

Volpone Summary

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Plot Summary

Volpone and His Love for Gold: The play begins in Venice. Volpone, the Fox, is a rich man. He lives in a big house. He has a servant named Mosca, the Fly. Volpone is not married. He has no children. He has no close family. Therefore, many greedy individuals aspire to become his heir. Volpone loves gold more than anything else. He calls it his "saint." Every morning, he asks Mosca to open the treasure box. He wants to look at his gold like others look at the sun. Volpone speaks to his gold as if it were a living god. He says, "Good morning to the day, and next, my gold!" He does not earn money by working. He says honest work is for fools. He gets gold by cheating others. He pretends to be sick and dying. This is his trick to fool those who are greedy. They visit him with gifts, hoping to inherit his wealth upon his death.

The Legacy-Hunters Visit Volpone: Volpone's first visitor is Voltore, a greedy lawyer. Voltore brings a big silver plate. He speaks kindly to Volpone and acts like a true friend. But he only wants Volpone's gold. Mosca flatters him and says Volpone talks about him all the time. Mosca also says Voltore is written in Volpone's will. Voltore becomes happy and proud. Next comes Corbaccio, an old man. He is deaf and weak. He brings a bag of gold coins. Mosca tells him that Volpone is near death. Mosca says Voltore has already been named as heir. Corbaccio becomes afraid. So, Mosca tricks him into disinheriting his own son, Bonario. Corbaccio agrees and gives Mosca a paper, making Volpone his new heir. The third visitor is Corvino, a wealthy merchant. He brings a pearl and a diamond. Mosca tells him that Voltore and Corbaccio have already visited with gifts. He says Volpone always calls out Corvino's name in pain. Corvino becomes proud and thinks he will be the true heir. Each man is fooled. They all believe they will get Volpone's fortune.

Volpone Falls in Love with Celia: One day, Volpone dresses like a street doctor. He stands outside Corvino's house. He pretends to sell a magic oil that can cure many diseases. He delivers a lengthy speech to a large crowd of people. He says his oil can heal all problems. Celia, the wife of Corvino, watches from her window. She throws down her handkerchief. Volpone becomes excited. He thinks Celia loves him. He returns home with passion in his heart. He tells Mosca that he has been shot by Cupid's arrow. He says Celia is more beautiful than gold. He says he cannot sleep without her. He feels she can make him young again. Volpone

gives Mosca the key to his chest. He says Mosca can use all his wealth to bring Celia to him.

Mosca's Plan to Bring Celia: Mosca makes a new plan. He goes to Corvino and praises Celia. He says she is very beautiful and pure. Then he tells Corvino that Volpone is near death. He says Volpone needs to see an attractive woman to feel better. He adds that if Celia comes and stands beside Volpone, his sickness may be cured. Corvino wants to become Volpone's heir, so he agrees. He does not care about his wife's feelings. At home, he tells Celia to wear her best dress and jewels. He lies and says they are going to a good man's house. Celia cries and begs him not to take her. But Corvino is cruel and greedy. He threatens her. He says he will lock her in a dark room forever. He also says he will kill her. He shows no love. He wants only money.

Bonario Learns the Truth: At this time, Mosca meets Bonario, Corbaccio's son. Bonario is a good man. He loves his father. But Mosca lies to him. He says Corbaccio is planning to disinherit him from his will. Mosca says Volpone is behind this evil plan. Bonario becomes angry. Mosca pretends to cry. He says he wants to help Bonario. He tells Bonario to hide in Volpone's house. He says Corbaccio is coming to meet Volpone. There, Bonario can hear everything and learn the truth. But this is another trick by Mosca. He wants to bring Celia and Corvino to Volpone's room while Bonario is hiding.

The Attempted Rape and Its Aftermath: Celia arrives at Volpone's room with Corvino. She looks very sad. Volpone sends Corvino away. Then he begins to speak sweet words to Celia. He praises her beauty and promises her gold and jewels. He says he will make her rich and free. Celia refuses his offers. She says she loves her honour more than gold. Volpone becomes angry. He says if she does not love him, he will take her by force. Celia cries and calls upon God. At that moment, Bonario jumps out. He stops Volpone. He also beats Mosca. Then he escapes with Celia. Volpone becomes afraid. His face is beaten, and his plan is broken. Mosca comes back, bleeding. But he is still clever. He says they can fix everything with lies.

The Trial and the False Story: The matter goes to court. Bonario and Celia speak the truth. But no one believes them. Voltore becomes Volpone's lawyer. He says Bonario and Celia are lovers. He says they made up the story to get Volpone's gold. Corvino and Corbaccio support this lie. They give false witness. Corvino says Celia is a bad wife. He says she tried to sell herself to a traveler. Lady Politick also supports this. Mosca gives her false news. The judges become confused. They think Celia and Bonario are guilty. They send them to jail. Mosca becomes proud. He controls the court with lies.

Volpone Pretends to Be Dead: Volpone enjoys tricking people. He wants to play one last game. He tells Mosca to spread the news that he is dead. He wants to see the legacy-hunters fight. Mosca agrees. He tells Voltore, Corvino, and Corbaccio that Volpone is dead. He also says

Volpone gave all his money to Mosca. The three men become mad with anger. They all feel cheated. They thought they would be heirs. Now, a servant has taken everything. Volpone watches their reaction from behind a curtain. He laughs at them. But then, Mosca shows his true face. He refuses to return the gold. He says the money is now his.

Volpone's Final Trick and Mosca's Betrayal: Volpone becomes scared. He dresses in disguise and goes to court. He tells Voltore the truth. He says he is not dead. He says it was a game. Voltore becomes nervous. He tries to change his statement. But the court thinks he is mad. Mosca enters as a rich man. He wears fine clothes. He walks like a lord. He calls Volpone crazy. Volpone offers him half the money. But Mosca refuses. Volpone gets angry. He throws off his disguise. He tells the court everything. He says he was pretending. He says Mosca is a liar. He also says Corbaccio, Corvino, and Voltore are greedy men. The truth is now open.

The Punishment of the Evil Characters: The court listens to Volpone's words. They also hear again from Bonario and Celia. They see who is good and who is evil. They give strong punishments. Volpone is sent to prison for life. His gold is given to a hospital. Mosca is whipped. He is sent to row in a ship as a slave. Voltore is removed from the law court. Corbaccio's money is given to Bonario. Corbaccio must live in a monastery. Corvino is punished in public. He must wear donkey ears and be shown around the city. Celia is freed from him. She is given her honour back.

Use of Comedy and Dramatic Irony: This play is a comedy of humours. Each person is ruled by one strong feeling. Volpone is greedy and lustful. Corbaccio is greedy and selfish. Corvino is jealous and cruel. Voltore loves fame and power. Mosca is clever and proud. These feelings lead them to funny and foolish actions. The play also uses dramatic irony. The audience knows Volpone is not sick. However, the other characters are unaware of this. That makes the play funny. We laugh when greedy men are fooled. We also feel the danger when lies almost destroy the good people. The play uses this irony to make its message strong.

Volpone as a Beast Fable and a Satire: Volpone is a beast fable. The main characters are like animals. Volpone is a fox. He is smart and tricky. Mosca is a fly. He moves quickly and lives by feeding on others. Corvino is a crow. Corbaccio is a raven. Voltore is a vulture. All are birds that feed on the dead. These animal names show their nature. They are all greedy, dirty, and selfish. The play is also a satire. It illustrates how people cheat for financial gain. It demonstrates how the law can be exploited for dishonest purposes. It mocks the rich, the doctors, the lawyers, and even marriage. Through jokes and tricks, the play gives a strong lesson. Greed leads to ruin. Lust leads to shame. Lies lead to punishment. Only truth and goodness bring peace.

Detailed Summary

Act 1, Scene 1: Volpone and His Love for Gold: The play begins with Volpone, the Fox, and his clever servant Mosca, the Fly. Volpone shows great love for his gold. He asks Mosca to open the gold chest so he can enjoy looking at it. He treats gold like others treat God, nature, or poetry. He has no wife or children, so wealthy people visit him with gifts, hoping to become his heirs. Volpone pretends to be dying to fool them. He does not want to earn money honestly. Instead, he lies and cheats to get more wealth.

Act 1, Scene 2: Volpone Tricks Voltore: Three strange entertainers (Nano, Castrone, and Androgynio) perform for Volpone. Their fun stops when someone knocks. Mosca opens the door and says Voltore, a lawyer, has come with a gold plate. Volpone quickly acts sick. He puts on fur clothes and drops medicine in his eyes. He looks like he is dying. Mosca brings Voltore in. Voltore shows fake respect, hoping to become the heir. But he is also greedy, so the audience enjoys Volpone's clever trick.

Act 1, Scene 3: Voltore Falls for the Trap: Mosca brings Voltore to Volpone's bedside and tells him Volpone always talks about him. Volpone acts weak and hard of hearing. When he sees the gold plate, he thanks Voltore and promises a reward. Mosca secretly tells Voltore that he is now the heir. Voltore becomes very happy and asks if he is the only heir. Mosca says yes. Voltore leaves, pleased. This scene shows Voltore's greed. He does not care about Volpone's health. He only wants money and power.

Act 1, Scene 4: Corbaccio Tricked into Giving Everything: Old Corbaccio, called "the Raven," comes to visit Volpone. He brings a bottle of medicine. Mosca thinks it is poison to kill Volpone faster. He tells Corbaccio that Volpone does not trust doctors. Corbaccio asks about Volpone's health. Mosca describes terrible symptoms, and Corbaccio is happy. He thinks Volpone will die soon. Since Corbaccio brings no gift, Mosca says that other men brought rich gifts. Then, he tricks Corbaccio into making Volpone his heir. At first, Corbaccio refuses to disinherit his son. But Mosca says Volpone will die soon, and then his son will get double. Corbaccio agrees and leaves. Like a greedy bird, Corbaccio is happy about death. Another legacy-hunter arrives as he exits. Volpone's trick continues.

Act 1, Scene 5: Corvino's Greed and Volpone's New Desire: Corvino, a rich merchant, comes with a pearl and a diamond. He asks if Volpone is dead. Mosca says no, but claims Volpone always says Corvino's name. At the bedside, Mosca calls Corvino the heir, though he says it is a secret. Corvino is happy and laughs at Volpone's sick body. Mosca jokes about smothering Volpone with a pillow. Corvino first says no, then whispers, "At your discretion." As he leaves, Lady Politick Would-Be arrives. Volpone ignores her. Mosca praises Corvino's wife,

calling her Italy's brightest star. Volpone becomes excited. He wants to see her. He decides to wear a disguise and watch her secretly.

Act 2, Scene 1: Foolish Talk Between Two Tourists: Outside Corvino's house, two English tourists (Peregrine and Sir Politick Would-Be) talk under Celia's window. Sir Politick tells a silly story about a raven building a ship. Peregrine thinks he is joking, but soon sees that Sir Politick believes everything he says. To test him, Peregrine shares fake news from England, like a lion having a cub in the Tower and porpoises swimming in the Thames. Sir Politick believes it all. They discuss spies and baboons allegedly working for China. Peregrine laughs secretly. He thinks Sir Politick is foolish and easy to fool.

Act 2, Scene 2: Volpone as a Fake Healer: Mosca and Nano, in disguise, set up a stage. Volpone, dressed as a mountebank (a medicine seller), delivers a loud speech. He says his oil can cure many illnesses. At first, he asks for eight crowns, but then lowers the price to just pennies. He promises a gift to whoever throws a handkerchief. Celia, Corvino's wife, drops hers from the window. Volpone's trick works. He gets her attention through this clever performance.

Act 2, Scene 3: Corvino's Rage and Sir Politick's Doubt: Corvino storms in, angry that a mountebank is near his house and that his wife dropped her handkerchief. He breaks up the crowd. Sir Politick thinks it might be a trick on him. Peregrine finds Sir Politick funny and wants to watch him more.

Act 2, Scene 4: Volpone Falls for Celia: At home, Volpone says he is wounded by love and cannot live without Celia. He saw her only once, but now he is deeply obsessed. Mosca promises to help him. Volpone offers all his wealth to Mosca to win Celia. His desire now beats his love for gold.

Act 2, Scene 5: Corvino's Cruelty to Celia: Corvino angrily scolds Celia for looking at the mountebank. He accuses her of wanting him for his money and body. In rage, he raises his sword but does not hit her. Instead, he says he will shut her window and lock her in. He calls her a "whore" and even threatens to kill her. This scene reveals Corvino's greed, jealousy, and the cruel way he treats his innocent wife.

Act 2, Scene 6: Corvino Offers His Wife: Mosca tells Corvino that Volpone is healed by the mountebank's oil. He also says Volpone now wants a woman to sleep with. To please Volpone, Mosca hints that Corvino should offer a woman he controls. Corvino first suggests others but finally agrees to send his own wife, Celia. This shows how greed makes him forget love, honor, and humanity.

Act 2, Scene 7: Corvino Tricks Celia: Celia cries in another room. Corvino pretends to be calm and says he trusts her. He asks her to dress up and come with him to Volpone's house. He hides his real plan and speaks sweetly to fool her.

Act 3, Scene 1: Mosca Praises Himself: As he leaves Corvino's house, Mosca feels proud. He praises his own cleverness and calls himself a brilliant rascal. He believes he can escape any danger like a snake. His pride now matches Volpone's earlier pride.

Act 3, Scene 2: Mosca Tricks Bonario: Mosca meets Bonario, who insults him for being low-class and dishonest. Mosca pretends to cry. Bonario feels bad and apologizes. Then Mosca tells him that his father, Corbaccio, plans to disinherit him. Bonario doubts it, but Mosca invites him to hide at Volpone's house and see the truth.

Act 3, Scene 3: Volpone Waits and Complains: Volpone waits for Mosca and grows impatient. His entertainers arrive, but he sends them away when Lady Politick Would-Be comes. He feels annoyed by her talk and says she kills his desire for Celia. He prefers quiet, obedient women, such as Celia.

Act 3, Scene 4: Lady Politick Annoys Volpone: Lady Politick fixes her makeup before visiting Volpone, wanting to look stylish. She talks nonstop about dreams, medicines, and poems. Volpone pretends to be too weak to speak. He offers her a drink to make her leave, but she continues talking. Volpone gets annoyed. He prefers silent women like Celia over talkative ones like Lady Politick.

Act 3, Scene 5: Mosca Tricks Lady Politick: Volpone begs Mosca to remove Lady Politick. Mosca lies, saying her husband is walking with a pretty courtesan. Lady Politick runs out in anger. Mosca then tells Volpone to get ready for Celia's arrival. Her jealousy clears the way for Volpone's next move.

Act 3, Scene 6: Bonario Hides: Volpone gets ready to meet Celia. Mosca brings Bonario into the room and hides him. Though only a servant, Mosca secretly controls everyone's actions like a clever director.

Act 3, Scene 7: Volpone Tries to Seduce Celia: Corvino brings Celia early. Mosca quickly sends Bonario to wait in another room. Corvino tells Celia she must sleep with Volpone. She pleads, but Corvino gets angry and forces her to the bed. Volpone enters and pretends to be weak. He offers Celia rich gifts and praises her beauty, but she refuses. Volpone then threatens her: "Yield, or I'll force thee." As he attacks, Bonario jumps out, saves Celia, and runs away with her. Volpone becomes afraid. His lust and greed have made him as cruel and foolish as Corvino. Both men treat Celia like an object, not a human being.

Act 3, Scene 8: Fear After the Escape: Mosca returns, bleeding from Bonario's attack. He and Volpone panic, thinking guards will arrest them. Mosca begs Volpone to kill him. But instead of guards, Corbaccio arrives. Volpone now fears punishment for the first time, as his cruel plan starts falling apart.

Act 3, Scene 9: Mosca Spreads More Lies: Corbaccio sees Mosca bleeding. Mosca lies, saying Bonario attacked them after learning about the will. Corbaccio happily hands over a new will and suggests poisoning Volpone. Voltore arrives and asks about the will. Mosca quickly lies again, saying Corbaccio made Volpone his heir to win favor, and Bonario, jealous, brought Celia and threatened to expose them. Mosca claims it's all part of Bonario's plan to steal their money. Voltore believes him and rushes to stop Bonario in court.

Act 4, Scene 1: Sir Politick Gives Silly Advice: Sir Politick gives Peregrine useless advice about acting like a local. He says Englishmen often get taken advantage of in Venice. He warns Peregrine to be careful with forks, fruit, and conversation. Then he brags about secret business plans, such as stopping plague outbreaks and shipyard attacks, but quickly shares them. Peregrine later finds his diary full of boring details. This humorous scene shows Sir Politick's foolishness and provides comic relief after the play's dark events.

Act 4, Scene 2: Lady Politick's Mistake: Lady Politick sees Peregrine and wrongly thinks he's a female prostitute. She scolds her husband for being dishonorable. She calls Peregrine rude names, such as "female devil." Sir Politick gets confused and fears Peregrine tricked him. He says they can no longer be friends. Peregrine tries to leave, but Lady Politick blocks him. The scene highlights the foolishness of both characters.

Act 4, Scene 3: Mosca Tricks Lady Politick Again: Mosca tells Lady Politick that the woman with her husband was caught. Embarrassed, she apologizes to Peregrine and rushes to court to see Celia. Mosca plans to use her to help Volpone. Peregrine, angry at the insult, starts planning revenge on Sir Politick.

Act 4, Scene 4: Mosca Controls the Heirs: Mosca meets Corbaccio, Corvino, and Voltore to plan what they will say in court. Each man secretly worries that the others may become Volpone's heir. Mosca lies to each one, saying they are the true heir and the others are just tools. He now fully controls them all.

Act 4, Scene 5: Lies in the Courtroom: In court, Celia and Bonario tell the truth, but Voltore defends Volpone. He (Voltore) says he is too sick to appear. The court insists Volpone must attend. Voltore lies, claiming that Bonario and Celia are having an affair and that Bonario attacked Mosca out of anger. Corbaccio, Corvino, and Voltore each lie. They say Bonario and

Celia planned everything. Corvino says horrible things about Celia, and Voltore adds that she tried to sell herself to a traveler. Celia is heartbroken. This scene shows how everyone now lies to protect Volpone. It also illustrates the powerlessness of women like Celia in Venetian society.

Act 4, Scene 6: Courtroom Deception: Lady Politick enters the court and angrily insults Celia, then apologizes. The court asks Bonario and Celia for proof, but they have none. Volpone arrives pretending to be sick again. Bonario demands that he be tested, but Voltore says it would be torture. The court believes Volpone is too weak to commit rape. They jailed Bonario and Celia. Volpone is praised, and Voltore is thanked. Corbaccio shows no guilt for ruining his own son. Volpone's disguise works again, and justice is denied to the innocent.

Act 5, Scene 1: A Wicked New Plan: Volpone talks alone. He says pretending to be sick in court was harder than he thought. His leg once cramped so badly he feared real illness. Though he escaped punishment, he now wants to drink and make a new plan that will bring him wild laughter and pleasure.

Act 5, Scene 2: A Dangerous Game Begins Again: Mosca and Volpone celebrate their courtroom trick. Volpone says it was more fun than sleeping with Celia. Mosca gives credit to Voltore, but Volpone ignores him. Volpone now plans to fake his death and name Mosca as his heir. Mosca dresses up, and Volpone hides to watch the greedy legacy-hunters react. Though Mosca warns this is risky, Volpone ignores him. Volpone's hunger for power grows, and Mosca begins to feel unhappy with his ungrateful master. This situation suggests a potential betrayal.

Act 5, Scene 3: Mosca Takes Control: The legacy-hunters arrive, hoping to be named Volpone's heir. Mosca ignores them and checks Volpone's wealth. Voltore reads the will and is shocked. He finds that Mosca is the heir. Each man protests, but Mosca reminds them of their sins: Lady Politick offered favors, Corbaccio disowned his son, and Corvino tried to sell his wife. Voltore hopes he will be rewarded, but is dismissed politely. All leave, stunned. Volpone jumps out, praising Mosca's cleverness. Mosca now holds absolute power, and the greedy men are left betrayed and humiliated.

Act 5, Scene 4: Peregrine's Revenge: Peregrine, dressed as a police officer, tricks Sir Politick by saying he is under arrest for trying to sell Venice to the Ottomans. Terrified, Sir Politick tells his servants to burn his papers and hides under a tortoise shell. Peregrine's hired actors pretend to search the room and stand on the shell. They finally reveal Sir Politick, and Peregrine says they are now even. This funny scene shows how disguise and trickery can expose foolish pride.

Act 5, Scene 5: Mosca's Betrayal Begins: Volpone and Mosca are both in disguise. When Volpone exits, Mosca reveals his plan to blackmail him. He calls it "the fox trap." Mosca now seeks power and wealth for himself. This shows that he is no longer a loyal servant.

Act 5, Scene 6: Mocking the Greedy: In disguise, Volpone meets Corvino and Corbaccio and pretends they have inherited his estate. They are angry and confused. Volpone mocks their greed and insults Celia before walking away. His cruel joke reveals that he craves power, not wealth. It also foreshadows his coming downfall.

Act 5, Scene 7: Fooling Voltore: Volpone, still in disguise, mocks Voltore just like the others. He pretends Voltore inherited his wealth and asks to rent a house from him. Voltore, confused and angry, leaves. Volpone's jokes show his pride, while Voltore begins to realize he has been fooled by someone he once trusted.

Act 5, Scene 8: Pride and Humiliation: Corvino and Corbaccio return as Mosca arrives, dressed like a noble. Volpone mocks them again, calling Corvino a "cuckold" and a fool. Corvino wants to hit him, but stops near the courthouse. Their anger is not just about money. They are ashamed to be tricked by a low-class servant.

Act 5, Scene 9: Mockery Continues: Voltore returns and angrily calls Mosca a "flesh-fly." Volpone, still mocking, pretends to support Voltore and says someone like Mosca should not outsmart a lawyer. Voltore, tired and humiliated, just wants to be left alone. Volpone's pride reveals that he has completely lost control of himself.

Act 5, Scene 10: Voltore Tells the Truth: At the courthouse, Voltore confesses he lied earlier and that Mosca planned everything. Volpone, still in disguise, follows him. Corvino and Corbaccio panic and say Voltore is mad or possessed. Voltore brings written proof, but they claim it is from the devil. Volpone offers to bring Mosca. Though Voltore's reason for confessing is unclear, he finally does the right thing. Ironically, the court now believes him, while earlier it ignored Celia simply because she was a woman.

Act 5, Scene 11: Realizing the Mistake: Outside the court, Volpone admits he should have ended the trick earlier. By faking his own death, he ultimately caused his downfall. Returning home, he finds Mosca has locked him out and taken the keys. Volpone finally realizes that his greed and pride led him to ignore Mosca's advice, and now he has become Mosca's next victim.

Act 5, Scene 12: Truth Revealed and Justice Done: Volpone runs into court while Voltore is confessing everything. Volpone quickly tells Voltore he is not dead. It was just a trick to test Voltore's loyalty. Voltore panics and tries to take back his confession. The court believes him

and ignores the confession. Then Mosca comes in and announces Volpone's funeral. Volpone realizes Mosca wants to keep his fortune. He secretly offers to share it, but Mosca says no as he wants it all. Angry, Volpone rips off his disguise and tells the truth. Now the court understands everything. Bonario and Celia are freed.

The court punishes everyone:

- Mosca gets life as a slave in the galleys.
- Volpone gets life in prison.
- Voltore is banned by law.
- Corbaccio loses everything to Bonario and is forced to live in a monastery.
- Corvino loses his wife and must wear donkey ears in public shame.
- Bonario gets his father's estate.
- Celia is freed from her cruel husband.

At the end, Volpone speaks to the audience. He says greed destroys people. He asks the crowd to clap if they learned the lesson.