

© *Scott Kaiser 2013*

**Love's Labor's Won**  
*By Scott Kaiser*

*All rights reserved. For permissions, contact [Scott@ScottKaiserShakespeare.com](mailto:Scott@ScottKaiserShakespeare.com)*

### The Play in Brief

At the end of Shakespeare's comedy *Love's Labor's Lost*, the romantic hopes of four young couples are abruptly dashed by the sudden death of the King of France. Their courting suspended, the lovers vow to meet again after a year has passed. But the death of the French King sparks a European war, delaying their reunion for four turbulent years. The couples meet again in Paris for the negotiation of an armistice. But the crucible of war has changed them all. Will their relationships survive?

### Setting

Paris, France—The Royal Palace

### Characters

WAR, *ageless*

ISABELLE, *20's, Princess of France*

ROSALINE, *20's, disguised as Lanier, a war journalist*

KATHERINE, *20's, friend to Isabelle*

MARIA, *20's, ambassador of France*

JAQUENETTA, *20's, a war entertainer*

FERDINAND, *20's, King of Navarre*

BEROWNE, *20's, a war entertainer, a captain*

DUMAINE, *20's, a wealthy munitions manufacturer*

LONGAVILLE, *20's, imprisoned in the palace*

COSTARD, *20's, servant to Ferdinand, a corporal*

**PROLOGUE**

*(Enter WAR.)*

WAR

Nay, do not run—for thou dost know me well;  
Though now my clothes are torn, and my grim visage  
Arrayed in blood. 'Twas only four years since  
That thou didst take my hand and welcome me.  
Why, is not this the very place that thou  
Didst fold me in thy open arms, and kissed  
My rosy cheeks, and praised my bearing much,  
Swearing oaths and waving flags as I marched by?  
And dost thou now not know me? O for shame!  
Why, thou didst polish bright my silver buttons,  
And sharpen my worn sword, and fill my purse  
With borrowed gold and new-collected treasure.  
And dost thou now not recognize my face?  
I am war, the pandemonious child  
You once adored, born in the self-same hour,  
And in that same contagious bed whereon  
The last French King commanded his last breath,  
Whose sickness, carried on the wanton breeze,  
Infected intertwined alliances  
As fragile as a widow spider's web,  
Infesting all the fecund courts of Europe  
With deadly enmity. For four long years  
I've toiled for thy glory without rest,  
Deafening sons with my thunderous voice,  
Defiling daughters with my fiery fists,  
Trampling villages with my cruel boots,  
Starving children with my greedy stomach,  
Bereaving fathers with my stony heart,  
Widowing wives with my venomous breath,  
Divorcing bodies from their timeless souls,  
And all in loving and devoted service  
To thy most deep and secretive desires;  
And dost thou now disown me? Call me bastard?  
Spit out my bitter name? Well, 'tis no matter:  
I know thou shalt despair when I am gone,  
Which soon may come to pass, for now, alas,  
The fickle coronets of Spain and France  
Do court in Paris, where they woo and dance,  
United by desire to conceive

A fetal treaty that will banish me  
From out the skirts of these deflower'd lands.  
But what care I if they expel me hence?  
For I'm in great demand on every plot  
Of this contentious ball of wormy earth;  
Pretend then, henceforth, not to know my birth;  
A round or two my labors here shall cease,  
While Time gestates my witless sibling, peace.

*(Exit WAR.)*

**SCENE 1: PARIS: THE ROYAL PALACE**

*(Enter ISABELLE, in tears, followed by KATHERINE, as a bell strikes the hour of noon.)*

KATHERINE

How now, dear princess Isabelle? Will war  
Of old age perish and be laid to rest?  
What says King Louis, your most royal brother,  
To Spain's most recent offering of peace?

ISABELLE

Indeed, dear Katherine, another scheme  
For armistice doth lie upon the table  
Between the royalties of France and Spain,  
Which may, by all reports, have better prospect  
Of mutual acceptance than before.

KATHERINE

Why then, let us rejoice this welcome news!

ISABELLE

Most certainly these tidings cheer my heart.

KATHERINE

Why dost thou, then, seem so disconsolate?

ISABELLE

For that there is an article set down  
In this agreement that doth grieve my heart  
To contemplate.

KATHERINE

What article is that?

ISABELLE

My royal brother and the King of Spain  
Do now propose to settle their dispute  
Over the kingdom of Navarre by splitting  
Those lands in half by north and south,  
Consuming it entirely between them.

KATHERINE

So then Navarre will vanish from the map?

**SCENE 2: THE GREAT HALL**

*(Enter COSTARD.)*

COSTARD

Through the palace have I gone, but Berowne found I not.

FERDINAND *(Shouting from offstage)*

Costard!

COSTARD

Though, this is not surprising. For the eye that I have left, the right, sees not the right way to go. You'd think my right eye would seek the right way, but my right eye doth miss the left so terribly, was so in love with the left, that since the left left, the right doth little but ache for the left, and naught goes right.

DUMAINE *(Shouting from offstage)*

Costard!

COSTARD

As for my legs, the good leg I have left, the right, strives to do the right thing. But the bad leg, the left, or what's left of it, hath no goodness left in him, can't stand to do the right thing. Whenever I favor the good leg to get ahead, the bad leg grows peevish, drags its heels—or heel—tries to knock me off my feet, so that my gait never lets me get to the tavern, or the path, or even past the gate.

FERDINAND *(Shouting from offstage)*

Costard!

COSTARD

In truth, there's no one to blame but I, myself. For if I'd merely stepped to the right instead of to the left, I'd be standing here now with two good eyes, two good legs, and two good *(holds his crotch)*—

DUMAINE *(Shouting from offstage)*

Costard!

COSTARD:

Well, I thank the Lord above I still have both my ears!

*(Exit COSTARD in one direction, as FERDINAND and DUMAINE enter from another.)*

**SCENE 3: A BALLROOM in the PALACE**

*(Enter ROSALINE, disguised as Emmanuel Lanier.)*

ROSALINE *(Reading a letter)*

“My dearest Rosaline, I crave thy counsel  
And sage advice on grave affairs of state;  
Return, therefore, with all convenient speed,  
To Paris, where the crownèd heads of Europe  
Do congregate to arbitrate a treaty.”

Obeying thus the will of my dear Princess,  
I dutifully have returned to Paris;  
But yet I do remain in this disguise,  
A correspondent armed with ink and pen,  
Wherein I boldly counterfeit a man,  
For in it, I have seen with mine own eyes  
The field of battle; heard with mine own ears  
The sound of skirmish, smelled with mine own nose  
The stench of death, and with these faculties,  
Made sharp upon the whetstone of this war,  
I hope to witness these hostilities  
Protracted in a gentlemanly fashion,  
Exchanging smoke-filled rooms for smoke-filled skies,  
Dull statesmanship for lethal marksmanship,  
Long tables for deep trenches, tired phrases  
For tired forces, folded arms for loaded arms,  
And write all down to share with all the world.  
I'll stay, therefore, a man, until that time  
When war's death knells, and bells of peace do chime.  
But who is he comes here? It is Berowne!

*(ROSALINE steps aside. Enter BEROWNE and JAQUENETTA.)*

BEROWNE

This ballroom, Jaquenetta, shall be the venue for your act. 'Tis a stage fit for a command performance!

JAQUENETTA

I shall scarce know how to sing, with walls to keep out wind, and a roof to keep out rain.

BEROWNE

Thou need'st not fear, dear Jaq, for the lords o' th' court shall provide the wind, and the ladies the rain.

**SCENE 4: THE PALACE DUNGEON**

*(Enter LONGAVILLE and MARIA.)*

LONGAVILLE

I thank thee, sweet Maria, for these books;  
Your loving-kindness nothing overlooks,  
For every printed line of these worn pages  
Contains the ancient wisdom of the sages,  
Whose simple eloquence doth carry me  
Upon a breeze of sweet philosophy  
That lifts me o'er these walls beyond all sight  
To break the bonds of earth in joyous flight.

MARIA

I would each sentence were a plumèd wing  
So thou mightst fly the sentence of the king.

LONGAVILLE

The sentence of the king, though most perverse,  
Hath been a blessing to me, not a curse,  
For freedom's loss hath granted me a peace  
That did infuse me once desire did cease,  
And by embracing nothingness I find  
That all of suffering is in the mind.

MARIA

Prepare your mind, then, gentle Longaville,  
To bear the brunt of further sufferance still.

LONGAVILLE

Tell me thy news; I prithee, what hath passed?

MARIA

It grieves my heart to be the player cast  
As messenger to bring you such ill-tidings.

LONGAVILLE

Say what you must; I shall attend with patience.

MARIA

I come with proclamations from King Louis,  
Whom even now doth storm like moody Zeus  
After Prometheus did steal immortal fire.



**SCENE 5: THE PALACE GARDENS**

*(Enter DUMAINE with KATHERINE.)*

KATHERINE

Why must we speak so urgently i' th' garden,  
When all is chaos and commotion in the court?  
Louis doth fume; the Princess is distraught;  
Maria doth despair, and Ferdinand  
Doth storm about the palace like Poseidon  
Seeking to drown all France beneath a raging sea.  
I must return apace before I'm miss'd.

DUMAINE

Thou hast been sorely miss'd, dear Katherine, by me,  
Which instantly I mean to remedy.

KATHERINE

'Tis shameful, Lord, to pull me thus away,  
And box me in this bold and sudden manner.

DUMAINE

Tis neither bold nor sudden, gracious Kate.  
Four years ago, thou chargest me to come  
And challenge thee, which even now I do,  
For I have served thee faithfully and true.

KATHERINE

To speak of love, Dumaine, and wedded bliss,  
The time and place are very much amiss.

DUMAINE

Nay, time and place will serve our turn indeed,  
For I have hired them and paid their wages,  
And now they both do wear my livery,  
And shall discharge at once their master's will.

KATHERINE

Then bid your servants both, for goodness' sake,  
Attend their master's will later and elsewhere.

DUMAINE

Later and elsewhere do not work for me;  
But now, dear Katherine, here, on bended knee,  
I ask: wilt thou consent to wear this ring?

**SCENE 6: THE PALACE GARDENS**

*(Enter ISABELLE, KATHERINE, MARIA, and ROSALINE, still disguised.)*

ROSALINE

They should be harshly punish'd, not rewarded,  
For launching such an all-destructive war,  
Imposing so much misery and loss  
Upon the batter'd populace of Europe.

MARIA

I understand your views, Monsieur Lanier,  
But surely, sir, these punitive conditions,  
These savage reparations and partitions,  
Will do far more to aggravate the wounds  
Inflicted by this war than they shall heal;  
For an infectious discontent shall spread  
And grow to be the source of further bloodshed;  
No, clemency and pardon's best for all;  
Vindictiveness shall start another brawl.

KATHERINE

For my part, I believe that war, like love,  
Plays not by any rules, and consequently,  
There is no profit to be made in talking,  
After the game is over, about fairness;  
For, by this hand, I swear—

ISABELLE

Nay, hold!  
What dost thou wear, pray tell, upon thy finger?

KATHERINE

The Lord Dumaine presented me this ring  
As an expression of his boundless love.

MARIA

'Tis an engagement ring?

ISABELLE

From Lord Dumaine?

MARIA

An emerald confin'd by diamonds!

**SCENE 7: THE PALACE BALLROOM**

*(Enter JAQUENETTA, singing.)*

JAQUENETTA

*I once was sure we were forever,  
That we would always walk  
Together hand in hand,  
But as it turned out I was too clever,  
And things did not work out  
Quite the way I had planned,*

*So now you're  
Gone and my heart is breaking,  
Gone and there's no mistaking,  
Gone is the love that we shared;*

*(Enter COSTARD.)*

*Gone are the days of gladness,  
Gone are the tears of sadness,  
The blissful nights, the fits of madness;*

*Gone are the songs we sang, dear,  
Gone are the bells that rang, dear,  
For my hopes and dreams  
Are all gone.*

*(COSTARD reveals himself.)*

COSTARD

Jaquenetta? Is it you? I do not trust my one good eye, nor my two ears, for many times I've heard your voice, heard you singing sweetly, like an angel in paradise, thinking I was dead, only to find that I was asleep, that I was dreaming, that I was lying in a muddy ditch, covered in blood, with bullets flying at my skull.

JAQUENETTA

Yes, it's me, love. And you are very much alive.

COSTARD

And am I awake?

JAQUENETTA

Yes, thou art awake.

**SCENE 8: A ROOM IN THE PALACE**

*(Enter DUMAINE, as a bell strikes the hour of nine.)*

DUMAINE

Another wing? Another corridor?  
Another serpentine arcade? *Mort Dieu!*  
The devil damn the thimble-witted Costard  
For hazarding me thus—and losing me—  
In this unnavigable labyrinth!  
What? Must a man assemble wings of wax  
To fly above the bound'ries of this maze?  
By this hath Ferdinand convinced himself  
Dumaine's a foul traitor, a deserter,  
And therefore shall I hang not once but twice,  
Losing my venture with a pair of kings.  
And yet not so, for now I do percieve  
Iscariot himself, bent on self-destruction,  
Could not have given o'er his life within  
The bowels of this captivating palace,  
For it is so immeasurably immense  
That death hath ne'er a prayer of finding thee.  
Or else, perchance I am already dead,  
And this same palace is a gilded limbo  
Where I am doomed to wander ceaselessly  
Til I redeem myself for dubious actions  
I perpetrated while I was alive.

*(Enter KATHERINE.)*

DUMAINE

I must be dead, for hither comes an angel  
That on her back will shepherd me to heaven.

KATHERINE

With whom dost thou converse, my Lord Dumaine?

DUMAINE

I sue to heaven to lead me from despair,  
And thou art come: the answer to my prayer.

KATHERINE

No answer, but a question do I bring—

**SCENE 9: THE PALACE BALLROOM**

*(Enter BEROWNE, drinking.)*

BEROWNE *(Singing)*  
*I asked sweet Margaret for her hand,  
"First prove thy love," said she,  
So I marched off across the land  
To prove my chivalry.*

*When I returned with wedding band,  
"Thou'rt come too late," she said,  
"For whiles you fought to win my hand,  
Dick won it in my bed."*

Ha! This is a scurrilous verse to sing at a man's hanging. But here's my comfort!

*(Enter ROSALINE, disguised as Lanier.)*

ROSALINE *(Aside)*  
I heard his voice along this passageway,  
And there he is! Alack, what shall I say?  
I've built an armor 'round my heart so hard  
That it can hardly beat without a guard;  
And though this wall doth shield me from life's blows,  
It blocks the sunlight where affection grows.  
Disguise, though at the start you set me free,  
I now perceive thou dost imprison me.  
I must reveal myself to him, or rue it;  
And yet, poor fool, I know not how to do it!  
Then, improvise, 'til he can plainly see  
The naked truth of thy duplicity.

*(ROSALINE steps forward.)*

How now, brave captain?

BEROWNE  
Greetings, good Lanier!  
I prithee, penman, what's the newest news?

ROSALINE  
I've news to share, if thou wilt lend an ear.

**SCENE 10: ANOTHER ROOM IN THE PALACE**

*(Enter FERDINAND and ISABELLE.)*

ISABELLE

I understand you not: you took an oath?

FERDINAND

We three did swear, swear boldly, by my troth,  
To stake our lives against the King's decree.

ISABELLE

But wherefore to this pledge would you agree?  
What certain benefit is to be gained  
By hazarding your lives? What good obtained?

FERDINAND

The certain good that we adventur'd all,  
Befall the harshest fate that might befall,  
In our attempt to liberate a friend.

ISABELLE

Beshrew me, I shall never comprehend,  
Live I a hundred years, what demon 'tis  
Drives men to make such reckless promises.

FERDINAND

That demon's name is honor, and divine  
When brothers band together, as do mine.

ISABELLE

Your band will be arrested by the guard,  
And every hope of rescue shall be marred.

FERDINAND

Then show me where Lord Longaville is hidden.

ISABELLE

I cannot; I expressly am forbidden  
And must abide the judgement of my brother.

FERDINAND

No Solomon is he, abide some other.

**SCENE 11: THE PALACE DUNGEON**

*(Enter MARIA and DUMAINE.)*

DUMAINE

I do not like this place, it stinks of death.

MARIA

Nay, come along, my Lord, you need not fear;

No injury shall come to you down here;

I'll be your escort and your surety.

DUMAINE

Nay, art thou certain? For this passage seems

The dank and slipp'ry way to Hades' gate.

Dost thou not, Virgil-like, conduct me to

The dreary banks whereon the hellish boatman

Charon awaits to pilot downcast souls

Across the river Styx, where they must face,

For wickedness they did commit above,

The torments of the King of fiery hell?

MARIA

Do not abandon hope in this deep place;

I do assure you here no demons dwell,

But only bashful rats and spineless spiders

That eagerly will flee the sight of us,

Stockpiles of wine aging without complaint,

Twelve centuries of books sequestered still,

And gems too rare to live among the living:

*Les Diamants de la Couronne de France.*

DUMAINE

*O, pardon mon français*, what was the last?

MARIA

The French Crown Jewels, that last did leave these vaults

When Louis, as a youth, was crownèd sovereign.

DUMAINE

The scepters, brooches, diadems and orbs

That dress the royal stage of coronation

Reside in this dark place?

**SCENE 12: THE PALACE GARDENS**

*(Enter ISABELLE, ROSALINE, and KATHERINE.)*

ROSALINE  
'Tis almost dawn!

KATHERINE  
Yea, look: the sun doth rise!

ISABELLE  
They've battled o'er the peace throughout the night.

KATHERINE  
Why should it take so long to compromise?

ROSALINE  
Behind closed doors, it's hard to see the light.

KATHERINE  
King Ferdinand, perhaps, refused to sign.

ISABELLE  
King Louis would not Longaville dare slay.

ROSALINE  
I would such certainty as that were mine.

KATHERINE  
Where is Maria?

ISABELLE  
Lo, she comes this way!

*(Enter MARIA.)*

ROSALINE  
How now, Maria?

KATHERINE  
Tell us what you know!

ISABELLE  
What tidings from the conference of Kings?