

THE ROVER

Aphra Behn

Enter FLORINDA, VALERIA, HELLENA, in antic different dresses from what they were in before, callis attending

- FLORINDA: I wonder what should make my brother in so ill a humour? I hope he has not found out our ramble this
- HELLENA: No, if he had, we should have heard on't at both ears, and have been mewed up this afternoon; which I would not for the world should have happened. Hey, ho, I'm as sad as a lover's lute.
- VALERIA: Well, methinks we have learnt this trade of gipsies as readily as if we had been bred upon the road to Loretta: and yet I did so fumble, when I told the stranger his fortune, that I was afraid I should have told my own and yours by mistake. But, methinks Hellena has been very serious ever since.
- FLORINDA: I would give my garters she were in love, to be revenged upon her for abusing me - How is't, Hellena?
- HELLENA: Ah, would I had never seen my mad monsieur - and yet for all your laughing, I am in love - and yet this small acquaintance o' my conscience will never out of my head.
- VALERIA: Ha, ha, ha! I laugh to think how thou art fitted with a lover, a fellow that I warrant loves every new face he sees.
- HELLENA: Hum, he has not kept his word with me here, and may be taken up - that thought is not very pleasant to me. What the deuce should this be now that I feel?
- VALERIA: What is't like?
- HELENA: Nay, the Lord knows - but if I should be hanged I cannot choose but be angry and afraid when I think that mad fellow should be in love with anybody but me: what to think of myself, I know not. Would I could meet with some true diamond gipsy that I might know my fortune.
- VALERIA: Know it! Why there's nothing to say. Thou wilt love this wandering inconstant till thou find'st thyself hanged about his neck, and then be as mad to get free again.
- FLORINDA: Yes, Valeria, we shall see her bestride his baggage horse and follow him to the campaign.
- HELLENA: So, so, now you are provided for, there's no care taken of poor me: but since you have set my heart a-wishing, I am resolved to know for what. I will not die of the pip, so I will not.
- FLORINDA: Art thou mad to talk so? Who will like thee well enough to have thee, than hears what mad wench thou art?
- HELLENA: Like me! I don't intend every he that likes me shall have me, but he that I like. I should have stayed in the nunnery still if I had liked my Lady Abbess as well as she

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liked me. No, I came thence not, as my wise brother imagines, to take an eternal farewell of the world, but to love and to beloved; and I will be beloved, or I'll get one of your men, so I will.

VALERIA: Am I put into the number of lovers?

HELLENA: Like me! I don't intend every he that likes me shall have me, but he that I like. I should have stayed in the nunnery still if I had liked my Lady Abbess as well as she liked me. No, I came thence not, as my wise brother imagines, to take an eternal farewell of the world, but to love and to beloved; and I will be beloved, or I'll get one of your men, so I will.

VALERIA: Am I put into the number of lovers?

HELLENA: You? Why coz, I know thou'rt too good-natured to leave us in any design: thou wouldst venture a cast through thou camest off a loser, especially with such a gamester. I observe your man, and your willing ear incline that way; and if you are not a lover, 'tis an art soon learnt (*sighs*) - that I find.

FLORINDA: I wonder how you learnt to love so easily. I had a thousand charms to meet my eyes and ears e'er I could yield, and 'twas the knowledge of Belvile's merit, not the surprising person, took my soul. Thou art too rash, to give a heart at first sight.

HELLENA: Hang your considering lover! I never thought beyond the fancy that 'twas a very pretty, idle, silly kind of pleasure to pass one's time with: to write little, soft, nonsensical billets, and with great difficulty and danger, receive answers in which I shall have my beauty praised, my wit admired - though little or none - and have the vanity and power to know I am desirable, Then I have the more inclination that way because I am to be a nun, and so shall not be suspected to have any such earthly thoughts about me, but when I walk this - and sigh thus - they'll think my mind's upon my monastery, and cry, "How happy 'tis she's so resolved". But not a word of man.

FLORINDA: What a mad creature's this?

HELLENA: I'll warrant, if my brother hears either of you sigh, he cries gravely: 'I fear you have the indiscretion to be in love, but take heed of the honour of our house and your own unspotted fame', and so he conjures on till he has laid the 'soft winged go in your hearts, or broke the bird's nest - But see, here comes your lover, but where's my inconstant? Let's step aside and we may learn something.