

# Shakespeare Advises You on Our Situation

A Cento Poem by Ollie Bowen



Do you not know she is a woman? When she thinks,  
she must speak, and she speaks an infinite deal of nothing.

O, full of scorpions is her mind!  
Do not challenge her to a battle of wits, for she is unarmed.  
Dispute not with her: she is a lunatic.  
Can thou truly ever love a fool?

Love her!...why?!? For which of her bad parts  
didst thou first fall in love with her?  
There is no evil angel but her. She looks like  
the innocent flower, but she be the serpent under it.

She be madness, though perhaps there is method in her.  
For she has eyes, and chose you.  
Yet she loves not with her eyes, but with her mind.

Alas, reason and love keep little company together nowadays.  
The tears live in an onion that should water this sorrow.  
O shame! Where is thy blush?

Still I can never say that she was false of heart.  
For she loves nothing in the world so well as you.  
Is not that strange? Her passions are made  
of nothing but the finest part of pure love.

The worst is this: her love is thy decay.  
These violent delights have violent ends.  
For the course of true love never did run smooth.  
Love bears it out even to the edge of doom.

But if she and you be pleased, what's that to me?  
Love denied blights the soul we owe to God.  
Thou are to wait, though waiting so be hell.  
In black ink thy love may still shine bright.

Sit by her side, and let the world slip:  
for thou shall ne'er be younger. Grow together,  
like a double cherry, seeming parted,  
but yet together; two lovely berries  
moulded on one stem; as two separate bodies,  
but with oneness of heart.

To be wise and in love exceeds man's might.  
So this above all: to thine own self be true.  
A thousand times good night! [Exit, pursued by a bear.]