth* says, drinking "provokes the desire but it takes away the performance." Not to mention, (2) Drinking on the job equals career suicide. *Antony and Cleopatra's* Lepidus learns this lesson the hard way when he blacks out on Pompey's booze cruise and proves he's not Roman Triumvirate material. And, of course, (3) Alcohol makes dysfunctional families even more dysfunctional. Sir Toby Belch, *Twelfth Night's* "quaffing and drinking" freeloader, upsets his depressed niece by throwing wild parties at her house and calling her a killjoy. And the future King Richard III unleashes a lifetime of sibling hostility by hiring two guys to drown his older brother in a barrel of Malmsey wine.

But drinking in Shakespeare's plays, as in life, doesn't always end in tragedy. Sometimes it's about bringing people together. Building community. Being there for each other through good times and bad. And the timeless power of partying.

We hope that *Shakespeare, Not Stirred* brings you all sorts of pleasure: fun drinks, good food, and the deep satisfaction of knowing that Shakespeare validates all of your feelings—no matter how socially inappropriate they may be. So get out your cocktail shaker and lend him your ears. Has *he* got a story to tell *you*.



A Little More Than Gin

Dysfunctional Family Gatherings

You **may** think you've outgrown your childhood insecurities, but just one family encounter can send you right **back to the kids' table**. Like when **King Lear** reignites the sibling rivalry between his adult daughters, Goneril and Regan. After he makes them compete for their inheritance in a "Who Loves Me Most?" contest, they're reduced to their old eyeball-clawing, boyfriend-stealing ways. Meanwhile, over **in the rotten state of Denmark**, Uncle Claudius rubs salt in Hamlet's Oedipal wounds by calling him "son" at his wedding to Hamlet's mother. The newly fatherless prince mutters: "A little more than kin and less than kind." Loose translation: "You may be sleeping with Mommy, but you are *not* my daddy." Booze is the perfect way to numb the pain of fraught family moments like these. It's not that a stiff drink is the healthiest way to deal with your kin. But it's a lot more enjoyable than bearing about how oversensitive, underachieving, and selfish you are.



COCKTAILS

RICHARD'S GIMME-LET

Does your family fail to appreciate how special you are? Have you defamed or killed any of them to get what you deserve? Then this drink, mixed in honor of the chronically misunderstood Richard, Duke of Gloucester, is for you. In *Henry VI, Part 3*, Richard scores big for his clan, the Yorks, in the ongoing Wars of the Roses. But at the start of the sequel, *Richard III*, no one cares about any of that. Sure, they all remember his martyr of a dead little brother, Rutland. And everyone's basking in the beams of his newly crowned oldest brother, King Edward. But do they remember one lousy thing Richard ever did? Noooooo. He's just an uneven-legged hunchback with a withered arm and no girlfriend. What's an undervalued son to do but take down some relatives to get his turn in the Big Chair? Richard spreads a rumor that Edward's a bastard; gets his other brother, George, murdered; and puts a hit out on his little prince nephews just to be safe. And then he gets to be King Richard! Too bad his mother's the only one left to celebrate the big moment. Which she does by crashing his royal procession, announcing he was a monster-baby born "to make the earth my hell," and hitting him with a death curse. At the end of the play, Richard finds himself alone, unloved, and horseless on the Bosworth battlefield, about to be killed by God's gift to England, the future King Henry VII. Face it, Dick, you're a middle child with shoe lifts. This was never going to go your way.

2 ounces gin
½ ounce simple syrup
1 ounce fresh lime juice
Very thin crosswise slice of habañero pepper

Shake the gin, simple syrup, and lime juice with ice and strain into a martini glass. Drop in a vicious bite of pepper. And in the spirit of Richard's power-grabbing . . . Gimme that drink!



The historical Richard was actually the youngest York son, but Shakespeare puts him in the middle—which is a great way to play up his status as the overlooked sibling. Other characters get a significant makeover, too.

Shakespeare wrote *Richard III* while Elizabeth I was on the throne, so her grandfather Henry VII lands a starring role as the God-anointed hero sent to save England from evil Richard and found the Tudor line. But even if Richard's life and afterlife were full of haters, he has an army of supporters now in the Richard III Society. Founded in 1924, they're a group committed to exposing factual distortions about Richard's life and reign—including his allegedly misshapen body. Congenital disabilities and "unnatural" births were often considered the marks of a damned soul and twisted mind. Sir Thomas More, working under the Tudor regime, knew this when he wrote his 1513 account of Richard's feet-first delivery, hunchback, and villainous behavior. X-ray machines have revealed that a hump was added on to one of Richard's portraits, which lends support to the pro-Richard conspiracy theorists, but the 2012 discovery of his skeleton under a parking lot in Leicester confirms that he had a severely curved spine. After this find, even the Richard III Society publicly acknowledged that "there is a germ of truth behind the Tudor descriptions." Still, as one long-time Society member maintains, "There is no evidence for the hunchback, the withered arm and the limp—they are merely inventions of those trying to blacken Richard's image." *To be continued . . .*



W. G. ...
1914

ISABELLA'S VESPERS

In *Measure for Measure*, Isabella is a type A nun-in-training, dedicated to “strict restraint” and fasting, when—*Bam!*—she’s forced into a sadistic game of Would You Rather: Would you rather see your brother, Claudio, get executed for illegally fornicating with his girlfriend or . . . save his life by having sex with the corrupt autocrat who sentenced him? Isabella, it turns out, would rather not sacrifice her body, her career, and her relationship with God for her “faithless coward” of a brother. Not that anyone could possibly understand that. *Hey, loosen up. It’s only your virginity. What’s the big deal? You can always get a job waiting tables at the tavern.* Jesus! Does the responsible, “together” sibling always have to clean up after the screw-up? Ultimately Claudio gets to keep his life, and Isabella gets to keep her virginity—for the moment—thanks to an undercover duke, a bed-trick, and a pirate head. (There’s a reason this is considered a “problem play.”) But that doesn’t mean she’s clean of the whole sordid affair: at the end of the play, everyone expects her to marry the duke, like she’s some kind of Edible Arrangements “Thank You” bouquet, Isabella *girlfriend*—listen to us: Run, don’t walk, back to the Sisters of Saint Clare. Then lock yourself in your cell, wait for the evening vespers service, and pray to God that He reincarnates you as an only child. Then treat yourself to one of *these vespers*.

Isabella likes following the rules, so we’re sticking to James Bond’s classic vesper recipe. But we’re adding our own fun garnish of rosary beads and a cross.

10 black tapioca pearls (boba)
3 ounces gin
1 ounce vodka
 $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce Lillet
Lemon peel cut in shape of a cross

Prepare the boba by placing them in boiling water. Cook, covered, for 5 minutes. Drain and cool. Place the cooked pearls in the bottom of a martini glass. Shake (don’t stir) the gin, vodka, and Lillet with ice until very cold. Strain into the glass over pearls. Float the lemon peel cross on top.



SHYLOCK'S DUCATS

Every adolescent girl needs someone to rebel against, and in Shakespeare's plays, it's usually Daddy. Okay, so maybe his fathers aren't always super supportive of their little girls' hopes and dreams, but do they deserve to be humiliated by their ungrateful daughters? That's what Shylock, Jessica's tormented Jewish father in *The Merchant of Venice*, wants to know. It's one thing when your daughter sneaks out on a few secret dates — but *eloping*? With a *guy*? And what kind of cruel child takes your wedding ring, along with all your gold and ducats, so she can bankroll her honeymoon to Genoa and her taste for exotic pet monkeys? This drink (made with Goldschläger, a liqueur with actual gold flakes) is for all you heartbroken — and broke — fathers out there. We know you can't afford it, so this one's on us.

Lemon wedge
Edible gold dust
1 ounce Goldschläger schnapps
3 ounces sparkling cider
1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice

Rim a chilled martini glass with the lemon wedge and dip the rim in gold dust (unless your daughter got to it first). Fill a shaker with ice. Add the Goldschläger, cider, and lemon juice. Shake like you're in Vegas and Daddy needs a new pair of shoes. Strain into the martini glass.



Beaten-down dads make frequent appearances in Shakespeare's plays. So it's too bad Shylock's dietary laws prevent him from sharing a consolation drink and some loaded potato skins with all of his equally miserable Christian counterparts. Like Baptista, whose shrewish daughter Kate yells at him for trying to find her a husband, and then embarrasses him by beating up her lute instructor; and Brabantio, whose daughter, Desdemona, breaks his heart when she elopes with Othello, the only non-white guy in all of Venice; and Lord Capulet, who pays for a lavish wedding that Juliet knows she's going to trap out on . . . *by pretending to die*. Even with their bad tempers, racism, and abusive defense mechanisms, Shakespeare's dads can be downright sympathetic at times. They also make us look like great parents by comparison.

CLAUDIUS'S SEX IN THE BREACH

You knew you weren't the Brady Bunch, but life in your new blended family has been a total pain in the ass. Especially (if you're like Hamlet's stepfather, Claudius) when you have to worry about that moody nephew/stepson of yours and his Big Unmedicated Thoughts, hanging around looking like he wants to kill you. You can't seem to do anything right with that nut-job. First, he thinks you should stop drinking so much, because it's a vulgar Danish custom "more honoured in the breach than the observance" . . . even though you're at your own freaking—hello—*Danish* wedding. Then he's convinced you're breaching some biblical incest command because your new wife also happens to be your sister-in-law. What's next? No more reading on the can? It's time to tune out all the random bitching in your new household and break whatever rules you want. In fact, go ahead and make this Sex in the Breach a double: one for you, and one for your hot "sometime sister, now our queen."

2 ounces vodka
½ ounce aquavit
1½ ounces Orangina
1 ounce cranberry juice
1 ounce pomegranate juice
Slice of star fruit

Add the vodka and aquavit (the Danish booze of choice) to a highball glass over ice. Fill with Orangina, cranberry juice, and pomegranate juice and stir. Garnish with star fruit and enjoy the hell out of this mixture.

SAVORY MATTERS

GLOUCESTER'S JELLIED EYEBALLS

You know that crazy family who lives down the block? The one with the dad who wanders around the neighborhood naked, yelling at the mailboxes? And the daughters screaming over whose turn it is to give him a sponge bath? Well, take a cue from *King Lear*'s most mangled Good Samaritan, the Earl of Gloucester: Do not—we repeat—*do not* go over there and try to help. If you do, someone might lose an eye. Possibly two. After King Lear makes a mess of his family by disowning his one honest, well-adjusted daughter, Cordelia, and dividing his kingdom up between her devious sisters, Goneril and Regan, he insists they still treat him like he's king. Goneril and Regan shut their doors on him instead of leaving him to wander into a raging storm, where he loses his mind and most of his clothes. That's when Gloucester decides to protect Lear from his daughters' "cruel nails" and "boarish fangs." When Goneril finds out about Gloucester's interference, she decides they should blind him. Regan's on board—in fact, she's practically drooling with excitement as she and her husband, Cornwall, bind Gloucester's "corky arms" to a chair and pluck out one of his eyes. When Cornwall goes for eyeball number two and yells "Out, vile jelly!" it's like a multiple family orgasm. Too bad Gloucester didn't keep his distance from the whole dysfunctional Lear clan. That's what lucky Cordelia got to do. Who *wouldn't* prefer disinheritance to spending one more holiday meal with these sociopaths?

• 40 hors d'œuvre

20 small new potatoes, halved crosswise

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup beet juice

1 cup sour cream

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt

4 ounces caviar

Boil the potatoes for 15 minutes or until tender. Drain and set aside to cool. Cut a small slice off the rounded bottom of each half so that they can sit flat on a plate. Pour the beet juice into shallow bowl and dab the open face of each potato half in the juice until it takes on a pink hue. Arrange the potato halves on a platter. In another bowl, combine the sour cream with the salt. Spoon a small dollop of sour cream in the middle of each potato. Top the sour cream on each potato with $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon caviar to make the pupils. Continue until all the eyes are staring at you, completely horrified.

Warning: Consuming food that resembles body parts in *King Lear* may evoke negative feelings about your own siblings, favoritism, and the cost of elder care.



JESSICA'S TOTALLY UN-KOSHER BITES

Shylock's daughter, Jessica, has been cooking up this finger-flip to her dad since she first laid eyes on that dreamy Christian boy, Lorenzo. If all goes well, she'll get the un-kosher kitchen and cutlery of her dreams. This dish mixes shellfish and bacon, and throws in some dairy for good measure.

• 12 hors d'oeuvres

- 6 slices bacon
- ¼ cup maple syrup
- ½ teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 12 jumbo shrimp, peeled, deveined, and tails off
- 3 tablespoons crumbled goat cheese

Preheat the oven to 375°F. Par-cook the bacon in a pan on the stovetop until translucent. Remove from pan, drain, and halve crosswise. Mix the syrup and red pepper flakes together in a small bowl. Brush both sides of each shrimp with the syrup mixture, sprinkle with goat cheese, then wrap in bacon. Secure with a toothpick and place on a foil-lined baking sheet. Bake for 15 minutes, or until the bacon is crisp and the shrimp are cooked through.



When English audiences first heard Jessica gush about ditching her father for Lorenzo to “become a Christian” and his “loving wife,” they may have thought *Great news! The more Christians the merrier!* Then again, they might have questioned the genuineness of her conversion. Jews had long been characterized as untrustworthy and devious. Even murderous. (Medieval stories depicted Jewish men poisoning wells and killing Christian children.) In 1290, Edward I banished all Jews from England, and they weren't legally readmitted until the 1650s. The only official exception to this rule was for converted Jews who were fleeing the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitions in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. This was the case for Rodrigo Lopez, a Portuguese *converso* who fled to England in 1559 and rose to become Elizabeth I's personal physician. Even though he had friends and supporters in the highest places, he eventually was accused of trying to poison the queen. This sensational scandal ended with Lopez's public execution in 1594. Twenty years later, the historian William Camden captured England's enduring distrust of converts when he dramatized Lopez's alleged final moments: the doctor affirmed “that he loved the Queen as well as he loved Jesus Christ; which coming from a man of the Jewish profession moved no small laughter in the standers-by.”

HAMLET'S "UNWEEDED GARDEN" SPRING ROLLS WITH HONEY DIPPING SAUCE

We really wish Hamlet could have gone to therapy instead of projecting all his issues onto his mother. You just know he blames Gertrude for all of his intimacy problems. Like if it weren't for her "rank and gross" sexual appetite—aka that "unweeded garden" growing in her and Claudius's "nasty sty" of a bed—he'd *definitely* be married to Ophelia. Yeah. *Right*. And they'd be living in the Copenhagen suburbs with their four perfect children, driving over the border to IKEA on the weekends for the \$1.99 Swedish meatball breakfast. We can't rewrite Shakespeare, or stop our own kids from blaming us for all their miserable problems, but we can turn Hamlet's crude comment about his mother's "unweeded" hoo-hoo into a healthy finger food. Even if your mother's having incestuous rebound sex with your father's murderer (oops, you weren't supposed to find out about *that* part until the end of act 1), get over it and eat your greens.

• 12 spring rolls

3 tablespoons sesame oil
2 cloves garlic, peeled and crushed
1 tablespoon minced fresh ginger
 $\frac{1}{2}$ pound boneless, skinless chicken breast
1 firm mango, peeled and diced
3 carrots, finely grated
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup chopped cilantro
1 cup chopped basil
1 cup chopped mint
2 tablespoons seasoned rice vinegar
12 rice paper wrappers
1 cup alfalfa sprouts
6 leaves endive, julienned

DIPPING SAUCE

3 tablespoons tahini
 $1\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons rice vinegar
2 tablespoons soy sauce
1 tablespoon brown sugar
1 teaspoon minced fresh ginger
1 tablespoon coarsely chopped roasted peanuts, for garnish
1 scallion (green part only), chopped, for garnish

In a skillet, heat the sesame oil and sauté the garlic and ginger over medium heat. Add the chicken and cook on high heat until browned and thoroughly cooked. Set aside to cool. Combine the mango, carrots, cilantro, basil, mint, and rice vinegar in a mixing bowl. Shred the cooled chicken and stir with its cooking liquid into this mixture. Prepare the rice paper wrappers, one at a time, by submerging them in a shallow pan of warm water. Tightly pushing down with your fingers, soak the wrapper until translucent and elastic. Lay the wrapper carefully on a flat surface, smooth side down. Place a heaping tablespoon of the chicken mixture at the end of the wrap closest to you. Sprinkle a pinch of alfalfa sprouts and a tablespoon of endive leaves over the filling. Roll halfway up. Fold the sides into the center so they are touching. Roll up to complete.

For the dipping sauce, combine all ingredients except for the garnishes in a small bowl and stir well. Top with peanuts and scallion. Arrange the rolls on plate around the dipping sauce. Call your therapist.



Shakespeare's audiences may have felt some déjà vu as they listened to Hamlet rant about King Claudius and Queen Gertrude's "incestuous sheets." Royal incest was front-page news when Queen Elizabeth's father, Henry VIII, tried to divorce his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, so he could wed Queen Elizabeth's mother, Anne Boleyn. Back in 1503, the pope had granted a special dispensation to Henry so that he could marry Catherine, his brother Arthur's widow, and get around the incest prohibition in Leviticus 20:21, which considered this kind of union "unclean." Then, in 1532, Henry used that very same biblical passage to lobby for the marriage's annulment. His logic? *God was punishing their incestuous marriage by not giving them any boy babies!* Henry's argument didn't fly with the Vatican, so he decided it would be easier to just break with the pope and divorce Catherine himself (see Henry's VIII's Whiskey Slash, page 53). Eventually—after his and his *third* wife's son (yay!) Edward VI took the throne—everyone lived Protestantly Ever After. Sort of. There were, of course, a few unpleasant bumps in the road, including (but not limited to): (1) Protestant Edward's early death, followed by the short reign of his Catholic half sister, "Bloody Mary," followed by the contentious ascension of her Protestant half sister, Elizabeth; (2) confusion for everyone over which religion from which monarch you were supposed to be practicing; not to mention (3) which sacrament meant what and why; and (4) panic attacks throughout the land.

II

Now Is the Whiskey of Our Discontent

Drinks for the Domestically Distressed

Living in a castle with a stockpile of servants and nurse-nannies may sound like a dream come true, especially when you're stuck doing laundry and driving carpool. But Shakespeare's upscale wives had problems, too. Maybe Gertrude didn't have to haul her "gifted" son, Hamlet, around to psychiatric appointments and Russian Math classes, but she did have to deal with all his inappropriate comments about her private life. And how about those husbands? If they aren't accusing you of adultery or shrewishness, they're blaming you for all their career setbacks. At the start of *Richard III*, gloomy Richard's a social outcast who can't snap out of "the winter of our discontent." But, hey, what's he complaining about? At least he gets plenty of "me" time. The real tragedy here is that Shakespeare's wives and mothers never got left alone. They suffered a lot of grief from a lot of people, and didn't have any girlfriends to back them up and take them out. This group of cocktails and savory matters is for all of you domestically distressed ladies out there looking for a boost of merry fellowship.



F. D. C. Dyer 1886

COCKTAILS

LADY MACBETH'S G-SPOT

Calling all ambitious mistresses of the house! Don't end up like Lady Macbeth. At the beginning of *Macbeth*, she strong-arms her husband into murdering his boss, King Duncan, so that they can snag the Scottish throne. Lady M. finally gets her tiara, but it's all so stressful and unpleasant. She ends up wandering around in a nightgown, obsessively washing her hands and sleep talking: "Out, damned spot!" Spilling an anointed king's blood has a way of catching up to you, doesn't it? Lucky for you, the right drink can deliver a satisfying rush of power without staining your furniture—or your soul—with regicidal blood. This spot will take you to Cloud Nine, instead of to Hell.

2 ounces Scotch whisky
½ ounce simple syrup
½ ounce fresh lemon juice
10 pomegranate seeds

Shake the first three ingredients with ice and strain into a chilled martini glass. Drop in pomegranate seed "spots" to finish.

KATE'S SHREW-DRIVER

At the end of *The Taming of the Shrew*, Kate's made the bumpy transition from cranky single girl to married lady. She says she's into the obedient wife thing and gives a whole speech telling women to "place your hands below your husband's foot"—but is she for real? After all, Petruchio literally dragged her through the mud and starved her during their honeymoon. We'll never know for sure, but we like to imagine that Kate's happy at least once a week as she's serving these cold, ironic Shrew-drivers up to her married girlfriends at her Wednesday-morning Book Club Brunch. We recommend pairing this sour-lemon version of the classic screwdriver with *Fifty Shades of Grey* or anything by Betty Friedan.

Superfine sugar*
1½ ounces limoncello
1½ ounces lemon-flavored vodka
5 ounces fresh orange juice
4–6 dashes grapefruit or lemon bitters (depending on your mood)
Lemon wedge and slice

Rim a highball glass with the lemon wedge and dip the rim in sugar. Fill the glass halfway with ice. Pour in the limoncello, vodka, and orange juice. Stir in the bitters. Garnish with a lemon slice.



The Real Housewives franchise didn't exist back in Shakespeare's day, but people sure loved to consume stories about "shrews"—women who yelled at their husbands, or gossiped about their spouses' sex, gambling, and anger management problems. In other words, women who couldn't keep their big fat traps shut. There were times when a husband had to allow his wife to gossip away—like when she stayed in bed for a month after giving birth, chatting it up with her girlfriends while he took care of the house and paid for the party. But this postpartum gabfest was the exception to the rule. Popular songs and poems about loud, domineering wives usually involved public humiliation, followed by a Stepford-like transformation. If charges of "scolding" were brought against a woman, she might get dunked repeatedly in water and/or muzzled by a scold's bridle, a metal head-cage with a tongue suppressor. The bridle sometimes came with a bonus feature: a leash, for trotting those unruly women out in the streets.

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