

As You Like It

4.3

Enter Rosalind as Ganymede and Celia as Aliena

ROSALIND How say you now? Is it not past two o'clock?
And here much Orlando.

CELIA I warrant you, with pure love and troubled brain
he hath ta'en his bow and arrows and is gone forth to
sleep. 5

[Enter Silvius]

Look who comes here.

SILVIUS *(to Rosalind)*

My errand is to you, fair youth.

My gentle Phoebe did bid me give you this.

*He offers Rosalind a letter, which she takes
and reads*

I know not the contents, but as I guess

By the stern brow and waspish action 10

Which she did use as she was writing of it,

It bears an angry tenor. Pardon me;

I am but as a guiltless messenger.

ROSALIND

Patience herself would startle at this letter,

And play the swaggerer. Bear this, bear all. 15

She says I am not fair, that I lack manners;

She calls me proud, and that she could not love me

Were man as rare as Phoenix. 'Od's my will,

Her love is not the hare that I do hunt.

Why writes she so to me? Well, shepherd, well, 20

This is a letter of your own device.

SILVIUS

No, I protest; I know not the contents.

Phoebe did write it.

ROSALIND

Come, come, you are a fool,

And turned into the extremity of love.

I saw her hand. She has a leathern hand, 25

A free-stone coloured hand. I verily did think

That her old gloves were on; but 'twas her hands.

She has a housewife's hand±±but that's no matter.

I say she never did invent this letter.
This is a man's invention, and his hand. 30

SILVIUS Sure, it is hers.

ROSALIND
Why, 'tis a boisterous and a cruel style,
A style for challengers. Why, she defies me,
Like Turk to Christian. Women's gentle brain
Could not drop forth such giant-rude invention, 35
Such Ethiop words, blacker in their effect
Than in their countenance. Will you hear the letter?

SILVIUS
So please you, for I never heard it yet,
Yet heard too much of Phoebe's cruelty.

ROSALIND
She Phoebes me. Mark how the tyrant writes: 40
(reads)
`Art thou god to shepherd turned,
That a maiden's heart hath burned?'
Can a woman rail thus?

SILVIUS Call you this railing?

ROSALIND *(reads)*
`Why, thy godhead laid apart, 45
Warr'st thou with a woman's heart?'
Did you ever hear such railing?
`Whiles the eye of man did woo me
That could do no vengeance to me.'±±
Meaning me a beast. 50

`If the scorn of your bright eyne
Have power to raise such love in mine,
Alack, in me what strange effect
Would they work in mild aspect?
Whiles you chid me I did love; 55
How then might your prayers move?
He that brings this love to thee
Little knows this love in me,
And by him seal up thy mind
Whether that thy youth and kind 60
Will the faithful offer take
Of me, and all that I can make,
Or else by him my love deny,

And then I'll study how to die.'

SILVIUS Call you this chiding?

65

CELIA Alas, poor shepherd.

ROSALIND Do you pity him? No, he deserves no pity. (To
Silvius) Wilt thou love such a woman? What, to make
thee an instrument, and play false strains upon thee?±±
not to be endured. Well, go your way to her±±for I see 70
love hath made thee a tame snake±±and say this to
her: that if she love me, I charge her to love thee. If
she will not, I will never have her unless thou entreat
for her. If you be a true lover, hence, and not a word;
for here comes more company. 75

Exit Silvius

Enter Oliver

OLIVER

Good morrow, fair ones. Pray you, if you know,
Where in the purlieus of this forest stands
A sheepcote fenced about with olive trees?

CELIA

West of this place, down in the neighbour bottom.
The rank of osiers by the murmuring stream 80
Left on your right hand brings you to the place.
But at this hour the house doth keep itself.
There's none within.

OLIVER

If that an eye may profit by a tongue,
Then should I know you by description. 85
Such garments, and such years. 'The boy is fair,
Of female favour, and bestows himself
Like a ripe sister. The woman low
And browner than her brother.' Are not you
The owner of the house I did enquire for? 90

CELIA

It is no boast, being asked, to say we are.

OLIVER

Orlando doth commend him to you both,
And to that youth he calls his Rosalind
He sends this bloody napkin. Are you he?

ROSALIND

I am. What must we understand by this? 95

OLIVER

Some of my shame, if you will know of me
What man I am, and how, and why, and where
This handkerchief was stained.

CELIA

I pray you tell it.

OLIVER

When last the young Orlando parted from you,
He left a promise to return again 100
Within an hour, and pacing through the forest,
Chewing the food of sweet and bitter fancy,
Lo what befell. He threw his eye aside,
And mark what object did present itself.
Under an old oak, whose boughs were mossed with
age 105
And high top bald with dry antiquity,
A wretched, ragged man, o'ergrown with hair,
Lay sleeping on his back. About his neck
A green and gilded snake had wreathed itself,
Who with her head, nimble in threats, approached 110
The opening of his mouth. But suddenly
Seeing Orlando, it unlinked itself,
And with indented glides did slip away
Into a bush, under which bush's shade
A lioness, with udders all drawn dry, 115
Lay couching, head on ground, with catlike watch
When that the sleeping man should stir. For 'tis
The royal disposition of that beast
To prey on nothing that doth seem as dead.
This seen, Orlando did approach the man 120
And found it was his brother, his elder brother.

CELIA

O, I have heard him speak of that same brother,
And he did render him the most unnatural
That lived amongst men.

OLIVER

And well he might so do,

For well I know he was unnatural. 125

ROSALIND

But to Orlando. Did he leave him there,
Food to the sucked and hungry lioness?

OLIVER

Twice did he turn his back, and purposed so.

But kindness, nobler ever than revenge,
And nature, stronger than his just occasion, 130
Made him give battle to the lioness,
Who quickly fell before him; in which hurtling
From miserable slumber I awaked.

CELIA

Are you his brother?

ROSALIND Was't you he rescued?

CELIA

Was't you that did so oft contrive to kill him? 135

OLIVER

'Twas I, but 'tis not I. I do not shame
To tell you what I was, since my conversion
So sweetly tastes, being the thing I am.

ROSALIND

But for the bloody napkin?

OLIVER

By and by.

When from the first to last betwixt us two 140
Tears our recountments had most kindly bathed±±
As how I came into that desert place±±
I' brief, he led me to the gentle Duke,
Who gave me fresh array, and entertainment,
Committing me unto my brother's love, 145
Who led me instantly unto his cave,
There stripped himself, and here upon his arm
The lioness had torn some flesh away,
Which all this while had bled. And now he fainted,
And cried in fainting upon Rosalind. 150
Brief, I recovered him, bound up his wound,
And after some small space, being strong at heart,
He sent me hither, stranger as I am,
To tell this story, that you might excuse
His broken promise, and to give this napkin, 155
Dyed in his blood, unto the shepherd youth
That he in sport doth call his Rosalind.

Rosalind faints

CELIA

Why, how now, Ganymede, sweet Ganymede!

OLIVER

Many will swoon when they do look on blood.

CELIA

There is more in it. Cousin Ganymede!

160

OLIVER Look, he recovers.

ROSALIND I would I were at home.

CELIA We'll lead you thither.

(*To Oliver*) I pray you, will you take him by the arm?

OLIVER Be of good cheer, youth. You a man? You lack a 165
man's heart.

ROSALIND I do so, I confess it. Ah, sirrah, a body would
think this was well counterfeited. I pray you, tell your
brother how well I counterfeited. Heigh-ho!

OLIVER This was not counterfeit. There is too great 170
testimony in your complexion that it was a passion of
earnest.

ROSALIND Counterfeit, I assure you.

OLIVER Well then, take a good heart, and counterfeit to
be a man. 175

ROSALIND So I do; but, i'faith, I should have been a
woman by right.

CELIA Come, you look paler and paler. Pray you, draw
homewards. Good sir, go with us.

OLIVER

That will I, for I must bear answer back 180
How you excuse my brother, Rosalind.

ROSALIND I shall devise something. But I pray you
commend my counterfeiting to him. Will you go?

Exeunt