

The Two Noble Kinsmen

2.1

Enter the Jailer and the Wooer

JAILER I may depart with little, while I live; something I may cast to you, not much. Alas, the prison I keep, though it be for great ones, yet they seldom come; before one salmon you shall take a number of minnows. I am given out to be better lined than it can appear to me report is a true speaker. I would I were really that I am delivered to be. Marry, what I have±±be it what it will±±I will assure upon my daughter at the day of my death.

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WOOER Sir, I demand no more than your own offer, and I will estate your daughter in what I have promised. 10

JAILER Well, we will talk more of this when the solemnity is past. But have you a full promise of her?

Enter the Jailer's Daughter with rushes

When that shall be seen, I tender my consent.

WOOER I have, sir. Here she comes. 15

JAILER (to Daughter) Your friend and I have chanced to name you here, upon the old business±±but no more of that now. So soon as the court hurry is over we will have an end of it. I'th' mean time, look tenderly to the two prisoners. I can tell you they are princes. 20

JAILER'S DAUGHTER These strewings are for their chamber. 'Tis pity they are in prison, and 'twere pity they should be out. I do think they have patience to make any adversity ashamed; the prison itself is proud of 'em, and they have all the world in their chamber. 25

JAILER They are famed to be a pair of absolute men.

JAILER'S DAUGHTER By my troth, I think fame but stammers 'em±±they stand a grece above the reach of report.

JAILER I heard them reported in the battle to be the only doers. 30

JAILER'S DAUGHTER Nay, most likely, for they are noble sufferers. I marvel how they would have looked had they been victors, that with such a constant nobility enforce a freedom out of bondage, making misery their

mirth, and affliction a toy to jest at.

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JAILER Do they so?

JAILER'S DAUGHTER It seems to me they have no more sense of their captivity than I of ruling Athens. They eat well, look merrily, discourse of many things, but nothing of their own restraint and disasters. Yet 40
sometime a divided sigh±±martyred as 'twere i'th' deliverance±±will break from one of them, when the other presently gives it so sweet a rebuke that I could wish myself a sigh to be so chid, or at least a sigher to be comforted. 45

WOOER I never saw 'em.

JAILER The Duke himself came privately in the night,
Palamon and Arcite appear [at a window] above
and so did they. What the reason of it is I know not.
Look, yonder they are. That's Arcite looks out.

JAILER'S DAUGHTER No, sir, no±±that's Palamon. Arcite is 50
the lower of the twain±± (*pointing at Arcite*) you may perceive a part of him.

JAILER Go to, leave your pointing. They would not make us their object. Out of their sight.

JAILER'S DAUGHTER It is a holiday to look on them. Lord, 55
the difference of men!
Exeunt