

The Two Gentlemen of Verona

3.1

Enter Duke, Thurio, and Proteus

DUKE

Sir Thurio, give us leave, I pray, awhile.
We have some secrets to confer about.

Exit Thurio

Now tell me, Proteus, what's your will with me?

PROTEUS

My gracious lord, that which I would discover
The law of friendship bids me to conceal. 5
But when I call to mind your gracious favours
Done to me, undeserving as I am,
My duty pricks me on to utter that
Which else no worldly good should draw from me.
Know, worthy prince, Sir Valentine my friend 10
This night intends to steal away your daughter.
Myself am one made privy to the plot.
I know you have determined to bestow her
On Thurio, whom your gentle daughter hates,
And should she thus be stol'n away from you 15
It would be much vexation to your age.
Thus, for my duty's sake, I rather chose
To cross my friend in his intended drift
Than by concealing it heap on your head
A pack of sorrows which would press you down, 20
Being unprevented, to your timeless grave.

DUKE

Proteus, I thank thee for thine honest care,
Which to requite command me while I live.
This love of theirs myself have often seen,
Haply, when they have judged me fast asleep, 25
And oftentimes have purposed to forbid
Sir Valentine her company and my court.
But fearing lest my jealous aim might err,
And so unworthily disgrace the man±±
A rashness that I ever yet have shunned±± 30
I gave him gentle looks, thereby to find

That which thyself hast now disclosed to me.
And that thou mayst perceive my fear of this,
Knowing that tender youth is soon suggested,
I nightly lodge her in an upper tower, 35
The key whereof myself have ever kept;
And thence she cannot be conveyed away.

PROTEUS

Know, noble lord, they have devised a mean
How he her chamber-window will ascend,
And with a corded ladder fetch her down, 40
For which the youthful lover now is gone,
And this way comes he with it presently,
Where, if it please you, you may intercept him.
But, good my lord, do it so cunningly
That my discovery be not aimed at; 45
For love of you, not hate unto my friend,
Hath made me publisher of this pretence.

DUKE

Upon mine honour, he shall never know
That I had any light from thee of this.

PROTEUS

Adieu, my lord. Sir Valentine is coming. 50
Exit
Enter Valentine

DUKE

Sir Valentine, whither away so fast?

VALENTINE

Please it your grace, there is a messenger
That stays to bear my letters to my friends,
And I am going to deliver them.

DUKE Be they of much import? 55

VALENTINE

The tenor of them doth but signify
My health and happy being at your court.

DUKE

Nay then, no matter. Stay with me awhile.
I am to break with thee of some affairs
That touch me near, wherein thou must be secret. 60
'Tis not unknown to thee that I have sought
To match my friend Sir Thurio to my daughter.

VALENTINE

I know it well, my lord; and sure the match
Were rich and honourable. Besides, the gentleman
Is full of virtue, bounty, worth, and qualities 65
Beseeming such a wife as your fair daughter.
Cannot your grace win her to fancy him?

DUKE

No, trust me. She is peevish, sullen, froward,
Proud, disobedient, stubborn, lacking duty,
Neither regarding that she is my child 70
Nor fearing me as if I were her father.
And may I say to thee, this pride of hers
Upon advice hath drawn my love from her,
And where I thought the remnant of mine age
Should have been cherished by her child-like duty, 75
I now am full resolved to take a wife,
And turn her out to who will take her in.
Then let her beauty be her wedding dower,
For me and my possessions she esteems not.

VALENTINE

What would your grace have me to do in this? 80

DUKE

There is a lady of Verona here
Whom I affect, but she is nice, and coy,
And naught esteems my ageAd eloquence.
Now therefore would I have thee to my tutor±±
For long ago I have forgot to court, 85
Besides, the fashion of the time is changed±±
How and which way I may bestow myself
To be regarded in her sun-bright eye.

VALENTINE

Win her with gifts if she respect not words.
Dumb jewels often in their silent kind 90
More than quick words do move a woman's mind.

DUKE

But she did scorn a present that I sent her.

VALENTINE

A woman sometime scorns what best contents her.
Send her another. Never give her o'er,
For scorn at first makes after-love the more. 95
If she do frown, 'tis not in hate of you,
But rather to beget more love in you.

If she do chide, 'tis not to have you gone,
Forwhy the fools are mad if left alone.
Take no repulse, whatever she doth say: 100
For `Get you gone' she doth not mean `Away'.
Flatter and praise, commend, extol their graces;
Though ne'er so black, say they have angels' faces.
That man that hath a tongue I say is no man
If with his tongue he cannot win a woman. 105

DUKE

But she I mean is promised by her friends
Unto a youthful gentleman of worth,
And kept severely from resort of men,
That no man hath access by day to her.

VALENTINE

Why then I would resort to her by night. 110

DUKE

Ay, but the doors be locked and keys kept safe,
That no man hath recourse to her by night.

VALENTINE

What lets but one may enter at her window?

DUKE

Her chamber is aloft, far from the ground,
And built so shelving that one cannot climb it 115
Without apparent hazard of his life.

VALENTINE

Why then, a ladder quaintly made of cords
To cast up, with a pair of anchoring hooks,
Would serve to scale another Hero's tower,
So bold Leander would adventure it. 120

DUKE

Now as thou art a gentleman of blood,
Advise me where I may have such a ladder.

VALENTINE

When would you use it? Pray sir, tell me that.

DUKE

This very night; for love is like a child
That longs for everything that he can come by. 125

VALENTINE

By seven o'clock I'll get you such a ladder.

DUKE

But hark thee: I will go to her alone.

How shall I best convey the ladder thither?

VALENTINE

It will be light, my lord, that you may bear it
Under a cloak that is of any length. 130

DUKE

A cloak as long as thine will serve the turn?

VALENTINE

Ay, my good lord.

DUKE

Then let me see thy cloak,
I'll get me one of such another length.

VALENTINE

Why, any cloak will serve the turn, my lord.

DUKE

How shall I fashion me to wear a cloak? 135
I pray thee let me feel thy cloak upon me.

*He lifts Valentine's cloak and finds a letter and a
rope-ladder*

What letter is this same? What's here? `To Silvia'?
And here an engine fit for my proceeding.
I'll be so bold to break the seal for once.

(Reads)

`My thoughts do harbour with my Silvia nightly, 140
And slaves they are to me, that send them flying.
O, could their master come and go as lightly,
Himself would lodge where, senseless, they are
lying.

My herald thoughts in thy pure bosom rest them,
While I, their king, that thither them importune, 145
Do curse the grace that with such grace hath blessed
them,

Because myself do want my servants' fortune.
I curse myself for they are sent by me,
That they should harbour where their lord should
be.'

What's here? 150

`Silvia, this night I will enfranchise thee'
'Tis so, and here's the ladder for the purpose.
Why, Phaeëton, for thou art Merops' son
Wilt thou aspire to guide the heavenly car,
And with thy daring folly burn the world? 155

Wilt thou reach stars because they shine on thee?
 Go, base intruder, over-weening slave,
 Bestow thy fawning smiles on equal mates,
 And think my patience, more than thy desert,
 Is privilege for thy departure hence. 160
 Thank me for this more than for all the favours
 Which, all too much, I have bestowed on thee.
 But if thou linger in my territories
 Longer than swiftest expedition
 Will give thee time to leave our royal court, 165
 By heaven, my wrath shall far exceed the love
 I ever bore my daughter or thyself.
 Be gone. I will not hear thy vain excuse,
 But as thou lov'st thy life, make speed from hence.

Exit

VALENTINE

And why not death, rather than living torment? 170
 To die is to be banished from myself,
 And Silvia is my self. Banished from her
 Is self from self, a deadly banishment.
 What light is light, if Silvia be not seen?
 What joy is joy, if Silvia be not by±± 175
 Unless it be to think that she is by,
 And feed upon the shadow of perfection.
 Except I be by Silvia in the night
 There is no music in the nightingale.
 Unless I look on Silvia in the day 180
 There is no day for me to look upon.
 She is my essence, and I leave to be
 If I be not by her fair influence
 Fostered, illumined, cherished, kept alive.
 I fly not death to fly his deadly doom. 185
 Tarry I here I but attend on death,
 But fly I hence, I fly away from life.

Enter Proteus and Lance

PROTEUS Run, boy, run, run, and seek him out.

LANCE So-ho, so-ho!

PROTEUS What seest thou? 190

LANCE Him we go to find. There's not a hair on's head
 but 'tis a Valentine.

PROTEUS Valentine?
VALENTINE No.
PROTEUS Who then±±his spirit? 195
VALENTINE Neither.
PROTEUS What then?
VALENTINE Nothing.
LANCE Can nothing speak?
He threatens Valentine
Master, shall I strike? 200
PROTEUS Who wouldst thou strike?
LANCE Nothing.
PROTEUS Villain, forbear.
LANCE Why, sir, I'll strike nothing. I pray you±±
PROTEUS
Sirrah, I say forbear. Friend Valentine, a word. 205
VALENTINE
My ears are stopped, and cannot hear good news,
So much of bad already hath possessed them.
PROTEUS
Then in dumb silence will I bury mine,
For they are harsh, untuneable, and bad.
VALENTINE
Is Silvia dead?
PROTEUS No, Valentine. 210
VALENTINE
No Valentine indeed, for sacred Silvia.
Hath she forsworn me?
PROTEUS No, Valentine.
VALENTINE
No Valentine, if Silvia have forsworn me.
What is your news?
LANCE Sir, there is a proclamation that you are vanished. 215
PROTEUS
That thou art banished. O that's the news:
From hence, from Silvia, and from me thy friend.
VALENTINE
O, I have fed upon this woe already,
And now excess of it will make me surfeit.
Doth Silvia know that I am banisheÁd? 220
PROTEUS
Ay, ay; and she hath offered to the doom,

Which unreversed stands in effectual force,
A sea of melting pearl, which some call tears.
Those at her father's churlish feet she tendered,
With them, upon her knees, her humble self, 225
Wringing her hands, whose whiteness so became them
As if but now they waxeÁd pale, for woe.
But neither bended knees, pure hands held up,
Sad sighs, deep groans, nor silver-shedding tears
Could penetrate her uncompassionate sire, 230
But Valentine, if he be ta'en, must die.
Besides, her intercession chafed him so
When she for thy repeal was suppliant
That to close prison he commanded her,
With many bitter threats of bidding there. 235

VALENTINE

No more, unless the next word that thou speak'st
Have some malignant power upon my life.
If so I pray thee breathe it in mine ear,
As ending anthem of my endless dolour.

PROTEUS

Cease to lament for that thou canst not help, 240
And study help for that which thou lament'st.
Time is the nurse and breeder of all good.
Here if thou stay thou canst not see thy love.
Besides, thy staying will abridge thy life.
Hope is a lover's staff. Walk hence with that, 245
And manage it against despairing thoughts.
Thy letters may be here, though thou art hence,
Which, being writ to me, shall be delivered
Even in the milk-white bosom of thy love.
The time now serves not to expostulate. 250
Come, I'll convey thee through the city gate,
And ere I part with thee confer at large
Of all that may concern thy love affairs.
As thou lov'st Silvia, though not for thyself,
Regard thy danger, and along with me. 255

VALENTINE

I pray thee, Lance, an if thou seest my boy
Bid him make haste, and meet me at the North Gate.

PROTEUS

Go, sirrah, find him out. Come, Valentine.

VALENTINE

O my dear Silvia! Hapless Valentine.

Exeunt Proteus and Valentine

LANCE I am but a fool, look you, and yet I have the wit 260
to think my master is a kind of a knave. But that's all
one, if he be but one knave. He lives not now that
knows me to be in love, yet I am in love, but a team
of horse shall not pluck that from me, nor who 'tis I
love; and yet 'tis a woman, but what woman I will 265
not tell myself; and yet 'tis a milkmaid; yet 'tis not a
maid, for she hath had gossips; yet 'tis a maid, for she
is her master's maid, and serves for wages. She hath
more qualities than a water-spaniel, which is much in
a bare Christian. 270

He takes out a paper

Here is the catalogue of her conditions. *`Imprimis*, she
can fetch and carry'±±why, a horse can do no more.
Nay, a horse cannot fetch, but only carry, therefore is
she better than a jade. *`Item*, she can milk.' Look you,
a sweet virtue in a maid with clean hands. 275

Enter Speed

SPEED How now, Signor Lance, what news with your
mastership?

LANCE With my master's ship? Why, it is at sea.

SPEED Well, your old vice still, mistake the word. What
news then in your paper? 280

LANCE The blackest news that ever thou heard'st.

SPEED Why, man, how 'black'?

LANCE Why, as black as ink.

SPEED Let me read them.

LANCE Fie on thee, jolt-head, thou canst not read. 285

SPEED Thou liest. I can.

LANCE I will try thee. Tell me this: who begot thee?

SPEED Marry, the son of my grandfather.

LANCE O illiterate loiterer, it was the son of thy grand-
mother. This proves that thou canst not read. 290

SPEED Come, fool, come. Try me in thy paper.

LANCE (*giving Speed the paper*) There: and Saint Nicholas
be thy speed.

SPEED *`Imprimis, she can milk.'*
LANCE Ay, that she can. 295
SPEED *`Item, she brews good ale.'*
LANCE And thereof comes the proverb *`Blessing of your*
 heart, you brew good ale'.
SPEED *`Item, she can sew.'*
LANCE That's as much as to say *`Can she so?'* 300
SPEED *`Item, she can knit.'*
LANCE What need a man care for a stock with a wench
 when she can knit him a stock?
SPEED *`Item, she can wash and scour.'*
LANCE A special virtue, for then she need not be washed 305
 and scoured.
SPEED *`Item, she can spin.'*
LANCE Then may I set the world on wheels, when she
 can spin for her living.
SPEED *`Item, she hath many nameless virtues.'* 310
LANCE That's as much as to say *`bastard virtues'*, that
 indeed know not their fathers, and therefore have no
 names.
SPEED Here follows her vices.
LANCE Close at the heels of her virtues. 315
SPEED *`Item, she is not to be broken with fasting, in*
 respect of her breath.'
LANCE Well, that fault may be mended with a breakfast.
 Read on.
SPEED *`Item, she hath a sweet mouth.'* 320
LANCE That makes amends for her sour breath.
SPEED *`Item, she doth talk in her sleep.'*
LANCE It's no matter for that, so she sleep not in her talk.
SPEED *`Item, she is slow in words.'*
LANCE O villain, that set this down among her vices! To 325
 be slow in words is a woman's only virtue. I pray thee
 out with't, and place it for her chief virtue.
SPEED *`Item, she is proud.'*
LANCE Out with that, too. It was Eve's legacy, and cannot
 be ta'en from her. 330
SPEED *`Item, she hath no teeth.'*
LANCE I care not for that, neither, because I love crusts.
SPEED *`Item, she is curst.'*

LANCE Well, the best is, she hath no teeth to bite.
SPEED *'Item, she will often praise her liquor.'* 335
LANCE If her liquor be good, she shall. If she will not, I
will; for good things should be praised.
SPEED *'Item, she is too liberal.'*
LANCE Of her tongue she cannot, for that's writ down
she is slow of. Of her purse she shall not, for that I'll 340
keep shut. Now of another thing she may, and that
cannot I help. Well, proceed.
SPEED *'Item, she hath more hair than wit, and more faults
than hairs, and more wealth than faults.'*
LANCE Stop there. I'll have her. She was mine and not 345
mine twice or thrice in that last article. Rehearse that
once more.
SPEED *'Item, she hath more hair than wit'±±*
LANCE *'More hair than wit.'* It may be. I'll prove it: the
cover of the salt hides the salt, and therefore it is more 350
than the salt. The hair that covers the wit is more than
the wit, for the greater hides the less. What's next?
SPEED *'And more faults than hairs'±±*
LANCE That's monstrous. O that that were out!
SPEED *'And more wealth than faults.'* 355
LANCE Why, that word makes the faults gracious. Well,
I'll have her, and if it be a match±±as nothing is
impossible±±
SPEED What then?
LANCE Why then will I tell thee that thy master stays for 360
thee at the North Gate.
SPEED For me?
LANCE For thee? Ay, who art thou? He hath stayed for
a better man than thee.
SPEED And must I go to him? 365
LANCE Thou must run to him, for thou hast stayed so
long that going will scarce serve the turn.
SPEED Why didst not tell me sooner? Pox of your love
letters!
Exit
LANCE Now will he be swung for reading my letter. An 370
unmannerly slave, that will thrust himself into secrets.
I'll after, to rejoice in the boy's correction.

Exit