

## Signior Dildo

**There's a chance that Rochester has little or nothing to do with this poem, but authorship was assigned to him as the leading wit and rake of the court. The "Duchess" referred to is Marie Beatrice d'Este, the Princess of Modena, who became the second wife of James, the Duke of York. (James was also the brother of King Charles II and would succeed him, becoming James II upon Charles's death in 1685). Marie arrived in London in November 1673 for the marriage, along with a large entourage of Italians, who clearly made an impression on the English court. The poem was written between then and the following January, when it is mentioned in a letter. Over the years, lots of additional verses were written (not included here), as the simple ballad form lends itself to extension. The poem was not printed until 1703.**

You ladies of merry England  
Who have been to kiss the Duchess's hand,  
Pray, did you not lately observe in the show  
A noble Italian called Signior Dildo?

This signior was one of the Duchess's train  
And helped to conduct her over the main;  
But now she cries out, "To the Duke I will go,  
I have no more need for Signior Dildo."

At the Sign of the Cross in St James's Street,  
When next you go thither to make yourselves sweet  
By buying of powder, gloves, essence, or so,  
You may chance to get a sight of Signior Dildo.

You would take him at first for no person of note,  
Because he appears in a plain leather coat,  
But when you his virtuous abilities know,  
You'll fall down and worship Signior Dildo.

My Lady Southesk, heaven prosper her for't,  
First clothed him in satin, then brought him to court;  
But his head in the circle he scarcely durst show,  
So modest a youth was Signior Dildo.

The good Lady Suffolk, thinking no harm,  
Had got this poor stranger hid under her arm.  
Lady Betty by chance came the secret to know  
And from her own mother stole Signior Dildo.

The Countess of Falmouth, of whom people tell  
Her footmen wear shirts of a guinea an ell,  
Might save that expense, if she did but know  
How lusty a swinger is Signior Dildo.

By the help of this gallant the Countess of Rafe  
Against the fierce Harris preserved herself safe;  
She stifled him almost beneath her pillow,  
So closely she embraced Signior Dildo.

The pattern of virtue, Her Grace of Cleveland,  
Has swallowed more pricks than the ocean has sand;  
But by rubbing and scrubbing so wide does it grow,  
It is fit for just nothing but Signior Dildo.

Our dainty fine duchesses have got a trick  
To dote on a fool for the sake of his prick,  
The fops were undone did their graces but know  
The discretion and vigour of Signior Dildo.

The Duchess of Modena, though she looks so high,  
With such a gallant is content to lie,  
And for fear that the English her secrets should know,  
For her gentleman usher took Signior Dildo.

The Countess o'th'Cockpit (who knows not her name?  
She's famous in story for a killing dame),  
When all her old lovers forsake her, I trow,  
She'll then be contented with Signior Dildo.

Red Howard, red Sheldon, and Temple so tall  
Complain of his absence so long from Whitehall.  
Signior Barnard has promised a journey to go  
And bring back his countryman, Signior Dildo.

Doll Howard no longer with His Highness must range,  
And therefore is proffered this civil exchange:  
Her teeth being rotten, she smells best below,  
And needs must be fitted for Signior Dildo.

St Albans with wrinkles and smiles in his face,  
Whose kindness to strangers becomes his high place,  
In his coach and six horses is gone to Bergo  
To take the fresh air with Signior Dildo.

Were this signior but known to the citizen fops,  
He'd keep their fine wives from the foremen o'their shops;  
But the rascals deserve their horns should still grow  
For burning the Pope and his nephew, Dildo.

Tom Killigrew's wife, that Holland fine flower,  
At the sight of this signior did fart and belch sour,  
And her Dutch breeding the further to show,  
Says, 'Welcome to England, Mynheer Van Dildo.'

He civilly came to the Cockpit one night,  
And proffered his service to fair Madam Knight.  
Quoth she, 'I intrigue with Captain Cazzo;  
Your nose in mine arse, good Signior Dildo.'

This signior is sound, safe, ready, and dumb  
As ever was candle, carrot, or thumb;  
Then away with these nasty devices, and show  
How you rate the just merit of Signior Dildo.

Count Cazzo, who carries his nose very high,  
In passion he swore his rival should die;  
Then shut himself up to let the world know  
Flesh and blood could not bear it from Signior Dildo.

A rabble of pricks who were welcome before,  
Now finding the porter denied them the door,  
Maliciously waited his coming below  
And inhumanly fell on Signior Dildo.

Nigh wearied out, the poor stranger did fly,  
And along the Pall Mall they followed full cry;  
The women concerned from every window  
Cried, 'For heaven's sake, save Signior Dildo.'

The good Lady Sandys burst into a laughter  
To see how the ballocks came wobbling after,  
And had not their weight retarded the foe,  
Indeed't had gone hard with Signior Dildo.