

ALCESIMARCHUS' SOLILOQUY

Titus Maccius Plautus

a soliloquy

first performed circa 206–205 BC

translated by Paul Nixon, 1917

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ALCESIMARCHUS:

I do believe it was Love that first devised
the torturer's profession here on earth.
It's my own experience—no need to look further—
that makes me think so, for in torment of soul
no man rivals me, comes near me.

I'm tossed around, bandied about, goaded,
whirled on the wheel of love,
done to death, poor wretch that I am!

I'm torn, torn asunder, disrupted, dismembered—
yes, all my mental faculties are befogged!
Where I am, there I am not;
where I am not, there my soul is—
yes, I am in a thousand moods!

The thing that pleases me ceases to please a moment later;
yes, Love mocks me in my weariness of soul,—
it drives me off, hounds me, seeks me,
lays hands on me, holds me back, lures, lavishes!

It gives without giving! beguiles me!

It leads me on, then warns me off;
it warns me off, then tempts me on.
It deals with me like the waves of the sea—
yes, batters my loving heart to bits;
and except that I do not go to the bottom,
poor devil,
my wreck's complete in every kind of wretchedness!

Yes, my father has kept me at the villa on the farm
the last six successive days and I was not allowed
to come and see my darling during all that time!
Isn't it a terrible thing to tell of?



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