

What Does Mirabell Contrive against Lady Wishfort?

Writer: William Congreve | Generated: Jan 26, 2026

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In “The Way of the World” (1681), Mirabell makes a clever plan against Lady Wishfort. His main goal is to marry Millamant. But Lady Wishfort does not like him. She controls Millamant’s money. So, Mirabell must trick her to get her permission. William Congreve (1631-1700) shows this very smartly.

Fake Sir Rowland: Mirabell tells his servant Waitwell to dress up as Sir Rowland. This man does not exist. Waitwell, as Sir Rowland, tries to make Lady Wishfort fall in love. She quickly believes him and wants to marry him. But Mirabell plans to stop the wedding before it happens. Then he will promise to keep her secret if she agrees to his marriage.

Foible’s Help: Foible is Lady Wishfort’s maid. She is a very important part of the plan. She tells lies to Lady Wishfort and makes her believe that Sir Rowland truly loves her. She also tells Millamant everything about the plan. When Lady Wishfort discovers Foible’s betrayal, she angrily asks,

“Have you made a passive bawd of me?”

Use of Jealousy:

Lady Wishfort already feels hurt by Mirabell’s past flattery. She believes Mirabell used her to get close to Millamant. So now, she wants revenge. Mirabell uses this anger. He knows she will try to hurt him by marrying Sir Rowland. This is exactly what Mirabell wants her to do.

In fine, Mirabell’s plan is smart and funny. He fools Lady Wishfort by using her pride, vanity, and jealousy. He does not hurt her, but he cleverly changes her mind. In the end, his plan helps him marry Millamant and saves others from Fainall’s evil plan.