

The Two Noble Kinsmen

4.1

Enter the Jailer and his Friend

JAILER

Hear you no more? Was nothing said of me
Concerning the escape of Palamon?
Good sir, remember.

FRIEND

Nothing that I heard,
For I came home before the business
Was fully ended. Yet I might perceive,
Ere I departed, a great likelihood
Of both their pardons: for Hippolyta
And fair-eyed Emily upon their knees
Begged with such handsome pity that the Duke,
Methought, stood staggering whether he should
follow

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His rash oath or the sweet compassion
Of those two ladies; and to second them
That truly noble prince, Pirithous±±
Half his own heart±±set in too, that I hope
All shall be well. Neither heard I one question
Of your name or his scape.

15

Enter the Second Friend

JAILER

Pray heaven it hold so.

SECOND FRIEND

Be of good comfort, man. I bring you news,
Good news.

JAILER They are welcome.

SECOND FRIEND

Palamon has cleared you,
And got your pardon, and discovered how
And by whose means he scaped±±which was your
daughter's,
Whose pardon is procured too; and the prisoner,
Not to be held ungrateful to her goodness,
Has given a sum of money to her marriage±±
A large one, I'll assure you.

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JAILER

Ye are a good man,
And ever bring good news.

FIRST FRIEND How was it ended? 25

SECOND FRIEND

Why, as it should be: they that ne'er begged,
But they prevailed, had their suits fairly granted±±
The prisoners have their lives.

FIRST FRIEND I knew 'twould be so.

SECOND FRIEND

But there be new conditions which you'll hear of
At better time.

JAILER I hope they are good.

SECOND FRIEND They are honourable±±

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How good they'll prove I know not.
Enter the Wooer

FIRST FRIEND 'Twill be known.

WOOER

Alas, sir, where's your daughter?

JAILER Why do you ask?

WOOER

O, sir, when did you see her?

SECOND FRIEND How he looks!

JAILER

This morning.

WOOER Was she well? Was she in health?

Sir, when did she sleep?

FIRST FRIEND These are strange questions. 35

JAILER

I do not think she was very well: for now
You make me mind her, but this very day
I asked her questions and she answered me
So far from what she was, so childishly,
So sillily, as if she were a fool, 40
An innocent±±and I was very angry.
But what of her, sir?

WOOER Nothing, but my pity±±

But you must know it, and as good by me
As by another that less loves her±±

JAILER

Well, sir?

FIRST FRIEND Not right?

WOOER No, sir, not well.

SECOND FRIEND

Not well? 45

WOOER

'Tis too true±±she is mad.

FIRST FRIEND

It cannot be.

WOOER

Believe, you'll find it so.

JAILER

I half suspected

What you told me±±the gods comfort her!

Either this was her love to Palamon,

Or fear of my miscarrying on his scape,

50

Or both.

WOOER 'Tis likely.

JAILER

But why all this haste, sir?

WOOER

I'll tell you quickly. As I late was angling

In the great lake that lies behind the palace,

From the far shore, thick set with reeds and sedges,

As patiently I was attending sport,

55

I heard a voice±±a shrill one±±and attentive

I gave my ear, when I might well perceive

'Twas one that sung, and by the smallness of it

A boy or woman. I then left my angle

To his own skill, came near, but yet perceived not

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Who made the sound, the rushes and the reeds

Had so encompassed it. I laid me down

And listened to the words she sung, for then,

Through a small glade cut by the fishermen,

I saw it was your daughter.

JAILER

Pray go on, sir.

65

WOOER

She sung much, but no sense; only I heard her

Repeat this often±±'Palamon is gone,

Is gone to th' wood to gather mulberries;

I'll find him out tomorrow.'

FIRST FRIEND

Pretty soul!

WOOER

`His shackles will betray him±±he'll be taken,

70

And what shall I do then? I'll bring a bevy,

A hundred black-eyed maids that love as I do,

With chaplets on their heads of daffodillies,
 With cherry lips and cheeks of damask roses,
 And all we'll dance an antic fore the Duke 75
 And beg his pardon.' Then she talked of you, sir±±
 That you must lose your head tomorrow morning,
 And she must gather flowers to bury you,
 And see the house made handsome. Then she sung
 Nothing but `willow, willow, willow', and between 80
 Ever was `Palamon, fair Palamon',
 And `Palamon was a tall young man'. The place
 Was knee-deep where she sat; her careless tresses
 A wreath of bull-rush rounded; about her stuck
 Thousand freshwater flowers of several colours±± 85
 That she appeared, methought, like the fair nymph
 That feeds the lake with waters, or as Iris
 Newly dropped down from heaven. Rings she made
 Of rushes that grew by, and to 'em spoke
 The prettiest posies±±`Thus our true love's tied', 90
 `This you may lose, not me', and many a one.
 And then she wept, and sung again, and sighed±±
 And with the same breath smiled and kissed her
 hand.

SECOND FRIEND

Alas, what pity it is!

WOOER

I made in to her:

She saw me and straight sought the flood±±I saved
 her, 95

And set her safe to land, when presently
 She slipped away and to the city made,
 With such a cry and swiftness that, believe me,
 She left me far behind her. Three or four
 I saw from far off cross her±±one of 'em 100
 I knew to be your brother, where she stayed
 And fell, scarce to be got away. I left them with her,

*Enter the Jailer's Brother, the Jailer's Daughter, and
 others*

And hither came to tell you±±here they are.

JAILER'S DAUGHTER (sings)

`May you never more enjoy the light . . .'±±
 Is not this a fine song?

JAILER'S BROTHER O, a very fine one. 105
JAILER'S DAUGHTER
I can sing twenty more.
JAILER'S BROTHER I think you can.
JAILER'S DAUGHTER
Yes, truly can I±±I can sing 'The Broom'
And 'Bonny Robin'±±are not you a tailor?
JAILER'S BROTHER
Yes.
JAILER'S DAUGHTER Where's my wedding gown?
JAILER'S BROTHER
bring it tomorrow.
JAILER'S DAUGHTER
Do, very rarely±±I must be abroad else, 110
To call the maids and pay the minstrels,
For I must lose my maidenhead by cocklight,
'Twill never thrive else. (*Sings*) 'O fair, O sweet . . .'
JAILER'S BROTHER [*to the Jailer*]
You must e'en take it patiently.
JAILER 'Tis true.
JAILER'S DAUGHTER
Good ev'n, good men. Pray, did you ever hear 115
Of one young Palamon?
JAILER Yes, wench, we know him.
JAILER'S DAUGHTER
Is't not a fine young gentleman?
JAILER 'Tis, love.
JAILER'S BROTHER
By no mean cross her, she is then distempered
Far worse than now she shows.
FIRST FRIEND (*to the Jailer's Daughter*) Yes, he's a fine man.
JAILER'S DAUGHTER
O, is he so? You have a sister.
FIRST FRIEND Yes. 120
JAILER'S DAUGHTER
But she shall never have him, tell her so,
For a trick that I know. You'd best look to her,
For if she see him once, she's gone±±she's done
And undone in an hour. All the young maids
Of our town are in love with him, but I laugh at 'em 125
And let 'em all alone. Is't not a wise course?

I'll

FIRST FRIEND

Yes.

JAILER'S DAUGHTER

There is at least two hundred now with child by him,
There must be four; yet I keep close for all this,
Close as a cockle; and all these must be boys±±
He has the trick on't±±and at ten years old 130
They must be all gelt for musicians
And sing the wars of Theseus.

SECOND FRIEND

This is strange.

[JAILER'S BROTHER]

As ever you heard, but say nothing.

FIRST FRIEND

No.

JAILER'S DAUGHTER

They come from all parts of the dukedom to him.
I'll warrant ye, he had not so few last night 135
As twenty to dispatch. He'll tickle't up
In two hours, if his hand be in.

JAILER

She's lost

Past all cure.

JAILER'S BROTHER Heaven forbid, man!

JAILER'S DAUGHTER *(to the Jailer)*

Come hither±±you are a wise man.

FIRST FRIEND

Does she know him?

SECOND FRIEND

No±±would she did.

JAILER'S DAUGHTER You are master of a ship? 140

JAILER

Yes.

JAILER'S DAUGHTER Where's your compass?

JAILER

Here.

JAILER'S DAUGHTER

Set it to th' north.

And now direct your course to th' wood where
Palamon

Lies longing for me. For the tackling,
Let me alone. Come, weigh, my hearts, cheerly all.
Uff, uff, uff! 'Tis up. The wind's fair. Top the bowline. 145
Out with the mainsail. Where's your whistle, master?

JAILER'S BROTHER Let's get her in.

JAILER

Up to the top, boy!

JAILER'S BROTHER Where's the pilot?

FIRST FRIEND

Here.

JAILER'S DAUGHTER

What kenn'st thou?

SECOND FRIEND A fair wood.

JAILER'S DAUGHTER

Bear for it, master.

Tack about!

150

(Sings) 'When Cynthia with her borrowed light . . .'

Exeunt