

The Comedy of Errors

2.1

*Enter [from the Phoenix] Adriana, wife of
Antipholus of Ephesus, with Luciana, her sister*

ADRIANA

Neither my husband nor the slave returned
That in such haste I sent to seek his master?
Sure, Luciana, it is two o'clock.

LUCIANA

Perhaps some merchant hath invited him,
And from the mart he's somewhere gone to dinner. 5
Good sister, let us dine, and never fret.
A man is master of his liberty.
Time is their mistress, and when they see time
They'll go or come. If so, be patient, sister.

ADRIANA

Why should their liberty than ours be more? 10

LUCIANA

Because their business still lies out o' door.

ADRIANA

Look when I serve him so, he takes it ill.

LUCIANA

O, know he is the bridle of your will.

ADRIANA

There's none but asses will be bridled so.

LUCIANA

Why, headstrong liberty is lashed with woe. 15
There's nothing situate under heaven's eye
But hath his bound in earth, in sea, in sky.
The beasts, the fishes, and the winged fowls
Are their males' subjects and at their controls.
Man, more divine, the master of all these, 20
Lord of the wide world and wild wat'ry seas,
Indued with intellectual sense and souls,
Of more pre-eminence than fish and fowls,
Are masters to their females, and their lords.
Then let your will attend on their accords. 25

ADRIANA

This servitude makes you to keep unwed.

LUCIANA

Not this, but troubles of the marriage bed.

ADRIANA

But were you wedded, you would bear some sway.

LUCIANA

Ere I learn love, I'll practise to obey.

ADRIANA

How if your husband start some otherwhere? 30

LUCIANA

Till he come home again, I would forbear.

ADRIANA

Patience unmoved! No marvel though she pause:

They can be meek that have no other cause.

A wretched soul, bruised with adversity,

We bid be quiet when we hear it cry. 35

But were we burdened with like weight of pain,

As much or more we should ourselves complain.

So thou, that hast no unkind mate to grieve thee,

With urging helpless patience would relieve me.

But if thou live to see like right bereft, 40

This fool-begged patience in thee will be left.

LUCIANA

Well, I will marry one day, but to try.

Enter Dromio of Ephesus

Here comes your man. Now is your husband nigh.

ADRIANA

Say, is your tardy master now at hand?

DROMIO OF EPHESUS Nay, he's at two hands with me, and 45
that my two ears can witness.

ADRIANA

Say, didst thou speak with him? Know'st thou his
mind?

DROMIO OF EPHESUS

I? Ay, he told his mind upon mine ear.

Beshrew his hand, I scarce could understand it.

LUCIANA

Spake he so doubtfully thou couldst not feel his
meaning? 50

DROMIO OF EPHESUS Nay, he struck so plainly I could too
well feel his blows, and withal so doubtfully that I
could scarce under-stand them.

ADRIANA

But say, I prithee, is he coming home?
It seems he hath great care to please his wife. 55

DROMIO OF EPHESUS

Why, mistress, sure my master is horn-mad.

ADRIANA Horn-mad, thou villain?

DROMIO OF EPHESUS

I mean not cuckold-mad, but sure he is stark mad.
When I desired him to come home to dinner,
He asked me for a thousand marks in gold. 60
`Tis dinner-time,' quoth I. `My gold,' quoth he.
`Your meat doth burn,' quoth I. `My gold,' quoth he.
`Will you come home?' quoth I. `My gold,' quoth he;
`Where is the thousand marks I gave thee, villain?'
`The pig', quoth I, `is burned.' `My gold!' quoth he. 65
`My mistress, sir±±' quoth I. `Hang up thy mistress!
I know thy mistress not. Out on thy mistress!'

LUCIANA Quoth who?

DROMIO OF EPHESUS Quoth my master.

`I know', quoth he, `no house, no wife, no mistress.' 70
So that my errand, due unto my tongue,
I thank him, I bare home upon my shoulders;
For, in conclusion, he did beat me there.

ADRIANA

Go back again, thou slave, and fetch him home.

DROMIO OF EPHESUS

Go back again and be new beaten home? 75
For God's sake, send some other messenger.

ADRIANA

Back, slave, or I will break thy pate across.

DROMIO OF EPHESUS

An he will bless that cross with other beating,
Between you I shall have a holy head.

ADRIANA

Hence, prating peasant. Fetch thy master home. 80
She beats Dromio

DROMIO OF EPHESUS

Am I so round with you as you with me,
That like a football you do spurn me thus?
You spurn me hence, and he will spurn me hither.
If I last in this service, you must case me in leather.

Exit

LUCIANA *(to Adriana)*

Fie, how impatience loureth in your face! 85

ADRIANA

His company must do his minions grace,
Whilst I at home starve for a merry look.
Hath homely age th'alluring beauty took
From my poor cheek? Then he hath wasted it.
Are my discourses dull? Barren my wit? 90
If voluble and sharp discourse be marred,
Unkindness blunts it more than marble hard.
Do their gay vestments his affections bait?
That's not my fault: he's master of my state.
What ruins are in me that can be found 95
By him not ruined? Then is he the ground
Of my defeatures. My decayeÁd fair
A sunny look of his would soon repair.
But, too unruly deer, he breaks the pale,
And feeds from home. Poor I am but his stale. 100

LUCIANA

Self-harming jealousy! Fie, beat it hence.

ADRIANA

Unfeeling fools can with such wrongs dispense.
I know his eye doth homage otherwhere,
Or else what lets it but he would be here?
Sister, you know he promised me a chain. 105
Would that alone o' love he would detain,
So he would keep fair quarter with his bed.
I see the jewel best enamelleÁd
Will lose her beauty. Yet the gold bides still
That others touch; and often touching will 110
Wear gold, and yet no man that hath a name
By falsehood and corruption doth it shame.
Since that my beauty cannot please his eye,
I'll weep what's left away, and weeping die.

LUCIANA

How many fond fools serve mad jealousy! 115
[Exeunt into the Phoenix]