

# Love's Labour's Lost

## 4.3

*Enter Biron with a paper in his hand, alone*

**BIRON** The King, he is hunting the deer. I am coursing myself. They have pitched a toil, I am toiling in a pitch±pitch that defiles. Defile±±a foul word. Well, set thee down, sorrow; for so they say the fool said, and so say I, and I the fool. Well proved, wit! By the Lord, 5  
this love is as mad as Ajax, it kills sheep, it kills me, I a sheep±±well proved again o' my side. I will not love. If I do, hang me; i'faith, I will not. O, but her eye! By this light, but for her eye I would not love her. Yes, for her two eyes. Well, I do nothing in the world but 10  
lie, and lie in my throat. By heaven, I do love, and it hath taught me to rhyme and to be melancholy, and here (*showing a paper*) is part of my rhyme, and here (*touching his breast*) my melancholy. Well, she hath one o' my sonnets already. The clown bore it, the fool sent 15  
it, and the lady hath it. Sweet clown, sweeter fool, sweetest lady. By the world, I would not care a pin if the other three were in. Here comes one with a paper. God give him grace to groan.

*He stands aside. The King entereth with a paper*

**KING** Ay me! 20

**BIRON** (*aside*) Shot, by heaven! Proceed, sweet Cupid, thou hast thumped him with thy birdbolt under the left pap. In faith, secrets.

**KING** (*reads*)

So sweet a kiss the golden sun gives not  
To those fresh morning drops upon the rose 25  
As thy eyebeams when their fresh rays have smote  
The night of dew that on my cheeks down flows.  
Nor shines the silver moon one-half so bright  
Through the transparent bosom of the deep  
As doth thy face through tears of mine give light. 30  
Thou shin'st in every tear that I do weep.  
No drop but as a coach doth carry thee,  
So ridest thou triumphing in my woe.

Do but behold the tears that swell in me  
 And they thy glory through my grief will show. 35  
 But do not love thyself; then thou wilt keep  
 My tears for glasses, and still make me weep.  
 O Queen of queens, how far dost thou excel,  
 No thought can think nor tongue of mortal tell.'  
 How shall she know my griefs? I'll drop the paper. 40  
 Sweet leaves, shade folly. Who is he comes here?  
*Enter Longueville with papers. The King steps aside*  
 What, Longueville, and reading±±listen, ear!  
**BIRON** *(aside)*  
 Now in thy likeness one more fool appear!  
**LONGUEVILLE** Ay me! I am forsworn.  
**BIRON** *(aside)*  
 Why, he comes in like a perjure, wearing papers. 45  
**KING** *(aside)*  
 In love, I hope! Sweet fellowship in shame.  
**BIRON** *(aside)*  
 One drunkard loves another of the name.  
**LONGUEVILLE**  
 Am I the first that have been perjured so?  
**BIRON** *(aside)*  
 I could put thee in comfort, not by two that I know.  
 Thou makest the triumvir, the corner-cap of society, 50  
 The shape of love's Tyburn, that hangs up simplicity.  
**LONGUEVILLE**  
 I fear these stubborn lines lack power to move.  
 O sweet Maria, empress of my love,  
 These numbers will I tear, and write in prose.  
**BIRON** *(aside)*  
 O, rhymes are guards on wanton Cupid's hose, 55  
 Disfigure not his slop.  
**LONGUEVILLE** This same shall go.  
*He reads the sonnet*  
 'Did not the heavenly rhetoric of thine eye,  
 'Gainst whom the world cannot hold argument,  
 Persuade my heart to this false perjury?  
 Vows for thee broke deserve not punishment. 60  
 A woman I forswore, but I will prove,  
 Thou being a goddess, I forswore not thee.

My vow was earthly, thou a heavenly love.  
Thy grace being gained cures all disgrace in me.  
Vows are but breath, and breath a vapour is. 65  
Then thou, fair sun, which on my earth dost shine,  
Exhal'st this vapour-vow; in thee it is.  
If broken then, it is no fault of mine.  
If by me broke, what fool is not so wise  
To lose an oath to win a paradise?' 70

**BIRON** (*aside*)

This is the liver vein, which makes flesh a deity,  
A green goose a goddess, pure, pure idolatry.  
God amend us, God amend: we are much out o'th'  
way.

*Enter Dumaine with a paper*

**LONGUEVILLE** (*aside*)

By whom shall I send this? Company? Stay.  
*He steps aside*

**BIRON** (*aside*)

All hid, all hid±±an old infant play. 75  
Like a demigod here sit I in the sky,  
And wretched fools' secrets heedfully o'er-eye.  
More sacks to the mill! O heavens, I have my wish.  
Dumaine transformed±±four woodcocks in a dish!

**DUMAINE** O most divine Kate! 80

**BIRON** (*aside*) O most profane coxcomb!

**DUMAINE**

By heaven, the wonder in a mortal eye!

**BIRON** (*aside*)

By earth, she is not, corporal; there you lie.

**DUMAINE**

Her amber hairs for foul hath amber quoted.

**BIRON** (*aside*)

An amber-coloured raven was well noted. 85

**DUMAINE**

As upright as the cedar.

**BIRON** (*aside*) Stoop, I say.

Her shoulder is with child.

**DUMAINE**

As fair as day.

**BIRON** (*aside*)

Ay, as some days; but then no sun must shine.

**DUMAINE** O that I had my wish!

**LONGUEVILLE** (*aside*) And I had mine! 90

**KING** (*aside*) And I mine too, good Lord!

**BIRON** (*aside*)

Amen, so I had mine. Is not that a good word?

**DUMAINE**

I would forget her, but a fever she

Reigns in my blood and will remembered be.

**BIRON** (*aside*)

A fever in your blood±±why then, incision

95

Would let her out in saucers±±sweet misprision.

**DUMAINE**

Once more I'll read the ode that I have writ.

**BIRON** (*aside*)

Once more I'll mark how love can vary wit.

*Dumaine reads his sonnet*

**DUMAINE**

‘On a day±±alack the day±±

Love, whose month is ever May,

100

Spied a blossom passing fair

Playing in the wanton air.

Through the velvet leaves the wind

All unseen can passage find,

That the lover, sick to death,

105

Wished himself the heavens' breath.

<sup>a</sup>Air<sup>o</sup>, quoth he, <sup>a</sup>thy cheeks may blow;

Air, would I might triumph so.

But, alack, my hand is sworn

Ne'er to pluck thee from thy thorn±±

110

Vow, alack, for youth unmeet,

Youth so apt to pluck a sweet.

Do not call it sin in me

That I am forsworn for thee,

Thou for whom great Jove would swear

115

Juno but an Ethiop were,

And deny himself for Jove,

Turning mortal for thy love.<sup>o</sup> '

This will I send, and something else more plain,

That shall express my true love's fasting pain.

120

O, would the King, Biron, and Longueville

Were lovers too! Ill to example ill  
Would from my forehead wipe a perjured note,  
For none offend where all alike do dote.

**LONGUEVILLE** (*coming forward*)

Dumaine, thy love is far from charity, 125  
That in love's grief desir'st society.  
You may look pale, but I should blush, I know,  
To be o'erheard and taken napping so.

**KING** (*coming forward*)

Come, sir, you blush. As his, your case is such.  
You chide at him, offending twice as much. 130

You do not love Maria? Longueville  
Did never sonnet for her sake compile,  
Nor never lay his wreathéd arms athwart  
His loving bosom to keep down his heart?  
I have been closely shrouded in this bush, 135  
And marked you both, and for you both did blush.

I heard your guilty rhymes, observed your fashion,  
Saw sighs reek from you, noted well your passion.  
`Ay me!' says one, `O Jove!' the other cries.  
One, her hairs were gold; crystal the other's eyes. 140

(*To Longueville*) You would for paradise break faith and  
troth,

(*To Dumaine*) And Jove for your love would infringe an  
oath.

What will Biron say when that he shall hear  
Faith so infringeéd, which such zeal did swear?  
How will he scorn, how will he spend his wit! 145  
How will he triumph, leap, and laugh at it!  
For all the wealth that ever I did see  
I would not have him know so much by me.

**BIRON** (*coming forward*)

Now step I forth to whip hypocrisy.  
Ah, good my liege, I pray thee pardon me. 150

Good heart, what grace hast thou thus to reprove  
These worms for loving, that art most in love?  
Your eyes do make no coaches. In your tears  
There is no certain princess that appears.

You'll not be perjured, 'tis a hateful thing; 155  
Tush, none but minstrels like of sonneting!

But are you not ashamed, nay, are you not,  
All three of you, to be thus much o'ershot?  
(*To Longueville*) You found his mote, the King your  
mote did see,

But I a beam do find in each of three. 160

O, what a scene of fool'ry have I seen,  
Of sighs, of groans, of sorrow, and of teen!  
O me, with what strict patience have I sat,  
To see a king transformeÁd to a gnat!  
To see great Hercules whipping a gig, 165

And profound Solomon to tune a jig,  
And Nestor play at pushpin with the boys,  
And critic Timon laugh at idle toys!  
Where lies thy grief, O tell me, good Dumaine?  
And, gentle Longueville, where lies thy pain? 170  
And where my liege's? All about the breast.  
A caudle, ho!

**KING** Too bitter is thy jest.  
Are we betrayed thus to thy over-view?

**BIRON**  
Not you to me, but I betrayed by you.  
I that am honest, I that hold it sin 175  
To break the vow I am engageÁd in.  
I am betrayed by keeping company  
With men like you, men of inconstancy.  
When shall you see me write a thing in rhyme,  
Or groan for Joan, or spend a minute's time 180  
In pruning me? When shall you hear that I  
Will praise a hand, a foot, a face, an eye,  
A gait, a state, a brow, a breast, a waist,  
A leg, a limb?

**KING** Soft, whither away so fast?  
A true man or a thief, that gallops so? 185

**BIRON**  
I post from love; good lover, let me go.  
*Enter Jaquenetta with a letter, and Costard the clown*

**JAQUENETTA**  
God bless the King!

**KING** What present hast thou there?

**COSTARD**

Some certain treason.

**KING**

What makes treason here?

**COSTARD**

Nay, it makes nothing, sir.

**KING**

If it mar nothing neither,

The treason and you go in peace away together!

190

**JAQUENETTA**

I beseech your grace, let this letter be read.

Our parson misdoubts it; 'twas treason, he said.

**KING**

Biron, read it over.

*Biron takes and reads the letter*

*(To Jaquenetta)* Where hadst thou it?

**JAQUENETTA**

Of Costard.

195

**KING**

*(to Costard)* Where hadst thou it?

**COSTARD**

Of Dun Adramadio, Dun Adramadio.

*Biron tears the letter*

**KING**

*(to Biron)*

How now, what is in you? Why dost thou tear it?

**BIRON**

A toy, my liege, a toy. Your grace needs not fear it.

**LONGUEVILLE**

It did move him to passion, and therefore let's hear it. 200

**DUMAINE** *(taking up a piece of the letter)*

It is Biron's writing, and here is his name.

**BIRON** *(to Costard)*

Ah, you whoreson loggerhead, you were born to do  
me shame!

Guilty, my lord, guilty! I confess, I confess.

**KING**

What?

**BIRON**

That you three fools lacked me fool to make up the  
mess. 205

He, he, and you±±e'en you, my liege±±and I

Are pickpurses in love, and we deserve to die.

O, dismiss this audience, and I shall tell you more.

**DUMAINE**

Now the number is even.

**BIRON**

True, true; we are four.

Will these turtles be gone?

**KING**

Hence, sirs; away.

210

**COSTARD**

Walk aside the true folk, and let the traitors stay.  
*Exeunt Costard and Jaquenetta*

**BIRON**

Sweet lords, sweet lovers!±±O, let us embrace.  
As true we are as flesh and blood can be.  
The sea will ebb and flow, heaven show his face.  
Young blood doth not obey an old decree. 215  
We cannot cross the cause why we were born,  
Therefore of all hands must we be forsworn.

**KING**

What, did these rent lines show some love of thine?

**BIRON**

‘Did they’, quoth you? Who sees the heavenly  
Rosaline  
That, like a rude and savage man of Ind 220  
At the first op’ning of the gorgeous east,  
Bows not his vassal head and, stricken blind,  
Kisses the base ground with obedient breast?  
What peremptory eagle-sighted eye  
Dares look upon the heaven of her brow 225  
That is not blinded by her majesty?

**KING**

What zeal, what fury hath inspired thee now?  
My love, her mistress, is a gracious moon,  
She an attending star, scarce seen a light.

**BIRON**

My eyes are then no eyes, nor I Biron. 230  
O, but for my love, day would turn to night.  
Of all complexions the culled sovereignty  
Do meet as at a fair in her fair cheek,  
Where several worthies make one dignity,  
Where nothing wants that want itself doth seek. 235  
Lend me the flourish of all gentle tongues±±  
Fie, painted rhetoric! O, she needs it not.  
To things of sale a seller’s praise belongs.  
She passes praise±±then praise too short doth blot.  
A withered hermit fivescore winters worn 240  
Might shake off fifty, looking in her eye.  
Beauty doth varnish age as if new-born,  
And gives the crutch the cradle’s infancy.



O, 'tis the sun that maketh all things shine.

**KING**  
By heaven, thy love is black as ebony. 245

**BIRON**  
Is ebony like her? O word divine!  
A wife of such wood were felicity.  
O, who can give an oath? Where is a book,  
That I may swear beauty doth beauty lack  
If that she learn not of her eye to look? 250  
No face is fair that is not full so black.

**KING**  
O paradox! Black is the badge of hell,  
The hue of dungeons and the style of night,  
And beauty's crest becomes the heavens well.

**BIRON**  
Devils soonest tempt, resembling spirits of light. 255  
O, if in black my lady's brows be decked,  
It mourns that painting and usurping hair  
Should ravish doters with a false aspect,  
And therefore is she born to make black fair.  
Her favour turns the fashion of the days, 260  
For native blood is counted painting now,  
And therefore red that would avoid dispraise  
Paints itself black to imitate her brow.

**DUMAINE**  
To look like her are chimney-sweepers black.

**LONGUEVILLE**  
And since her time are colliers counted bright. 265

**KING**  
And Ethiops of their sweet complexion crack.

**DUMAINE**  
Dark needs no candles now, for dark is light.

**BIRON**  
Your mistresses dare never come in rain,  
For fear their colours should be washed away.

**KING**  
'Twere good yours did; for, sir, to tell you plain, 270  
I'll find a fairer face not washed today.

**BIRON**  
I'll prove her fair, or talk till doomsday here.

**KING**

No devil will fright thee then so much as she.

**DUMAINE**  
 I never knew man hold vile stuff so dear.

**LONGUEVILLE** (*showing his foot*)  
 Look, here's thy love±±my foot and her face see. 275

**BIRON**  
 O, if the streets were paveÁd with thine eyes  
 Her feet were much too dainty for such tread.

**DUMAINE**  
 O vile! Then as she goes, what upward lies  
 The street should see as she walked overhead.

**KING**  
 But what of this? Are we not all in love? 280

**BIRON**  
 Nothing so sure, and thereby all forsworn.

**KING**  
 Then leave this chat and, good Biron, now prove  
 Our loving lawful and our faith not torn.

**DUMAINE**  
 Ay, marry there, some flattery for this evil.

**LONGUEVILLE**  
 O, some authority how to proceed, 285  
 Some tricks, some quillets how to cheat the devil.

**DUMAINE**  
 Some salve for perjury.

**BIRON** O, 'tis more than need.  
 Have at you, then, affection's men-at-arms.  
 Consider what you first did swear unto:  
 To fast, to study, and to see no woman±± 290  
 Flat treason 'gainst the kingly state of youth.  
 Say, can you fast? Your stomachs are too young,  
 And abstinence engenders maladies.  
 O, we have made a vow to study, lords,  
 And in that vow we have forsworn our books; 295  
 For when would you, my liege, or you, or you  
 In leaden contemplation have found out  
 Such fiery numbers as the prompting eyes  
 Of beauty's tutors have enriched you with?  
 Other slow arts entirely keep the brain, 300  
 And therefore, finding barren practisers,  
 Scarce show a harvest of their heavy toil.

But love, first learn'd in a lady's eyes,  
 Lives not alone immur'd in the brain,  
 But with the motion of all elements 305  
 Courses as swift as thought in every power,  
 And gives to every power a double power  
 Above their functions and their offices.  
 It adds a precious seeing to the eye±±  
 A lover's eyes will gaze an eagle blind. 310  
 A lover's ear will hear the lowest sound  
 When the suspicious head of theft is stopped.  
 Love's feeling is more soft and sensible  
 Than are the tender horns of cockled snails.  
 Love's tongue proves dainty Bacchus gross in taste. 315  
 For valour, is not love a Hercules,  
 Still climbing trees in the Hesperides?  
 Subtle as Sphinx, as sweet and musical  
 As bright Apollo's lute strung with his hair;  
 And when love speaks, the voice of all the gods 320  
 Make heaven drowsy with the harmony.  
 Never durst poet touch a pen to write  
 Until his ink were tempered with love's sighs.  
 O, then his lines would ravish savage ears,  
 And plant in tyrants mild humility. 325  
 From women's eyes this doctrine I derive.  
 They sparkle still the right Promethean fire.  
 They are the books, the arts, the academes  
 That show, contain, and nourish all the world,  
 Else none at all in aught proves excellent. 330  
 Then fools you were these women to forswear,  
 Or keeping what is sworn, you will prove fools.  
 For wisdom's sake±±a word that all men love±±  
 Or for love's sake±±a word that loves all men±±  
 Or for men's sake±±the authors of these women±± 335  
 Or women's sake±±by whom we men are men±±  
 Let us once lose our oaths to find ourselves,  
 Or else we lose ourselves to keep our oaths.  
 It is religion to be thus forsworn,  
 For charity itself fulfils the law, 340  
 And who can sever love from charity?

KING

Saint Cupid, then, and, soldiers, to the field!

**BIRON**

Advance your standards, and upon them, lords.  
Pell-mell, down with them; but be first advised  
In conflict that you get the sun of them. 345

**LONGUEVILLE**

Now to plain dealing. Lay these glozes by.  
Shall we resolve to woo these girls of France?

**KING**

And win them, too! Therefore let us devise  
Some entertainment for them in their tents.

**BIRON**

First, from the park let us conduct them thither; 350  
Then homeward every man attach the hand  
Of his fair mistress. In the afternoon  
We will with some strange pastime solace them,  
Such as the shortness of the time can shape,  
For revels, dances, masques, and merry hours 355  
Forerun fair love, strewing her way with flowers.

**KING**

Away, away, no time shall be omitted  
That will be time, and may by us be fitted.

**BIRON**

*Allons, allons!* Sowed cockle reaped no corn,  
And justice always whirls in equal measure. 360  
Light wenches may prove plagues to men forsworn.  
If so, our copper buys no better treasure.

*Exeunt*