

The Two Noble Kinsmen

3.1

*[A bush in place.] Cornetts in sundry places. Noise
and hollering as of people a-Maying.
Enter Arcite*

ARCITE

The Duke has lost Hippolyta±±each took
A several laund. This is a solemn rite
They owe bloomed May, and the Athenians pay it
To th' heart of ceremony. O, Queen Emilia,
Fresher than May, sweeter 5
Than her gold buttons on the boughs, or all
Th' enamelled knacks o'th' mead or garden±±yea,
We challenge too the bank of any nymph
That makes the stream seem flowers; thou, O jewel
O'th' wood, o'th' world, hast likewise blessed a pace 10
With thy sole presence in thy [
] rumination
That I, poor man, might eftsoons come between
And chop on some cold thought. Thrice blesseÁd
chance
To drop on such a mistress, expectation 15
Most guiltless on't! Tell me, O Lady Fortune,
Next after Emily my sovereign, how far
I may be proud. She takes strong note of me,
Hath made me near her, and this beauteous morn,
The prim'st of all the year, presents me with 20
A brace of horses±±two such steeds might well
Be by a pair of kings backed, in a field
That their crowns' titles tried. Alas, alas,
Poor cousin Palamon, poor prisoner±±thou
So little dream'st upon my fortune that 25
Thou think'st thyself the happier thing to be
So near Emilia. Me thou deem'st at Thebes,
And therein wretched, although free. But if
Thou knew'st my mistress breathed on me, and that
I eared her language, lived in her eye±±O, coz, 30
What passion would enclose thee!

*Enter Palamon as out of a bush with his shackles.
He bends his fist at Arcite*

PALAMON Traitor kinsman,
Thou shouldst perceive my passion if these signs
Of prisonment were off me, and this hand
But owner of a sword. By all oaths in one,
I and the justice of my love would make thee 35
A confessed traitor. O thou most perfidious
That ever gently looked, the void'st of honour
That e'er bore gentle token, falsest cousin
That ever blood made kin±±call'st thou her thine?
I'll prove it in my shackles, with these hands, 40
Void of appointment, that thou liest and art
A very thief in love, a chaffy lord
Not worth the name of villain. Had I a sword
And these house-clogs away±±

ARCITE Dear cousin Palamon±±

PALAMON
Cozener Arcite, give me language such 45
As thou hast showed me feat.

ARCITE Not finding in
The circuit of my breast any gross stuff
To form me like your blazon holds me to
This gentleness of answer±±'tis your passion
That thus mistakes, the which, to you being enemy, 50
Cannot to me be kind. Honour and honesty
I cherish and depend on, howsoe'er
You skip them in me, and with them, fair coz,
I'll maintain my proceedings. Pray be pleased
To show in generous terms your griefs, since that 55
Your question's with your equal, who professes
To clear his own way with the mind and sword
Of a true gentleman.

PALAMON That thou durst, Arcite!

ARCITE
My coz, my coz, you have been well advertised
How much I dare; you've seen me use my sword 60
Against th'advice of fear. Sure, of another
You would not hear me doubted, but your silence
Should break out, though i'th' sanctuary.

PALAMON

Sir,

I have seen you move in such a place which well
Might justify your manhood; you were called 65
A good knight and a bold. But the whole week's not
fair

If any day it rain: their valiant temper
Men lose when they incline to treachery,
And then they fight like compelled bears±±would fly
Were they not tied.

ARCITE Kinsman, you might as well 70
Speak this and act it in your glass as to
His ear which now disdains you.

PALAMON Come up to me,
Quit me of these cold gyves, give me a sword,
Though it be rusty, and the charity
Of one meal lend me. Come before me then, 75
A good sword in thy hand, and do but say
That Emily is thine±±I will forgive
The trespass thou hast done me, yea, my life,
If then thou carry't; and brave souls in shades
That have died manly, which will seek of me 80
Some news from earth, they shall get none but this±±
That thou art brave and noble.

ARCITE Be content,
Again betake you to your hawthorn house.
With counsel of the night I will be here
With wholesome viands. These impediments 85
Will I file off. You shall have garments and
Perfumes to kill the smell o'th' prison. After,
When you shall stretch yourself and say but `Arcite,
I am in plight', there shall be at your choice
Both sword and armour.

PALAMON O, you heavens, dares any 90
So noble bear a guilty business! None
But only Arcite, therefore none but Arcite
In this kind is so bold.

ARCITE Sweet Palamon.

PALAMON

I do embrace you and your offer±±for
Your offer do't I only, sir; your person, 95

Without hypocrisy, I may not wish

Wind horns within

More than my sword's edge on't.

ARCITE

You hear the horns±±

Enter your muset lest this match between's

Be crossed ere met. Give me your hand, farewell.

I'll bring you every needful thing±±I pray you, 100

Take comfort and be strong.

PALAMON

Pray hold your promise,

And do the deed with a bent brow. Most certain

You love me not±±be rough with me and pour

This oil out of your language. By this air,

I could for each word give a cuff, my stomach 105

Not reconciled by reason.

ARCITE

Plainly spoken,

Yet±±pardon me±±hard language: when I spur

Wind horns within

My horse I chide him not. Content and anger

In me have but one face. Hark, sir, they call

The scattered to the banquet. You must guess 110

I have an office there.

PALAMON

Sir, your attendance

Cannot please heaven, and I know your office

Unjustly is achieved.

ARCITE

'Tis a good title.

I am persuaded this question, sick between's,

By bleeding must be cured. I am a suitor 115

That to your sword you will bequeath this plea

And talk of it no more.

PALAMON

But this one word:

You are going now to gaze upon my mistress±±

For note you, mine she is±±

ARCITE

Nay then±±

PALAMON

Nay, pray you±±

You talk of feeding me to breed me strength±± 120

You are going now to look upon a sun

That strengthens what it looks on. There you have

A vantage o'er me, but enjoy it till

I may enforce my remedy. Farewell.

Exeunt severally, [Palamon as into the bush]