

Love's Labor's Lost

By William Shakespeare

An Abridged Version
for Nine Actors

Adapted by
Scott Kaiser

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CAST of CHARACTERS

- Actor 1: King of Navarre
- Actor 2: Berowne
- Actor 3: Dumaine
- Actor 4: Costard
- Actor 5: Dull, Jaquenetta, Marcade (*female*)
- Actor 6: Princess of France
- Actor 7: Rosaline
- Actor 8: Katherine
- Actor 9: Boyet (*male or female*)

Estimated Run Time: 66 minutes

SCENE 1

(Enter KING of Navarre, BEROWNE and DUMAINE.)

KING: Let fame, that all hunt after in their lives,
Live register'd upon our brazen tombs,
And then grace us in the disgrace of death,
Making us heirs of all eternity.
Therefore, brave conquerors—for so you are,
That war against your own affections
And the huge army of the world's desires—
Our late edict shall strongly stand in force.
Navarre shall be the wonder of the world;
Our court shall be a little academe,
Still and contemplative in living art.
You, my fellow scholars, Berowne and Dumaine,
Have sworn for three years' term to live with me
And to keep those statutes
That are recorded in this schedule here.
Your oaths are pass'd; and now subscribe your names,
That his own hand may strike his honor down
That violates the smallest branch herein.
If you are arm'd to do as sworn to do,
Subscribe to your deep oaths, and keep it too.

DUMAINE: I am resolv'd; 'tis but a three years' fast.
The mind shall banquet, though the body pine.
The grosser manner of these world's delights
I throw upon the gross world's baser slaves.
To love, to wealth, to pomp, I pine and die,
With all these living in philosophy.

BEROWNE: I can but say his protestation over;
So much, dear liege, I have already sworn,
That is, to live and study here three years.
But there are other strict observances,
As, not to see a woman in that term,
Which I hope well is not enrollèd there;
And one day in a week to touch no food,
The which I hope is not enrollèd there;
And then, to sleep but three hours in the night,
And not be seen to wink of all the day,
Which I hope well is not enrollèd there:
O, these are barren tasks, too hard to keep,
Not to see ladies, study, fast, not sleep!

KING: Your oath is pass'd to pass away from these.

BEROWNE: Let me say no, my liege, an if you please.
I only swore to study with your grace
And stay here in your court for three years' space.

DUMAINE: You swore to that, Berowne, and to the rest.

BEROWNE: By yea and nay, sir, then I swore in jest.
What is the end of study, let me know?

KING: Why, that to know, which else we should not know.

BEROWNE: Things hid and barr'd, you mean, from common sense?

KING: Ay, that is study's godlike recompense.

BEROWNE: Come on, then; I will swear to study so,
To know the thing I am forbid to know:
As thus—to study where I well may dine,
When I to feast expressly am forbid;
Or study where to meet some mistress fine,
When mistresses from common sense are hid;
Or, having sworn too hard a keeping oath,
Study to break it and not break my troth.
If study's gain be thus and this be so,
Swear me to this, and I will ne'er say no.

KING: Well, sit you out; go home, Berowne; adieu!

BEROWNE: No, my good lord; I'll keep what I have swore
And bide the penance of each three years' day.
Give me the paper; let me read the same,
And to the strict'st decrees I'll write my name.

KING: How well this yielding rescues thee from shame!

BEROWNE: *(Reads)* "Item: That no woman shall come within a mile of my court."
Hath this been proclaimed?

DUMAINE: Four days ago.

BEROWNE: Let's see the penalty. *(Reads)* "On pain of losing her tongue." Who devised
this penalty?

DUMAINE: Marry, that did I.

BEROWNE: Sweet lord, and why?

DUMAINE: To fright them hence with that dread penalty.

BEROWNE: A dangerous law against gentility!

(Reads) "Item: If any man be seen to talk with a woman within the term of three years, he shall endure such public shame as the rest of the court can possibly devise."

This article, my liege, yourself must break;

For well you know here comes in embassy

The French king's daughter with yourself to speak—

A maid of grace and complete majesty—

About surrender up of Aquitaine

To her decrepit, sick and bed-rid father.

Therefore this article is made in vain,

Or vainly comes the admir'd princess hither.

KING: What say you, lords? Why, this was quite forgot.

BEROWNE: So study evermore is overshot:

While it doth study to have what it would

It doth forget to do the thing it should.

KING: We must of force dispense with this decree;

She must lie here on mere necessity.

BEROWNE: Necessity will make us all forsworn

Three thousand times within this three years' space;

For every man with his affects is born,

Not by might master'd but by special grace.

If I break faith, this word shall speak for me:

I am forsworn on "mere necessity."

So to the laws at large I write my name,

(Signing) And he that breaks them in the least degree

Stands in attainder of eternal shame.

But is there no quick recreation granted?

KING: Ay, that there is.

Costard the swain shall be our sport;

And so to study, three years is but short.

(Enter DULL with a letter, and COSTARD.)

DULL: Which is the duke's own person?

BEROWNE: This, fellow. What wouldst?

DULL: I myself reprehend his own person, for I am his grace's constable: but I would see his own person in flesh and blood.

BEROWNE: This is he.

DULL: There's villany abroad: this letter will tell you more.

COSTARD: Sir, the contempts thereof are as touching me.

BEROWNE: How low soever the matter, I hope in God for high words.

DUMAINE: A high hope for a low heaven: God grant us patience!

COSTARD: The matter is to me, sir, as concerning Jaquenetta. The manner of it is, I was taken with the manner.

BEROWNE: In what manner?

COSTARD: In manner and form following, sir; all those three: I was seen with her in the manor-house, sitting with her upon the form, and taken following her into the park; which, put together, is in manner and form following.

KING: But, sirrah, what say you to this?

COSTARD: Sir, I confess the wench.

KING: Did you hear the proclamation?

COSTARD: I do confess much of the hearing it, but little of the marking of it.

KING: It was proclaimed a year's imprisonment to be taken with a wench.

COSTARD: I was taken with none, sir; I was taken with a damsel.

KING: Well, it was proclaimed "damsel."

COSTARD: This was no damsel, neither, sir; she was a virgin.

KING: It is so varied, too; for it was proclaimed "virgin."

COSTARD: If it were, I deny her virginity; I was taken with a maid.

KING: This maid will not serve your turn, sir.

COSTARD: This maid will serve my turn, sir.

KING: Sir, I will pronounce your sentence: you shall fast a week with bran and water.

COSTARD: I had rather pray a month with mutton and porridge.

KING: My Lord Berowne, see him deliver'd o'er;
And go we, lords, to put in practice that
Which each to other hath so strongly sworn.

(Exit KING and DUMAINE.)

BEROWNE: I'll lay my head to any good man's hat,
These oaths and laws will prove an idle scorn.
Sirrah, come on.

(Exit COSTARD with BEROWNE, followed by DULL.)

SCENE 2

(Enter PRINCESS of France, KATHERINE, ROSALINE, and BOYET.)

PRINCESS: Good Boyet,
You are not ignorant, all-telling fame
Doth noise abroad Navarre hath made a vow,
Till painful study shall outwear three years,
No woman may approach his silent court;
Therefore seemeth it a needful course,
Before we enter his forbidden gates,
To know his pleasure; and in that behalf,
Bold of your worthiness, we single you
As our best-moving fair solicitor.
Tell him, the daughter of the King of France,
On serious business, craving quick dispatch,
Importunes personal conference with his grace.
Haste, signify so much; while we attend,
Like humble-visag'd suitors, his high will.

BOYET: Proud of employment, willingly I go.

PRINCESS: All pride is willing pride, and yours is so.

(Exit BOYET.)

PRINCESS: Who are the votaries, my loving maidens,
That are vow-fellows with this virtuous duke?

KATHERINE: The young Dumaine is one.

PRINCESS: Know you the man?

KATHERINE: I know him, madam: a well-accomplish'd youth,
Of all that virtue love for virtue lov'd:
Most power to do most harm, least knowing ill;
For he hath wit to make an ill shape good,
And shape to win grace though he had no wit.
I saw him at the Duke Alençon's once;
And much too little of that good I saw
Is my report to his great worthiness.

ROSALINE: Another of these students at that time
Was there with him, if I have heard a truth.
Berowne they call him; but a merrier man,
Within the limit of becoming mirth,
I never spent an hour's talk withal.
His eye begets occasion for his wit;
For every object that the one doth catch
The other turns to a mirth-moving jest,
Which his fair tongue
Delivers in such apt and gracious words
That aged ears play truant at his tales,
And younger hearings are quite ravishèd,
So sweet and voluble is his discourse.

PRINCESS: God bless my ladies! are they all in love,
That every one her own hath garnishèd
With such bedecking ornaments of praise?

KATHERINE: Here comes Boyet.

(Re-enter BOYET.)

PRINCESS: Now, what admittance, lord?

BOYET: Navarre had notice of your fair approach,
And he and his competitors in oath
Were all address'd to meet you, gentle lady,
Before I came. Marry, thus much I have learnt:
He rather means to lodge you in the field,

Like one that comes here to besiege his court,
Than seek a dispensation for his oath,
To let you enter his unpeopled house.
Here comes Navarre.

(Enter the KING, DUMAINE, and BEROWNE.)

KING: Fair princess, welcome to the court of Navarre.

PRINCESS: 'Fair' I give you back again; and 'welcome' I have not yet: the roof of this court is too high to be yours; and welcome to the wide fields too base to be mine.

KING: You shall be welcome, madam, to my court.

PRINCESS: I will be welcome, then; conduct me thither.

KING: Hear me, dear lady; I have sworn an oath.

PRINCESS: Our Lady help my lord! he'll be forsworn.

KING: Not for the world, fair madam, by my will.

PRINCESS: Why, will shall break it; will and nothing else.

KING: Your ladyship is ignorant what it is.

PRINCESS: Were my lord so, his ignorance were wise,
Where now his knowledge must prove ignorance.
I hear your grace hath sworn out house-keeping.
'Tis deadly sin to keep that oath, my lord,
And sin to break it. But pardon me. I am too sudden-bold:
To teach a teacher ill beseemeth me.
Vouchsafe to read the purpose of my coming,
And suddenly resolve me in my suit.

KING: Madam, I will, if suddenly I may.

PRINCESS: You will the sooner, that I were away;
For you'll prove perjurd if you make me stay.

BEROWNE: Did not I dance with you in Brabant once?

ROSALINE: Did not I dance with you in Brabant once?

BEROWNE: I know you did.

ROSALINE: How needless was it then to ask the question!

BEROWNE: You must not be so quick.

ROSALINE: 'Tis long of you that spur me with such questions.

BEROWNE: Your wit's too hot, it speeds too fast, 'twill tire.

ROSALINE: Not till it leave the rider in the mire.

BEROWNE: What time o' day?

ROSALINE: The hour that fools should ask.

BEROWNE: Now fair befall your mask!

ROSALINE: Fair fall the face it covers!

BEROWNE: And send you many lovers!

ROSALINE: Amen, so you be none.

BEROWNE: Nay, then will I be gone.

KING: Madam, your father here doth intimate
The payment of a hundred thousand crowns,
Being but the one half of an entire sum
Disbursèd by my father in his wars.
Dear Princess, were not his requests so far
From reason's yielding, your fair self should make
A yielding 'gainst some reason in my breast
And go well satisfied to France again.

PRINCESS: You do the king my father too much wrong,
And wrong the reputation of your name,
In so unseeming to confess receipt
Of that which hath so faithfully been paid.

KING: I do protest I never heard of it;
And if you prove it, I'll repay it back
Or yield up Aquitaine.

PRINCESS: We arrest your word.
Boyet, you can produce acquittances
For such a sum from special officers

Of Charles his father.

KING: Satisfy me so.

BOYET: So please your grace, the packet is not come
Where that and other specialties are bound.
Tomorrow you shall have a sight of them.

KING: It shall suffice me; at which interview
All liberal reason I will yield unto.
Meantime receive such welcome at my hand
As honor, without breach of honor, may
Make tender of to thy true worthiness.
You may not come, fair princess, in my gates;
But here without you shall be so receiv'd
As you shall deem yourself lodg'd in my heart,
Though so denied fair harbor in my house.
Your own good thoughts excuse me, and farewell:
Tomorrow shall we visit you again.

PRINCESS: Sweet health and fair desires consort your grace!

KING: Thy own wish wish I thee in every place!

(Exit KING.)

DUMAINE: Sir, I pray you, a word. What is she in the white?

BOYET: A woman sometimes, if you saw her in the light.

DUMAINE: Perchance light in the light. I desire her name.

BOYET: She hath but one for herself; to desire that were a shame.

DUMAINE: Pray you, sir, whose daughter?

BOYET: Her mother's, I have heard.

DUMAINE: God's blessing on your beard!

BOYET: Good sir, be not offended.
She is the heir of Alençon, Katharine her name.

DUMAINE: Nay, my choler is ended.
She is a most sweet lady.

PRINCESS: Come to our pavilion; Boyet is dispos'd.

BOYET: But to speak that in words which his eye hath disclos'd.
I only have made a mouth of his eye,
By adding a tongue which I know will not lie.

PRINCESS: Thou art an old love-monger and speak'st skilfully.

KATHERINE: He is Cupid's grandfather and learns news of him.

BOYET: Do you hear, my mad wenches?

KATHERINE: No.

BOYET: What then, do you see?

ROSALINE: Ay, our way to be gone.

BOYET: You are too hard for me.

(Exit PRINCESS, ROSALINE, KATHERINE, and BOYET.)

SCENE 3

(Enter BEROWNE.)

BEROWNE: O! And I, forsooth, in love!
I, that have been love's whip;
A very beadle to a humorous sigh;
A critic, nay, a night-watch constable;
A domineering pedant o'er the boy,
Than whom no mortal so magnificent!
This wimpled, whining, purblind, wayward boy;
This senior-junior, giant-dwarf, Dan Cupid;
Regent of love-rhymes, lord of folded arms,
The anointed sovereign of sighs and groans,
Liege of all loiterers and malcontents,
Dread prince of plackets, king of codpieces,
Sole imperator and great general
Of trotting paritons—O my little heart!
And I to be a corporal of his field,
And wear his colors like a tumbler's hoop!
What! I love! I sue! I seek a wife!
Nay, to be perjur'd, which is worst of all;

And, among three, to love the worst of all;
A whitely wanton with a velvet brow,
With two pitch-balls stuck in her face for eyes;
And I to sigh for her! to watch for her!
To pray for her! Go to; it is a plague
That Cupid will impose for my neglect
Of his almighty dreadful little might.
Well, I will love, write, sigh, pray, sue and groan;
Some men must love my lady, and some Joan.

(Enter COSTARD.)

O, my good knave Costard! exceedingly well met.

COSTARD: I thank your worship; God be wi' you!

BEROWNE: Stay, slave; I must employ thee.
As thou wilt win my favor, good my knave,
Do one thing for me that I shall entreat.

COSTARD: When would you have it done, sir?

BEROWNE: This afternoon.

COSTARD: Well, I will do it, sir; fare you well.

BEROWNE: Thou knowest not what it is.

COSTARD: I shall know, sir, when I have done it.

BEROWNE: Why, villain, thou must know first.

COSTARD: I will come to your worship tomorrow morning.

BEROWNE: It must be done this afternoon.
Hark, slave, it is but this:
The princess comes to hunt here in the park,
And in her train there is a gentle lady;
When tongues speak sweetly, then they name her name,
And Rosaline they call her. Ask for her,
And to her white hand see thou do commend
This seal'd-up counsel. There's thy remuneration; go.

(BEROWNE gives COSTARD a coin.)

COSTARD: Remuneration! O, that's the Latin word for three farthings: three farthings, remuneration. 'What's the price of this inkle?'—'One penny.'—'No, I'll give you a remuneration.' Why, it carries it. Remuneration. Why, it is a fairer name than French crown. I will never buy and sell out of this word.

(Exit COSTARD.)

BEROWNE: Well, set thee down, sorrow! for so they say the fool said, and so say I, and I the fool. Well proved, wit! Well, she hath one o' my sonnets already: the clown bore it, the fool sent it, and the lady hath it; sweet clown, sweeter fool, sweetest lady! By the world, I would not care a pin if the other three were in. Here comes one with a paper. God give him grace to groan!

(Enter KING, with a paper. BEROWNE stands aside.)

KING: Ay me!

BEROWNE: *(Aside)* Shot, by heaven! Proceed, sweet Cupid; thou hast thumped him with thy bird-bolt under the left pap. In faith, secrets!

KING: *(Reads)* So sweet a kiss the golden sun gives not
To those fresh morning drops upon the rose,
As thy eye-beams, when their fresh rays have smote
The night of dew that on my cheeks down flows.
Do but behold the tears that swell in me,
And they thy glory through my grief will show;
But do not love thyself; then thou wilt keep
My tears for glasses, and still make me weep.
O queen of queens! how far thou dost excel,
No thought can think, nor tongue of mortal tell.

How shall she know my griefs?

(Enter DUMAINE, with a paper. The KING steps aside.)

But who is he comes here?

BEROWNE: Now, in thy likeness, one more fool appear!

DUMAINE: Ay me, I am forsworn!

BEROWNE: Why, he comes in like a perjure, wearing papers.

KING: In love, I hope: sweet fellowship in shame!

This will I send, and something else more plain,
That shall express my true love's fasting pain.
O, would the King and good Berowne,
Were lovers too! Ill, to example ill,
Would from my forehead wipe a perjur'd note;
For none offend where all alike do dote.

KING: (*Advancing*) Dumaine, thy love is far from charity
That in love's grief desir'st society.
You may look pale, but I should blush, I know,
To be o'erheard and taken napping so.
What will Berowne say when that he shall hear
Faith so infring'd, which such zeal did swear?
How will he scorn! how will he spend his wit!
How will he triumph, leap and laugh at it!
For all the wealth that ever I did see,
I would not have him know so much by me.

BEROWNE: Now step I forth to whip hypocrisy.
(*Advancing*) Ah, good my liege, I pray thee, pardon me!
Good heart, what grace hast thou, thus to reprove
This worm for loving, that art most in love?
Your eyes do make no coaches; in your tears
There is no certain princess that appears;
You'll not be perjur'd, 'tis a hateful thing;
Tush, none but minstrels like of sonneting!
But are you not asham'd? nay, are you not,
The both of you, to be thus much o'ershot?
O, what a scene of foolery have I seen,
Of sighs, of groans, of sorrow and of teen!
O me, with what strict patience have I sat,
To see a king transformèd to a gnat!
Where lies thy grief? O, tell me, good Dumaine,
And where my liege's? all about the breast?
A doctor, ho!

KING: Too bitter is thy jest.
Are we betray'd thus to thy over-view?

BEROWNE: Not you to me, but I betray'd by you;
I, that am honest; I, that hold it sin
To break the vow I am engagèd in;
I am betray'd by keeping company
With moon-like men, men of inconstancy.
When shall you see me write a thing in rhyme?

DUMAINE: It is Berowne's writing, and here is his name.

BEROWNE: *(To COSTARD)* Ah, you whoreson loggerhead! you were born to do me shame. Guilty, my lord, guilty! I confess, I confess.

KING. What?

BEROWNE: That you three fools lack'd me fool to make up the mess:
He, and you, my liege, and I,
Are pick-purses in love, and we deserve to die.
O, dismiss this audience, and I shall tell you more.

KING: Hence, sirs; away

COSTARD: Walk aside the true folk, and let the traitors stay.

(Exit COSTARD and JAQUENETTA.)

BEROWNE: Sweet lords, sweet lovers, O, let us embrace!

KING: What, did these rent lines show some love of thine?

BEROWNE: Did they, quoth you? Who sees the heavenly Rosaline,
That, like a rude and savage man of Inde,
At the first opening of the gorgeous east,
Bows not his vassal head and stricken blind
Kisses the base ground with obedient breast?
What peremptory eagle-sighted eye
Dares look upon the heaven of her brow,
That is not blinded by her majesty?

KING: What zeal, what fury hath inspir'd thee now?
My love, her mistress, is a gracious moon;
She an attending star, scarce seen a light.

BEROWNE: My eyes are then no eyes, nor I Berowne;
O, but for my love, day would turn to night!

DUMAINE: Dark needs no candles now, for dark is light.

BEROWNE: Your mistresses dare never come in rain,
For fear their colors should be wash'd away.

KING: 'Twere good, yours did; for, sir, to tell you plain,
I'll find a fairer face not wash'd to-day.

BEROWNE: I'll prove her fair, or talk till doomsday here.

KING: No devil will fright thee then so much as she.

DUMAINE: I never knew man hold vile stuff so dear.
Look, here's thy love: my foot and her face see.

BEROWNE: O, if the streets were paved with thine eyes,
Her feet were much too dainty for such tread!

DUMAINE: O, vile! then, as she goes, what upward lies
The street should see as she walk'd overhead.

KING: But what of this? are we not all in love?

BEROWNE: Nothing so sure; and thereby all forsworn.

KING: Then leave this chat; and, good Berowne, now prove
Our loving lawful, and our faith not torn.

DUMAINE: Ay, marry, there; some flatt'ry for this evil.

BEROWNE: Have at you, then, affection's men at arms.
Consider what you first did swear unto,
To fast, to study, and to see no woman;
Flat treason 'gainst the kingly state of youth.
Say, can you fast? your stomachs are too young;
And abstinence engenders maladies.
O, we have made a vow to study, lords,
And in that vow we have forsworn our books.
For when would you, my liege, or you, or I,
Have found the ground of study's excellence
Without the beauty of a woman's face?
Why, universal plodding poisons up
The nimble spirits in the arteries,
And other arts entirely keep the brain;
But love, first learned in a lady's eyes,
Gives to every power a double power,
Above their functions and their offices.
A lover's eyes will gaze an eagle blind;
A lover's ear will hear the lowest sound;
Love's feeling is more soft and sensible
Than are the tender horns of cockled snails;
Never durst poet touch a pen to write
Until his ink were temper'd with Love's sighs;

For valor, is not Love a Hercules?
And when Love speaks, the voice of all the gods
Makes heaven drowsy with the harmony.
From women's eyes this doctrine I derive:
They are the books, the arts, the academes,
That show, contain and nourish all the world.
Then fools you were these women to forswear,
Or keeping what is sworn, you will prove fools.
For wisdom's sake, a word that all men love,
Or for love's sake, a word that loves all men,
Or women's sake, by whom we men are men,
Let us once lose our oaths to find ourselves,
Or else we lose ourselves to keep our oaths!

KING: Saint Cupid, then! and, soldiers, to the field!

DUMAINE: Advance your standards, and upon them, lords.

BEROWNE: Shall we resolve to woo these girls of France?

KING: And win them too; therefore let us devise
Some entertainment for them in their tents.
For revels, dances, masks and merry hours
Forerun fair Love, strewing her way with flowers.

ALL: Away, away!

(Exit KING, BEROWNE, and DUMAINE.)

SCENE 4

(Enter the PRINCESS, KATHARINE, and ROSALINE)

PRINCESS: Sweet hearts, we shall be rich ere we depart,
If fairings come thus plentifully in:
A lady wall'd about with diamonds!
Look you what I have from the loving king.

ROSALINE: Madame, came nothing else along with that?

PRINCESS: Nothing but this! yes, as much love in rhyme
As would be cramm'd up in a sheet of paper,
Writ o' both sides the leaf, margent and all,
That he was fain to seal on Cupid's name.

ROSALINE: That was the way to make his godhead wax,
For he hath been five thousand years a boy.

KATHERINE: But Rosaline, you have a favor too:
Who sent it? and what is it?

ROSALINE: I would you knew:
An if my face were but as fair as yours,
My favor were as great; be witness this.
Nay, I have verses too, I thank Berowne;
I am compar'd to twenty thousand fairs.
O, he hath drawn my picture in his letter!

PRINCESS: Any thing like?

ROSALINE: Much in the letters; nothing in the praise.

PRINCESS: Beauteous as ink; a good conclusion.

ROSALINE: "Let me not die your debtor,
My red dominical, my golden letter:
O, that your face were not so full of O's!"

KATHERINE: A pox of that jest! and I beshrew all shrows.

PRINCESS: But, Katharine, what was sent to you from fair Dumaine?

KATHERINE: Madam, this glove.

PRINCESS: Did he not send you two?

KATHERINE: Yes, madam, and moreover
Some thousand verses of a faithful lover,
A huge translation of hypocrisy,
Vilely compil'd, profound simplicity.

PRINCESS: We are wise girls to mock our lovers so.

ROSALINE: They are worse fools to purchase mocking so.
That same Berowne I'll torture ere I go:
O that I knew he were but in by the week!
How I would make him fawn and beg and seek,
And wait the season and observe the times,
And spend his prodigal wits in bootless rhymes,
And shape his service wholly to my hests,

And make him proud to make me proud that jests!
So masterly would I o'ersway his state
That he should be my fool and I his fate.

PRINCESS: None are so surely caught, when they are catch'd,
As wit turn'd fool!

(Enter BOYET.)

Here comes Boyet, and mirth is in his face.

BOYET: O, I am stabb'd with laughter! Where's her grace?

PRINCESS: Thy news Boyet?

BOYET: Prepare, madam, prepare!
Arm, wenches, arm! encounters mounted are
Against your peace: Love doth approach disguis'd,
Arm'd in arguments; you'll be surpris'd:
Muster your wits; stand in your own defence;
Or hide your heads like cowards, and fly hence.

PRINCESS: Saint Denis to Saint Cupid! What are they
That charge their breath against us? Say, scout, say.

BOYET: Under the cool shade of a sycamore
I thought to close mine eyes some half an hour;
When, lo! to interrupt my purpos'd rest,
Toward that shade I might behold address'd
The king and his companions: warily
I stole into a neighbor thicket by,
And overheard what you shall overhear,
That, by and by, disguis'd they will be here.

PRINCESS: But what, but what, come they to visit us?

BOYET: They do, they do: and are apparell'd thus.
Like Muscovites or Russians, as I guess.
Their purpose is to parle, to court and dance;
And every one his love-feat will advance
Unto his several mistress, which they'll know
By favors several which they did bestow.

PRINCESS: And will they so? the gallants shall be task'd;
For, ladies, we shall every one be mask'd;

And not a man of them shall have the grace,
Despite of suit, to see a lady's face.
Hold, Rosaline, this favor thou shalt wear,
And then the king will court thee for his dear;
And change your favors too; so shall your loves
Woo contrary, deceiv'd by these removes.

KATHERINE: But in this changing, what is your intent?

PRINCESS: The effect of my intent is to cross theirs:
They do it but in mocking merriment;
And mock for mock is only my intent.

ROSALINE: But shall we dance, if they desire to't?

PRINCESS: No, to the death, we will not move a foot;
Nor to their penn'd speech render we no grace,
But while 'tis spoke each turn away her face.

BOYET: Why, that contempt will kill the speaker's heart,
And quite divorce his memory from his part.

PRINCESS: Therefore I do it; and I make no doubt
The rest will ne'er come in, if he be out.
So shall we stay, mocking intended game,
And they, well mock'd, depart away with shame.

BOYET: Be mask'd; the maskers come.

(Music; The Ladies mask; Enter KING, BEROWNE, and DUMAIN, in Russian habits, and masked.)

COSTARD: All hail, the richest beauties on the earth!

BOYET: Beauties no richer than rich taffeta.

COSTARD: A holy parcel of the fairest dames,

(The Ladies turn their backs to COSTARD.)

That ever turn'd their—backs—to mortal views!

BEROWNE: *(Aside to COSTARD)* 'Their eyes', villain, 'their eyes!'

COSTARD: That ever turn'd their eyes to mortal views!
Out—

BOYET: True; 'out' indeed.

COSTARD: Out of your favors, heavenly spirits, vouchsafe
Not to behold—

BEROWNE: (*Aside to COSTARD*) 'Once to behold,' rogue.

COSTARD: Once to behold with your sun-beamed eyes,—
with your sun-beamed eyes—

BOYET: They will not answer to that epithet;
You were best call it 'daughter-beamed eyes.'

COSTARD: They do not mark me, and that brings me out.

BEROWNE: Is this your perfectness? be gone, you rogue!

(*Exit COSTARD.*)

ROSALINE: What would these strangers? Know their minds, Boyet.
If they do speak our language, 'tis our will
That some plain man recount their purposes;
Know what they would.

BOYET: What would you with the princess?

BEROWNE: Nothing but peace and gentle visitation.

ROSALINE: What would they, say they?

BOYET: Nothing but peace and gentle visitation.

ROSALINE: Why, that they have; and bid them so be gone.

BOYET: She says, you have it, and you may be gone.

KING: Say to her, we have measur'd many miles
To tread a measure with her on this grass.

BOYET: They say, that they have measur'd many a mile
To tread a measure with you on this grass.

ROSALINE: It is not so. Ask them how many inches
Is in one mile: if they have measur'd many,
The measure then of one is easily told.

BOYET: If to come hither you have measur'd miles,
And many miles, the princess bids you tell
How many inches doth fill up one mile.

BEROWNE: Tell her, we measure them by weary steps.

BOYET: She hears herself.

ROSALINE: How many weary steps,
Of many weary miles you have o'ergone,
Are number'd in the travel of one mile?

BEROWNE: We number nothing that we spend for you:
Our duty is so rich, so infinite,
That we may do it still without a count.
Vouchsafe to show the sunshine of your face,
That we, like savages, may worship it.

ROSALINE: My face is but a moon, and clouded too.

KING: Blessèd are clouds, to do as such clouds do!
Vouchsafe, bright moon, and these thy stars, to shine,
Those clouds remov'd, upon our watery eyne.

ROSALINE: O vain petitioner! beg a greater matter;
Thou now request'st but moonshine in the water.

KING: Then, in our measure do but vouchsafe one change.
Thou bidd'st me beg; this begging is not strange.

ROSALINE: Since you are strangers and come here by chance,
We'll not be nice: take hands. We will not dance.

KING: Why take we hands, then?

ROSALINE: Only to part friends.
Curtsy, sweet hearts; and so the measure ends.

KING: More measure of this measure; be not nice.

ROSALINE: We can afford no more at such a price.

PRINCESS: Say you so? Fair lord—
Take that for your 'fair lady.'

DUMAINE: Please it you,
As much in private, and I'll bid adieu.

(They converse apart.)

BOYET: The tongues of mocking wenches are as keen
As is the razor's edge invisible,
Cutting a smaller hair than may be seen,
So sensible seemeth their conference;
Their conceits have wings
Fleeter than arrows, bullets, wind, thought, swifter things.

ROSALINE: Not one word more, my maids; break off, break off.

BEROWNE: By heaven, all dry-beaten with pure scoff!

KING: Farewell, mad wenches; you have simple wits.

PRINCESS: Twenty adieus, my frozen Muscovits.

(Exit KING, BEROWNE, and DUMAINE.)

Are these the breed of wits so wonder'd at?

BOYET: Candles they are, with your sweet breaths puff'd out.

ROSALINE: Well-liking wits they have; gross, gross; fat, fat.

PRINCESS: O poverty in wit, kingly-poor flout!
Will they not, think you, hang themselves tonight?
Or ever, but in vizards, show their faces?

KATHERINE: This pert Berowne was out of countenance quite.

ROSALINE: O, they were all in lamentable cases!
The king was weeping-ripe for a good word.

KATHERINE: Berowne did swear himself out of all suit.

PRINCESS: Dumaine was at my service, and his sword:
'No point,' quoth I; my servant straight was mute.

We three indeed confronted were with three
In Russian habit: here they stay'd an hour,
And talk'd apace; and in that hour, my lord,
They did not bless us with one happy word.
I dare not call them fools; but this I think,
When they are thirsty, fools would fain have drink.

BEROWNE: This jest is dry to me.

ROSALINE: Which of the vizards was it that you wore?

BEROWNE: Where? when? what vizard? why demand you this?

ROSALINE: There, then, that vizard; that superfluous case
That hid the worse and show'd the better face.

KING: (*Aside*) We are descried; they'll mock us now downright.

DUMAINE: (*Aside*) Let us confess and turn it to a jest.

PRINCESS: Amaz'd, my lord? why looks your highness sad?

ROSALINE: Help, hold his brows! he'll swoon! Why look you pale?
Sea-sick, I think, coming from Muscovy.

BEROWNE: Thus pour the stars down plagues for perjury.
Can any face of brass hold longer out?
Here stand I, lady; dart thy skill at me;
Bruise me with scorn, confound me with a flout,
Thrust thy sharp wit quite through my ignorance,
Cut me to pieces with thy keen conceit,
And I will wish thee never more to dance,
Nor never more in Russian habit wait.
O, never will I trust to speeches penn'd,
Nor to the motion of a schoolboy's tongue,
Nor never come in vizard to my friend,
Nor woo in rhyme, like a blind harper's song!
Taffeta phrases, silken terms precise,
Three-piled hyperboles, spruce affectation,
Figures pedantical;
I do forswear them; and I here protest,
Henceforth my wooing mind shall be express'd
In russet yeas and honest kersey noes:
And, to begin, wench,—so God help me, law!—
My love to thee is sound, sans crack or flaw.

KING: What mean you, madam? By my life, my troth,
I never swore this lady such an oath.

ROSALINE: By heaven, you did; and to confirm it plain,
You gave me this: but take it, sir, again.

KING: My faith and this the princess I did give.

PRINCESS: Pardon me, sir, this jewel did she wear.

KATHERINE: And Lord Berowne, I thank him, is my dear.
What, will you have me, or your pearl again?

BEROWNE: Neither of either; I remit both twain.
I see the trick on't: here was a consent,
Knowing aforehand of our merriment,
To dash it like a Christmas comedy.
The ladies did change favors; and then we,
Following the signs, woo'd but the sign of she.
Now, to our perjury to add more terror,
We are again forsworn, in will and error.

BOYET: Full merrily
Hath this brave manage, this career, been run.

DUMAINE: Lo, he is tilting straight!

BEROWNE: Peace! I have done.

(Enter Monsieur MARCADE.)

MARCADE: God save you, madam!

PRINCESS: Welcome, Mercade;
But that thou interrupt'st our merriment.

MARCADE: I am sorry, madam; for the news I bring
Is heavy in my tongue. The King your father—

PRINCESS: Dead, for my life!

MARCADE: Even so; my tale is told.

(Exit MARCADE.)

END OF EXCERPT

For final pages, please contact: Scott@ScottKaiserShakespeare.com