

Imitating Mary Shelley

With apologies to A.E. Houseman and his splendid “Terence, This is Stupid Stuff”

[Mary], this is stupid stuff:

You eat your victuals fast enough;

There can't be much amiss, 'tis
clear,

To see the rate you drink your beer.

But oh, good Lord, the verse you
make,

It gives a chap the belly-ache.



Victor's father expresses concern about his son's future

I trembled violently at his exordium, and my father continued—

“I confess, my son, that I have always looked forward to your marriage with our dear Elizabeth as the tie of our domestic comfort and the stay of my declining years. You were attached to each other from your earliest infancy; you studied together, and appeared, in dispositions and tastes, entirely suited to one another. But so blind is the experience of man that what I conceived to be the best assistants to my plan may have entirely destroyed it. You, perhaps, regard her as your sister, without any wish that she might become your wife. Nay, you may have met with another whom you may love; and considering yourself as bound in honour to Elizabeth, this struggle may occasion the poignant misery which you appear to feel.”

“My dear father, reassure yourself. I love my cousin tenderly and sincerely. I never saw any woman who excited, as Elizabeth does, my warmest admiration and affection. My future hopes and prospects are entirely bound up in the expectation of our union.”

“The expression of your sentiments of this subject, my dear Victor, gives me more pleasure than I have for some time experienced. If you feel thus, we shall assuredly be happy, however present events may cast a gloom over us. But it is this gloom which appears to have taken so strong a hold of your mind that I wish to dissipate. Tell me, therefore, whether you object to an immediate solemnisation of the marriage. We have been unfortunate, and recent events have drawn us from that everyday tranquillity befitting my years and infirmities. You are younger; yet I do not suppose, possessed as you are of a competent fortune, that an early marriage would at all interfere with any future plans of honour and utility that you may have



formed. Do not suppose, however, that I wish to dictate happiness to you or that a delay on your part would cause me any serious uneasiness. Interpret my words with candour and answer me, I conjure you, with confidence and sincerity."

I listened to my father in silence and remained for some time incapable of offering any reply. I revolved rapidly in my mind a multitude of thoughts and endeavoured to arrive at some conclusion. Alas! To me the idea of an immediate union with my Elizabeth was one of horror and dismay. I was bound by a solemn promise which I had not yet fulfilled and dared not break, or if I did, what manifold miseries might not impend over me and my devoted family! Could I enter into a festival with this deadly weight yet hanging round my neck and bowing me to the ground? I must perform my engagement and let the monster depart with his mate before I allowed myself to enjoy the delight of a union from which I expected peace.

Situations to Choose from

- **High school sweethearts break up**
- **A son/daughter asks to borrow the car**
- **A student is caught vaping and appears before an AP**
- **Telling a parent that you received your first ticket**
- **A cat's conversation with the other family pet, a dog**
- **A generational conversation about musical tastes**
- **An athlete discusses playing time with a coach**
- **Asking someone out on a first date**

The goal of this assignment is not to improve but rather to imitate the style of Mary Shelly in a provided situation. Remember to keep a flare for the dramatic and the overuse of vocabulary.

