

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?

OLIVER

Some of my shame; if you will know of me
What man I am, and how, and why, and where
This handkercher was stain'd.

CELIA

I pray you, tell it.

OLIVER

When last the young Orlando parted from you
He left a promise to return again
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 oak, whose boughs were moss'd with age
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 approach'd
The opening of his mouth; but suddenly,
Seeing Orlando, it unlink'd itself,
And with indented glides did slip away
Into a bush: under which bush's shade
A lioness, with udders all drawn dry,
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
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.

ROSALIND

But, to Orlando: did he leave him there,
Food to the suck'd 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,
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

Wast you he rescued?

CELIA

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

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
Tears our recountments had most kindly bathed,
As how I came into that desert place:--
In brief, he led me to the gentle duke,
Who gave me fresh array and entertainment,
Committing me unto my brother's love;
Who led me instantly unto his cave,
There stripp'd 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.
Brief, I recover'd 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
Dyed in his blood unto the shepherd youth
That he in sport doth call his Rosalind.

ROSALIND swoons

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!

OLIVER

Look, he recovers.

ROSALIND

I would I were at home.

CELIA

We'll lead you thither.
I pray you, will you take him by the arm?

OLIVER

Be of good cheer, youth: you a man! you lack a
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
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.