

ARMADO

I do affect the very ground, which is base, where her shoe, which is baser, guided by her foot, which is basest, doth tread. I shall be forsworn, which is a great argument of falsehood, if I love. And how can that be true love which is falsely attempted? Love is a familiar, love is a devil. There is no evil angel but love. Yet Samson was so tempted, and he had an excellent strength. Yet was Solomon so seduced, and he had a very good wit. Cupid's butt-shaft is too hard for Hercules' club, and therefore too much odds for a Spaniard's rapier. Adieu, valour: rust, rapier: be still, drum, for your manager is in love; yea, he loveth. Assist me, some extemporal god of rhyme, for I am sure I shall turn sonnet. Devise, wit: write, pen, for I am for whole volumes in folio.

BEROWNE

O and I, forsooth, in love! I, that have been love's whip,
A critic, nay, a night-watch constable,
A domineering pedant o'er the boy,
Than whom no mortal so magnificent!
This wimpled, whining, purblind, wayward boy,
This Signior Junior, giant-dwarf, Don Cupid,
Regent of love-rhymes, lord of folded arms,
Th'anointed sovereign of sighs and groans,
Liege of all loiterers and malcontents,
Dread prince of plackets, king of codpieces,
Sole imperator and great general
Of trotting paritors — O my little heart! —
And I to be a corporal of his field
And wear his colours like a tumbler's hoop.
What? I love, I sue, I seek a wife?
Nay, to be perjured, which is worst of all,
And, among three, to love the worst of all;
A whitely wanton with a velvet brow,
With two pitch-balls stuck in her face for eyes.
And I to sigh for her, to watch for her,
To pray for her! Go to, it is a plague
That Cupid will impose for my neglect
Of his almighty dreadful little might.
Well, I will love, write, sigh, pray, sue and groan.
Some men must love my lady, and some Joan.

COSTARD

By my soul, a swain, a most simple clown!
Lord, Lord, how the ladies and I have put him down!
O my troth, most sweet jests, most incony vulgar wit,
When it comes so smoothly off, so obscenely, as it were, so fit.
Armado o'th't'other side — O, a most dainty man!
To see him walk before a lady and to bear her fan!
To see him kiss his hand, and how most sweetly a will swear!
And his page o't'other side, that handful of wit!
Ah, heavens, it is most pathological nit!

FERDINAND

Let fame, that all hunt after in their lives,
Live registered upon our brazen tombs,
And then grace us in the disgrace of death
When, spite of cormorant devouring time,
Th'endeavour of this present breath may buy
That honour which shall bate his scythe's keen edge
And make us heirs of all eternity.

Therefore, brave conquerors — for so you are,
That war against your own affections
And the huge army of the world's desires —
Our late edict shall strongly stand in force.

Navarre shall be the wonder of the world,
Our court shall be a little academe,
Still and contemplative in living art.

You three, Berowne, Dumaine and Longaville,
Have sworn for three years' term to live with me,
My fellow-scholars, and to keep those statutes
That are recorded in this schedule here.

PRINCESS

Good Lord Boyet, my beauty, though but mean,
Needs not the painted flourish of your praise.
Beauty is bought by judgement of the eye,
Not uttered by base sale of chapmen's tongues:
I am less proud to hear you tell my worth
Than you much willing to be counted wise
In spending your wit in the praise of mine.
But now to task the tasker. Good Boyet,
You are not ignorant all-telling fame
Doth noise abroad Navarre hath made a vow,
Till painful study shall outwear three years,
No woman may approach his silent court:
Therefore to's seemeth it a needful course,
Before we enter his forbidden gates,
To know his pleasure, and in that behalf,
Bold of your worthiness, we single you
As our best-moving fair solicitor.
Tell him the daughter of the King of France,
On serious business craving quick dispatch,
Importunes personal conference with his grace.
Haste, signify so much, while we attend,
Like humble-visaged suitors, his high will.

ROSALINE

Oft have I heard of you, my Lord Berowne,
Before I saw you, and the world's large tongue
Proclaims you for a man replete with mocks,
Full of comparisons and wounding flouts,
Which you on all estates will execute
That lie within the mercy of your wit.
To weed this wormwood from your fruitful brain,
And therewithal to win me, if you please,
Without the which I am not to be won,
You shall this twelvemonth term from day to day
Visit the speechless sick and still converse
With groaning wretches, and your task shall be
With all the fierce endeavour of your wit
To enforce the painèd impotent to smile.