

The Two Noble Kinsmen

4.2

[Enter Emilia, with two pictures]

EMILIA

Yet I may bind those wounds up that must open
And bleed to death for my sake else±±I'll choose,
And end their strife. Two such young handsome men
Shall never fall for me; their weeping mothers
Following the dead cold ashes of their sons, 5
Shall never curse my cruelty. Good heaven,
What a sweet face has Arcite! If wise nature,
With all her best endowments, all those beauties
She sows into the births of noble bodies,
Were here a mortal woman and had in her 10
The coy denials of young maids, yet doubtless
She would run mad for this man. What an eye,
Of what a fiery sparkle and quick sweetness
Has this young prince! Here love himself sits smiling!
Just such another wanton Ganymede 15
Set Jove afire once, and enforced the god
Snatch up the goodly boy and set him by him,
A shining constellation. What a brow,
Of what a spacious majesty, he carries!
Arched like the great-eyed Juno's, but far sweeter, 20
Smoother than Pelops' shoulder! Fame and honour,
Methinks, from hence, as from a promontory
Pointed in heaven, should clap their wings and sing
To all the under world the loves and fights
Of gods, and such men near 'em. Palamon 25
Is but his foil; to him a mere dull shadow;
He's swart and meagre, of an eye as heavy
As if he had lost his mother; a still temper,
No stirring in him, no alacrity,
Of all this sprightly sharpness, not a smile. 30
Yet these that we count errors may become him:
Narcissus was a sad boy, but a heavenly.
O, who can find the bent of woman's fancy?
I am a fool, my reason is lost in me,

I have no choice, and I have lied so lewdly 35
That women ought to beat me. On my knees
I ask thy pardon, Palamon, thou art alone
And only beautiful, and these the eyes,
These the bright lamps of beauty, that command
And threaten love±±and what young maid dare cross
'em? 40

What a bold gravity, and yet inviting,
Has this brown manly face? O, love, this only
From this hour is complexion. Lie there, Arcite,
Thou art a changeling to him, a mere gypsy,
And this the noble body. I am sotted, 45
Utterly lost±±my virgin's faith has fled me.
For if my brother, but even now, had asked me
Whether I loved, I had run mad for Arcite;
Now if my sister, more for Palamon.
Stand both together. Now come ask me, brother±± 50
Alas, I know not; ask me now, sweet sister±±
I may go look. What a mere child is fancy,
That having two fair gauds of equal sweetness,
Cannot distinguish, but must cry for both!

[Enter a Gentleman]

How now, sir?

GENTLEMAN From the noble Duke your brother, 55
Madam, I bring you news. The knights are come.

EMILIA
To end the quarrel?

GENTLEMAN Yes.

EMILIA Would I might end first!

What sins have I committed, chaste Diana,
That my unspotted youth must now be soiled
With blood of princes, and my chastity 60
Be made the altar where the lives of lovers±±
Two greater and two better never yet
Made mothers joy±±must be the sacrifice
To my unhappy beauty?

Enter Theseus, Hippolyta, Pirithous, and attendants

THESEUS Bring 'em in
Quickly, by any means, I long to see 'em. 65
Exit one or more

(To Emilia) Your two contending lovers are returned,
And with them their fair knights. Now, my fair sister,
You must love one of them.

EMILIA I had rather both,
So neither for my sake should fall untimely.

Enter a Messenger

THESEUS
Who saw 'em?

PIRITHOUS I a while.

GENTLEMAN And I. 70

THESEUS (to the Messenger)
From whence come you, sir?

MESSENGER From the knights.

THESEUS Pray
speak,

You that have seen them, what they are.

MESSENGER I will, sir,

And truly what I think. Six braver spirits
Than these they have brought, if we judge by the
outside,

I never saw nor read of. He that stands 75

In the first place with Arcite, by his seeming,
Should be a stout man; by his face, a prince.

His very looks so say him: his complexion,
Nearer a brown than black, stern and yet noble,
Which shows him hardy, fearless, proud of dangers. 80

The circles of his eyes show fire within him,
And, as a heated lion, so he looks.

His hair hangs long behind him, black and shining,
Like ravens' wings. His shoulders, broad and strong;
Armed long and round; and on his thigh a sword 85

Hung by a curious baldric, when he frowns
To seal his will with. Better, o' my conscience,
Was never soldier's friend.

THESEUS Thou hast well described him.

PIRITHOUS Yet a great deal short, 90

Methinks, of him that's first with Palamon.

THESEUS
Pray speak him, friend.

PIRITHOUS I guess he is a prince too,

And, if it may be, greater±±for his show
 Has all the ornament of honour in't.
 He's somewhat bigger than the knight he spoke of, 95
 But of a face far sweeter. His complexion
 Is as a ripe grape, ruddy. He has felt,
 Without doubt, what he fights for, and so apter
 To make this cause his own. In's face appears
 All the fair hopes of what he undertakes, 100
 And when he's angry, then a settled valour,
 Not tainted with extremes, runs through his body
 And guides his arm to brave things. Fear he cannot±±
 He shows no such soft temper. His head's yellow,
 Hard-haired and curled, thick twined: like ivy tods, 105
 Not to undo with thunder. In his face
 The livery of the warlike maid appears,
 Pure red and white±±for yet no beard has blessed
 him±±
 And in his rolling eyes sits victory,
 As if she ever meant to court his valour. 110
 His nose stands high, a character of honour;
 His red lips, after fights, are fit for ladies.

EMILIA

Must these men die too?

PIRITHOUS

When he speaks, his tongue
 Sounds like a trumpet. All his lineaments
 Are as a man would wish 'em±±strong and clean. 115
 He wears a well-steeled axe, the staff of gold.
 His age, some five-and-twenty.

MESSENGER

There's another±±
 A little man, but of a tough soul, seeming
 As great as any. Fairer promises
 In such a body yet I never looked on. 120

PIRITHOUS

O, he that's freckle-faced?

MESSENGER

The same, my lord.
 Are they not sweet ones?

PIRITHOUS

Yes, they are well.

MESSENGER

Methinks,

Being so few and well disposed, they show

Great and fine art in nature. He's white-haired±±
 Not wanton white, but such a manly colour 125
 Next to an auburn, tough and nimble set,
 Which shows an active soul. His arms are brawny,
 Lined with strong sinews±±to the shoulder piece
 Gently they swell, like women new-conceived,
 Which speaks him prone to labour, never fainting 130
 Under the weight of arms; stout-hearted, still,
 But when he stirs, a tiger. He's grey-eyed,
 Which yields compassion where he conquers; sharp
 To spy advantages, and where he finds 'em,
 He's swift to make 'em his. He does no wrongs, 135
 Nor takes none. He's round-faced, and when he smiles
 He shows a lover; when he frowns, a soldier.
 About his head he wears the winner's oak,
 And in it stuck the favour of his lady.
 His age, some six-and-thirty. In his hand 140
 He bears a charging staff embossed with silver.

THESEUS

Are they all thus?

PIRITHOUS They are all the sons of honour.

THESEUS

Now as I have a soul, I long to see 'em.

(*To Hippolyta*) Lady, you shall see men fight now.

HIPPOLYTA

I wish it,

But not the cause, my lord. They would show 145

Bravely about the titles of two kingdoms±±

'Tis pity love should be so tyrannous.

(*To Emilia*) O my soft-hearted sister, what think you?

Weep not till they weep blood. Wench, it must be.

THESEUS (*to Emilia*)

You have steeled 'em with your beauty.

(*To Pirithous*)

Honoured

friend, 150

To you I give the field: pray order it

Fitting the persons that must use it.

PIRITHOUS

Yes, sir.

THESEUS

Come, I'll go visit 'em±±I cannot stay,

Their fame has fired me so. Till they appear,
Good friend, be royal.

PIRITHOUS There shall want no bravery.

155

EMILIA *[aside]*

Poor wench, go weep±±for whosoever wins
Loses a noble cousin for thy sins.

Exeunt