

The Two Noble Kinsmen

3.3

*Enter Arcite with a bundle containing meat, wine,
and files*

ARCITE

I should be near the place. Ho, cousin Palamon!

Enter Palamon [as from the bush]

PALAMON

Arcite.

ARCITE The same. I have brought you food and files.

Come forth and fear not, here's no Theseus.

PALAMON

Nor none so honest, Arcite.

ARCITE

That's no matter±±

We'll argue that hereafter. Come, take courage±± 5

You shall not die thus beastly. Here, sir, drink;

I know you are faint. Then I'll talk further with you.

PALAMON

Arcite, thou mightst now poison me.

ARCITE

I might±±

But I must fear you first. Sit down and, good now,

No more of these vain parleys. Let us not, 10

Having our ancient reputation with us,

Make talk for fools and cowards. To your health, sir.

PALAMON

Do.

[Arcite drinks]

ARCITE Pray sit down, then, and let me entreat you,

By all the honesty and honour in you,

No mention of this woman±±'twill disturb us. 15

We shall have time enough.

PALAMON

Well, sir, I'll pledge you.

Palamon drinks

ARCITE

Drink a good hearty draught; it breeds good blood,
man.

Do not you feel it thaw you?

PALAMON

Stay, I'll tell you

After a draught or two more.

Palamon drinks

ARCITE Spare it not±±
The Duke has more, coz. Eat now.

PALAMON Yes.

Palamon eats

ARCITE I am glad 20
You have so good a stomach.

PALAMON I am gladder
I have so good meat to't.

ARCITE Is't not mad, lodging
Here in the wild woods, cousin?

PALAMON Yes, for them
That have wild consciences.

ARCITE How tastes your victuals?
Your hunger needs no sauce, I see.

PALAMON Not much. 25
But if it did, yours is too tart, sweet cousin.
What is this?

ARCITE Venison.

PALAMON 'Tis a lusty meat±±
Give me more wine. Here, Arcite, to the wenches
We have known in our days. *[Drinking]* The lord
steward's daughter.
Do you remember her?

ARCITE After you, coz. 30

PALAMON
She loved a black-haired man.

ARCITE She did so; well, sir.

PALAMON
And I have heard some call him Arcite, and±±

ARCITE
Out with't, faith.

PALAMON She met him in an arbour±±
What did she there, coz? Play o'th' virginals?

ARCITE
Something she did, sir±±

PALAMON Made her groan a month for't±±
35

Or two, or three, or ten.

ARCITE The marshal's sister
Had her share too, as I remember, cousin,

Else there be tales abroad. You'll pledge her?

PALAMON

Yes.

[They drink]

ARCITE

A pretty brown wench 'tis. There was a time
When young men went a-hunting, and a wood,
And a broad beech, and thereby hangs a tale±±
Heigh-ho!

40

PALAMON For Emily, upon my life! Fool,
Away with this strained mirth. I say again,
That sigh was breathed for Emily. Base cousin,
Dar'st thou break first?

ARCITE You are wide.

PALAMON

By heaven and

earth, 45

There's nothing in thee honest.

ARCITE Then I'll leave you±±

You are a beast now.

PALAMON As thou mak'st me, traitor.

ARCITE (*pointing to the bundle*)

There's all things needful: files and shirts and
perfumes±±

I'll come again some two hours hence and bring
That that shall quiet all.

PALAMON A sword and armour.

50

ARCITE

Fear me not. You are now too foul. Farewell.

Get off your trinkets: you shall want naught.

PALAMON

Sirrah±±

ARCITE

I'll hear no more.

Exit

PALAMON If he keep touch, he dies for't.

Exit [as into the bush]