

Love's Labours Lost

by William Shakespeare

Presented by Paul W. Collins

© *Copyright 2011 by Paul W. Collins*

Love's Labours Lost

By William Shakespeare

Presented by Paul W. Collins

All rights reserved under the International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. Except as permitted under the U.S. Copyright Act of 1976, no part of this work may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, or stored in a database or retrieval system, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, audio or video recording, or other, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Contact: paul@wsrightnow.com

Note: Spoken lines from Shakespeare's drama are in the public domain, as is the Globe edition (1864) of his plays, which provided the basic text of the speeches in this new version of *Love's Labours Lost*. But *Love's Labours Lost, by William Shakespeare: Presented by Paul W. Collins*, is a copyrighted work, and is made available *for your personal use only*, in reading and study.

Student, beware: This is a *presentation*, not a scholarly work, so you should be sure your teacher, instructor or professor considers it acceptable as a reference before quoting characters' comments or thoughts from it in your report or term paper.

Chapter One Regimens Begun

This lovely morning in a flowery glade, part of an enclosed woodland park beside the royal palace, the ruler of a prosperous realm straddling the mountains just north of Spain meets with three young lords of his court.

Standing on the carefully kept lawn, the noblemen are about to endorse a written pledge to begin an austere new life, one of dedication to intellectual discovery.

The King of Navarre, fit and thirty-eight, ten years older than his three friends, begins the ceremony: “Let *fame*, which all hunt after in their lives, live registered upon our brazen tombs, and then grace us in the disgrace of Death, when, in despite of cormorant, devouring Time, the endeavor of this present breath may buy that *honour* which shall abate his scythe’s keen edge, and make us heirs of all eternity!

“Therefore, brave conquerors—for so you *are*, who war against your own affections and the huge army of the world’s desires!—our late edict shall strongly stand in force!” The puritanical proscriptions restrict, primarily, relations between the sexes. “Navarre shall be the wonder of the *world*: our court shall be a little *academe*, still and contemplative, living on *art*!

“You three, Berowne, Dumaine, and Longaville, have sworn for three years’ term to live with me as my fellow-scholars, and to keep those statutes that are recorded in this schedule, here,” he says, unrolling a sheet of parchment.

“Your oaths are passed; and now subscribe your names, so that his own hand may strike his honour down who violates the smallest branch herein!

“If you are armed to *do* as *sworn* to do, subscribe to your deep oath—and *keep* it, too!” He stands beside a delicate, white-painted writing desk brought out here for the ceremony; a goose-quill pen, stirred by a zephyr, wavers in the heavy, square bottle of ink.

“I am resolved,” declares the youngest, tall Lord Longaville. “’Tis but a three-year fast; the *mind* shall banquet, though the body pine. Fat paunches have lean *pates*, and dainty bits make rich the ribs, but bankrupt quite the *wits*!” He signs the list of rules.

The next nobleman bows. “My loving lord, Dumaine is mortifièd”—dead to corporeal temptation, he claims. “The grosser manner of these *worldly* delights he throws upon the gross world’s baser slaves! As to *love*, to *wealth*, to *pomp*—pine and die *all* those; I’ll live in *philosophy*!” The nobleman plucks up the pen and leans down to swirl out a bold signature, finishing it with a flourish.

Lord Berowne bows to the king. “I can but say *their* protestation over. *Much*, dear liege, I have already sworn—that is, to live in study here three years.” He glances at the elegantly drawn document. “But there were *other* strict observances—such as *not to see a woman* in that term—which I hope *well* are not enrollèd there!

“And one day in a week to *touch no food*—and but *one meal* on every day beside—the which I hope is not enrollèd there!

“And to *sleep but three hours* in a night, and not be seen to close an eye in all the day—when I was wont to think no harm *all night*, and make a dark night, too, of *half the day*!—which I hope well is *not* enrollèd there!

“Oh, those are *barren tasks*, too hard to *keep*! Not to see *ladies*!—study, fast, not *sleep*!”

The king raises an eyebrow. “Your oath is passèd, to pass away from these.”

“Let me say *no*, my liege, an if you please,” replies Berowne politely. “I swore only to *study* with Your Grace, and stay here in your court for three years’ space.”

“You swore to that, Berowne,” the king protests, “and to the *rest*!”

Hazily, Berowne recalls laughing, and clacking his cup against the others’ during the bachelors’ wine-fueled vows. “By yea and nay, sir, then I swore in *jest*!” The purpose of such sacrifices eludes him. “What is the *end* of study?”—its purpose. “Let me know.”

“Why, that to know that which else we should *not* know.”

“Things hid, and barrèd, you mean, from *ordinary* sense?”

“*Aye*,” says the king. “That is study’s godlike recompense.”

Berowne grins. “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 with some mistress *fine*, when mistresses from *common* senses are hid—or, having sworn too hard-a-keeping oath, study to break *it*, but not break my troth!

“If study’s gain be *thus*, then this be so: study *knows* what yet it doth not know! Swear me to *this*, and I will ne’er say no!”

But the king frowns at the jolly equivocation; he takes his project very seriously. “*Those* be the steps that *hinder* study quite, and train our intellects to vain *delight!*”

“Why, *all* delights are vain!” laughs Berowne—who has studied each, and at some length. “But that *most* vain which, with pain *purchased*, doth *inherit* pain—as in painfully poring upon a book to seek the light of *Truth*, while truth”—fidelity to poor promises—“doth falsely *blind* the eyesight from Truth’s look!

“Light seeing light doth sight of light *beguile*”—vision’s illumination is dimmed by brightness, as when one stares at a flame. “So, ere you *find* where light in darkness lies, your light grows dark by the losing of your *eyes!*”

“Teach me how to *please my eye indeed*, by fixing it upon a *fairer* eye!” says Berowne, his own two shining in anticipation of his next lady. “*Dazzling* so, *that* eye shall be mine’s heed, and give it the light that it was blinded by!

“*Study* is like the heavens’ glorious *sun*, that will not be deep-searchèd with steady looks. Small have continual *plodders* ever won, save base authority from *others’* books! These earthly studiers of heaven’s lights that give a name to every fixèd *star* have no more profit from their shining nights than those that walk but wot not what they are!”—beasts. “Too much to know is to know nought but of *fame!*”—*consensus*. “And every *godfather* can give a *name.*”

“How well he’s *read*, so to reason against *reading!*” laughs the king—who does, in fact, delight in collecting nomenclature.

Dumaine smiles. “He’s proceeded well—to *stop* all *good* proceeding!”

“He weeds out the *corn*, and lets still grow the *weeding!*” adds Longaville.

Worldly Lord Berowne is impatient with these Platonical innocents: “The *spring* is near, when *green geese* are a-brooding!”

Dumaine sees no relation. “How follows that?”

“*Fit*, in its place and *time!*”

“In *reason* nothing,” scoffs Dumaine.

Berowne laughs. “Something then in *rhyme!*”

The king would defend the potential discoveries of their intended retreat. “Berowne is like an envious, sneaping *frost* that bites the first-born infants of the spring!”

That nobleman shrugs. “Well, say I *am*; why should proud *summer* boast before the *birds* have any cause to sing? Why should I joy in any too-*early* birth? At Christmas I no more desire a *rose* than wish a *snow* in May’s new-fangled mirth, but like each thing that *in season* grows.

“As for *your* studying now, it is *too late!*—you *climb o’er the house* to unlock a little gate!”

But the king feels young enough, and he wants to proceed. “Well, sit you out. Go home, Berowne. Adieu.”

That nobleman sighs. “No, my good lord, I have sworn to stay with you. And—though I have for barbarism spoken more than for that angel *Knowledge*, you can say—yet I’m confident I’ll *keep* what I have sworn, and abide 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.”

The king is pleased. “How well this yielding rescues thee from shame!”

Berowne reads aloud: “*Item*, ‘That no woman shall come within a mile of my court.’ Hath this been proclaimed?”

Longaville nods. "Four days ago."

"Let's see the penalty. 'On pain of losing her tongue.'" He bursts into laughter. "Who devised *this* penalty?"

"Marry, that did I," the soft-spoken Longaville admits.

"Sweet lord, and *why*?"

"To *fright them hence*, with that dread penalty."

"A *dangerous* law—against *gentility!*" declares Berowne. He reads: "*Item*, 'If any man be seen to talk with a woman within the term of three years, he shall endure as much public shame as the rest of the court can possibly devise.'

"*This* article, my liege, *yourself* must break," he tells the king, "for, as you well know, a maid of grace and complete majesty, *the French king's daughter*, is coming here—in embassy to speak with you about our surrendering Aquitaine to her decrepit, sick and bedrid father." The region, whose ownership is in question, lies just north of the Pyrenees, beside France.

"Therefore *this* article is made in vain—or vainly comes the admirèd *princess* hither!"

"What say you, lords?" asks the king, taken aback. "Why, this was quite forgot!"

"So is *study* ever more *overshot*," argues Berowne. "While it doth study to *have* what it *would*, it doth forget to *do* the thing it *should*; and when it *hath* the thing it hunted most, 'tis won as towns with *fire*: so *won*, so *lost!*"

"We must perforce dispense with *this* decree," the king admits. "She *must* stay here of sheer necessity."

"*Necessity* will make us *all* forsworn three *thousand* times within this three years' space!" warns the lusty Berowne. "For every man with his *affections* is born—not by *might* mastered, but by special *grace!* If I break faith, that word shall speak for me: I am forsworn on mere *'necessity!'*"

"So to the laws at large I write my name." He signs the general covenant. He growls with mock ferocity, "And he that breaks them in the least degree stands in attainder of eternal *shame!*"

"Suggestion is to me as to others," he allows, regarding temptation, "but I believe, although I seem so loath, I am the *last* who will fail to *keep* his oath!"

He knows many dry tomes loom. "But is there no *lively* recreation granted?"

"*Aye*, that there *is!*" says the king with enthusiasm. "Our court, as you know, is haunted with a refinèd traveller from *Spain*, a man in all the world's *new fashion* planted, who hath a *mint of phrases* in his brain, a man of *compliments*—one whom the *music* of his *own* vain tongue doth *ravish* like enchanting harmony—whom *right* and *wrong* have chosen as umpire of their mutiny!" The garrulous Spaniard tends to pontificate.

"This child of fancy, who *Armado* hight,"—*is called*; the king feels that such antique terms add a learned tone, "for *interim* to our studies shall relate, in high-born words, the worth of many a knight from tawny Spain lost to the world's debate."

The pompous visitor from the warm lands just south of Navarre persists in lauding those who were lost in warships of Spain's famed fleet—stunningly defeated just a few years past in a disastrously failed attack on England.

"How *you'll* delight, my lords, I know not," says the king, "but I protest *I* love to *hear him lie!*—and will use him for my minstrelsy!"

Berowne nods. "*Armado is* a most illustrious wight, a man of fire-new words, *fashion's* own knight!"

Longaville smiles as a brawny young fellow, a local man new to service at the palace, approaches. "Costard the swain and he shall be our sport—and *so* to study, three years is but short!"

With Costard, nineteen, is a portly man of middle age, one Anthony Dull—who brings a letter.

Constable Dull bows courteously. "Which is the king's own person?"

"*This*, fellow," says the rascal Berowne. "What wouldst?"

The officer frowns. “I *myself* reprehend his own person,”—he means *represent him*—“for I am his grace’s tharborough,” says the township deputy stolidly. “But I would see his own person in flesh and blood.”

Berowne nods toward the king—and points to his crown. “This is he.”

“Signior Arm....” Dull pauses, peering at the paper, studying its elaborate, carefully formed characters. “*Arm*—” He abandons the effort. “—commends you. There’s *villainy* abroad! This letter will tell you more.”

Costard—whose name is also a word for *head* and *apple*—is twisting a crumpled cap in his hands. “Sir, the contempts thereof are as touching *me*....”

The king takes the paper. “A letter from the magnificent Armado!” He begins reading eagerly.

“How low soever the *matter*, I hope to God for high *words*,” says Berowne.

“A *high* hope for a low heaven,” says Longaville. The kindly nobleman finds the knight’s florid fawning tedious. “God grant us patience.”

“To *hear*, or *forbear* hearing?”

“To *forbear both*—or to *hear meekly*, sir, and to laugh *moderately*.”

“Well, sir, let it be that the *style* shall give us cause to *climb* into *merriness*,” says Berowne, with a play on *stile*, steps for climbing over a wall.

Young Costard is worried. “The matter is about *me*, sir, concerning *Jaquenetta*. The manner of it is, I was *taken* in the manner!”

Berowne’s eyebrows rise. “In *what* manner?”

“In ‘*manner, form and following*,’ sir,” Costard confesses, having just heard that lawyerly phrase from the constable, “*all* those three!

“I was seen with her in the *manor*-house, sitting with her upon the *form*,”—a bench, “and caught *following* her into the park—which, put together, is ‘in manner, form and following.’”

Costard begins his defense: “Now, sir, as for the manner: it *is* the manner of a man to speak to a woman!

“As for the form....” Costard shrugs. “In *some* form”—using truth, or whatever works.

Demands Berowne, amused, “And for the ‘following,’ sir?”

“As it shall be, following my *correction*. And God defend the right!”—a prayer of knights just before combat.

The king has been reading. He looks up, smiling broadly. “Will you hear this letter with attention?”

“As we would hear an *oracle*!” says Lord Berowne.

Costard, awaiting judgment, wags his head sadly. “Such is the simplicity of Man, to hearken after the flesh,” he moans.

The king reads aloud his letter from the Spaniard: “‘Great *deputy*, the welkin’s vice-regent and sole *dominator* of Navarre’s earth, my *soul’s* god and body’s fostering *patron*’—”

“Not a word of *Costard* yet.” The swain is listening closely.

“—‘so it is’—”

“It may *be* so,” says Costard. “If he say it is so, he is, in telling *true*, but *so*.”

The king frowns at the commentary. “Peace!”

“—be to me, and *every* man that dares not fight!” says Costard.

“No *words*!”

“—about *other men’s secrets*, I beseech you!” says Costard, protesting the arrest.

The king proceeds with sharing the ornate phrases of Don Adriano de Armado: “—‘so it is that, besieged with sable-coloured *melancholy*, I did commend the dark, oppressing mood to the most wholesome *physic* of *thy* health-giving air!—and, as I am a *gentleman*, betook myself to walk.

“‘The time, *when*?—about the sixth hour, when most beasts graze, birds best peck, and men sit down to that nourishment which is called supper; so much for the time when.

“Now for the *ground*—that which, I mean, I *walked upon*; it is yclepèd thy ‘*park*.’

“Then, as for the place *where*—where, I mean, I did encounter that *obscene* and *preposterous* event that draweth from my snow-white pen the ebon-coloured ink, which here thou viewest, beholdest, surveyest, or seest! But, as to the *place* where: it standeth north-north-east, and just east from the west corner of thy curious-knotted garden.

“There did I see that low-spirited *swain*, that base *minnow* of thy *mirth*,’—”

Costard blinks. “Me.”

“—‘that *unletterèd*, *small-knowing* soul,’—”

“Me.”

“—‘that shallow *vassal*,’—”

“*Still* me.”

“—which, as I remember, hight *Costard*,’—”

“Oh, *me!*”

“—‘sorted and *consorted*, contrary to *thy* establishèd, proclaimèd *edict*, and continent *canon*, with... Oh, with *which*—this I question even to *say* wherewith!”

“With a wench,” says Costard.

“With a child of our grandmother *Eve*—a *female*; or, for thy more sweet understanding, a *woman!*”

“Him, I, as my ever-esteemèd *duty* pricks me on, have sent to *thee* to receive the meed of *punishment*, by Thy Sweet Grace’s officer, Anthony Dull—a man of good repute, carriage, bearing, and estimation.”

The constable helpfully raises a hand. “*Me*, an’t shall please you. I am Anthony Dull.”

“As for *Jaquenetta*—so is callèd the *weaker* vessel which I apprehended with the aforesaid swain—as a vassal of *thy law’s fury*, I keep her, and shall, at the least of thy sweet notice, *bring her to trial*”—a proposition that provokes the lords’ laughter.

“Thine, in all compliments of *devoted* and heart-burning *heat of duty*, *Don Adriano de Armado*.”

The king looks up from the paper, happily noting his friends’ shared amusement.

Laughs Berowne, “This is not so well as I *looked* for—but *the best that ever I heard!*”

“*Aye*, the best of the *worst!*” says the king. He turns to Costard. “But, sirrah, what *say* you to this?”

Costard shrugs. “Sir, I confess the wench.”

“Did you hear the proclamation?”

“I do confess to hearing much of it, but marking little of it.”

“It was proclaimèd *a year’s imprisonment* to be taken with a wench!”

“I was taken with none, sir!” protests the youth. “I was taken with a *damsel*.”

“Well, it was *proclaimèd* ‘damsel.’”

“This was no damsel, neither, sir,” the lad amends. “She was a *virgin!*”

The king’s order was thorough: “It is so carried, too, for it was proclaimèd ‘virgin.’”

“If it were, I *deny* her virginity!—I was taken with a *maid!*”

The king frowns at the youth. “This ‘maid’ will not serve your turn, sir!”

Costard smiles, thinking of the pretty, cooperative girl. “*This* maid *will* serve my turn, sir!”

The king scowls in disapproval. “Sir, I will pronounce your sentence: you shall *fast a week*, with bran and water!”

“I had rather *pray a month* with mutton and porridge,” counters Costard.

“And Don Armado shall be your keeper. My lord Berowne, see him delivered o’er.

“And go *we*, lords, to *put in practise* that which each to the others hath so strongly sworn!”

With Longaville and Dumaine, he strolls out among the bloom-laden trellises of the palace’s verdant gardens.

Left with the commoners, Lord Berowne watches his friends go. “I’ll lay my *head* to any good man’s *hat*,” he wagers, “that these oaths and laws will prove idle and scornèd!”

He motions for Costard to head back with him to the palace. "Sirrah, come on."
"I *suffer* for the *truth*, sir!" argues Costard as the three trudge toward the kitchen. "For true it is I was *taken* with Jaquenetta,"—attracted to her, "and Jaquenetta is a *true girl*!"
"And therefore I *welcome* the sour cup of prosperity!
"Affliction may one day *smile* again; but till then, sit thee down, Sorrow!"

Chapter Two Knightly Love

Within his spacious quarters at the palace, Don Adriano de Armado, forty, ponders, as his page—a small, flaxen-haired boy of twelve called Moth—polishes pieces of armor. "Boy, what *sign* is it when a man of great spirit grows *melancholy*?" asks the Spanish knight, of the stars' influence.

"A great sign, sir, that he will look sad."

"Why, sadness is one and the *self-same thing*, dear imp."

"No, *no!* Oh, *Lord* no, sir!"

"How canst thou part sadness and melancholy, my tender Juvenal?" The boy's comments, often wry, remind the knight of that first-century Roman satirist.

Moth is annoyed; his retaliation plays on *señor*: "By a familiar demonstration of that working, my tough senior."

"Why tough *senior*?" demands the knight. "Why *tough senior*?"

"Why 'tender *juvenile*?' Why *tender juvenile*?"

"I spoke it, tender juvenile, as a congruent *epithet* on, appertaining *to*, thy *young days*, which we may nominate *tender*," explains Don Adriano.

"And *I*, tough senior, add an *appurtenant* title to your *old time*, which we may name *tough*."

Don Adriano nods, taking that as *enduring* and *rugged*. "Pretty and *apt*."

"How mean you, sir? *I* pretty, and my *saying apt*? Or *I apt*, and my *saying pretty*?"

"*Thou* pretty, because little."

"Little pretty because *little*!" grumbles oft-teased Moth. "Wherefore *apt*?"

"And *therefore apt* because *quick*!"

"Speak you this in my *praise*, master?" Quick can mean simply *alive*.

"In thy *condign* praise."

"I will praise an *eel* with the same praise!"

"What, that an eel is ingenious?"

"That an eel is *quick*"—kept living, and thus fresh, for cooking.

Don Armado frowns. "I do say *thou* art quick in *answers*!" He cautions, "Thou heatest my blood!"

Moth continues polishing. "I am *answerèd*, sir."

"I love not to be crossed!"

Thinks Moth, aware of the knight's dearth of coins called crosses, those stamped with a crucifix, *He speaks the exact contrary*; crosses *love not* him!

Don Adriano—once a farm boy, then a squire, knighted by Spain as its military swelled, but always wary of taking part in war's violence—finds a comfortable, cushioned seat at the window ledge and looks out over the grounds. He is glad to have secured this employment. "I have promised to study *three years* with the king," he advises the page.

"You may do it in an hour, sir."

"Impossible!"

Moth proceeds with his argument: "How many is *one* thrice told?"

"I am ill at *reckoning*," Don Adriano replies. "It fitteth the spirit of a *tapster*," he adds haughtily.

“You *are* a gentleman and a *gamester*, sir,” Moth points out.

“I confess both: they are both the varnish of a complete man.”

“Then, I am sure, you know how much the gross sum of ace-deuce amounts to.”

“It doth amount to one more than two.”

“Which the base vulgar do call *three*.”

“True.”

“Well, sir, this is just a piece of *study*!—now is ‘three’ here studied ere ye’ll *wink* thrice! And how easy it is to put the word *years* to *three*—and study ‘three years’ in *two words*, the *dancing horse* will tell you!” A circus animal can perform hoof-taps on command.

The knight enjoys the whimsy. “A most fine figure!”

To prove you a cipher!—the figure zero, an empty placeholder, thinks the boy, still shining the undinted armor; its new leather is still stiff.

But Don Armado grows pensive. He stares, forlorn, out the window.

“I will hereupon confess I am in *love*,” he says ruefully. “And as it is *base* for a *soldier* to love, so am I in love with a base *wench*. If drawing my *sword* against the mood of *affection* would deliver me from the reprobate thought of it, I would take Desire *prisoner*, and ransom him to any French courtier for a new-devised *courtesy*!”

“I *scorn* sighing! Methinks I should outswear *Cupid*!” he insists with manly disgust.

“Comfort, me, boy: what great men have been in love?”

Moth, pausing to consider, notices the sheen of sweat beneath the fine, golden hairs on his own bare arms. “Hercules, master.”

Don Adriano is pleased. “Most sweet *Hercules*! More authority, dear boy; name *more*, and, sweet my child, let them be men of good repute and carriage.”

“*Samson*, master. *He* was a man of good carriage—*great* carriage, for he carried the town-gates on his back like a porter! And *he* was in love.”

“Well-knit *Samson*! O strong-*jointed* Samson,” cries Don Adriano, “I do excel thee in my *rapier* as much as thou didst me in *carrying gates*! I am in love *too*!”

“Who was Samson’s love, my dear Moth?”

That detail was of little interest to the boy when he read myths. “A woman, master.”

“Of what complexion?”

“Of *all four*—or three, or two—or *one* of the four,” says Moth—definitively, if not helpfully; the four humours’ mixture supposedly shows in the face.

“Tell me *precisely* of what complexion.”

“Of a sea-water *green*, sir.”

The Spaniard frowns. “Is *that* one of the four complexions?”

“As I have read, sir—and the *best* of them, too,” he adds—of potent *jealousy*.

“Green indeed is the colour of lovers,” the knight admits, based on his own experience. “But to have a love of *that* colour, methinks *Samson* had small reason for it! And he surely affected her for her *wit*.”

“It was so, sir: for she had a *keen* wit!”—*sharp* and *cutting*, Moth remembers of Delilah.

At the window, Don Adriano peruses the clouds. “My love is most immaculate white and red”—pure and strong.

“Most *maculate* thoughts,”—impure ones, “master, are *masked* under such colours.”

“Define, *define*, well-educated infant,” demands the don.

The boy thinks. “My father’s wit and my mother’s tongue, assist me,” he murmurs, trying to recollect.

“Sweet invocation by a child: most pretty and pathetic!”

Moth offers this:

“If she be made of white and red,
Her faults will ne’er be known,
For blushing cheeks by *faults* are bred,

And *fears* by pale-white shown.
Then if she fear or be to *blame*,
By this you shall not know—
For still her *cheeks* possess the same
Whatever she doth own!

“A rhyme, master, against the dangerous reasoning of ‘white and red!’”

But Don Adriano has had an inspiration—if an immodest one. “Is there not a ballad, boy, of ‘The *King* and the *Beggar*?’”

“The world *was* very guilty of such a ballad some *three ages since*,” says Moth with distaste. “But I think now ’tis not to be found—and if it were, it would not serve, neither for the writing nor for the tune.”

“I will have that subject *newly* writ o’er,” Don Adriano decides, “so that I may example my digression”—in succumbing to love—“by some mighty *precedent!*”

Again he glances toward the palace grounds. The knight blurts out, “Boy, I do love that country girl that I found in the park with th’ irrational hind Costard!” He shakes his head, disapproving. “She deserves *well!*”

—*To be whipped!* thinks Moth. *And to get a better lover than my master!*

“Sing, boy. My spirit grows *heavy*, in love.”

Moth grins. *And that’s great marvel, you loving a light wench!* Light implies *loose*.

The knight presses: “I say *sing*.”

Moth waves his polishing rag toward the door. “Forbear till this company be past.”

Constable Dull is bringing the swain—and Jaquenetta, a rosy-cheeked lass of twenty.

Dull bows to the knight. “Sir, the king’s pleasure it is that you keep Costard safe”—hold him in custody. “And you must suffer him to take no delight nor no penance,”—he means *solace*, “but he must fast three days a week.

“As for this damsel, I must keep *her* at the park. She is allowed for a dey-woman”—is assigned to work in the dairy. Moth laughs: not as a *night* woman. “Fare you well.”

Thinks Don Adriano, flustered, as she starts to go, *I do betray myself with blushing!* “Maid. . . .”

“Man?” Punished for talking, and with someone near her own age, Jaquenetta is sullen.

He beams. “I will *visit* thee at the lodge.”

“That’s nearby.”

“I know where it is situate.”

“Lord, how *wise* you are!”

Don Adriano does not hear the sarcasm; he smiles. “I will tell thee wonders!”

Jaquenetta thinks not. *With that face?*

Don Adriano whispers, to her alone: “I love thee!”

“So I hear you *say*. . . .”

“And so, *fare well!*” says Don Adriano de Armado aloud.

“*Fair* weather, after *you!*” mutters the wench. The Spaniard hears a benediction.

Constable Dull motions for her to proceed. “Come, Jaquenetta, away.” They head for the dairy, where she may usefully exercise her talents for stroking and squeezing.

Don Adriano glares at his young rival. “*Villain*, thou shalt *fast* for thy offences, ere thou be pardoned!”

“Well, sir,” says Costard, “I hope when I do I shall do it on a full stomach.”

“Thou shalt be *heavily punished!*”

“I am more obliged to you than your fellows,” he says, “for they are but *lightly rewarded*”—provided with amusement. Costard has learned, from Moth, of the knight’s commission at the court.

“Take away this villain! Shut him up!”—incarcerate him, Don Adriano tells the page.

Moth stands, and looks up at the burly Costard. “Come, you *transgressing slave*—away!”

Costard smiles at his young friend. “Let me not be pent up, sir!—I’ll still fast, being loose.”

“No, sir!—that were *fast and loose!* Thou shalt to prison!” says the knight.

“Well, if ever I do see the merry days of desolation that I *have* seen,” says Costard, “*some shall see....*”

The boy frowns. “*What shall some see?*”

“Nay, nothing, Master Moth, but what they *look upon,*” he admits. “It is not for prisoners to be too silent in their words,”—he means *salient,* “and therefore I will say nothing! I thank God I have as little patience as any other man, and therefore I can be quiet.” He follows the boy to the chamber of his confinement—a sunny room just down the corridor.

Alone, Don Adriano paces, stirred again by an encounter with the buxom milkmaid.

I do affect the very ground, which is base, where her shoe, which is baser, guided by her foot, which is basest, doth tread!

But he is worried, remembering his recent oath, supporting the noblemen. *I shall be forsworn—which is a great argument of falsehood—if I love! And how can that be true love which is falsely attempted?*

Angrily, he considers Cupid. *Love is a familiar—Love is a devil!*

There is no Evil Angel but Love! Samson had an excellent strength, yet he was so tempted! Solomon had a very good wit, yet he was so seduced!

Cupid’s butt-shaft is too hard for Hercules’ club, and therefore too much odds for a Spaniard’s rapier! The first and second cause —duelist’s challenges— will not serve my turn! The passado—a swordsman’s thrust— he respects not; the duello—knightly code— he regards not! His disgrace is to be called boy, but his glory is to subdue men!

Adieu, valour! Be still, drum! Rust rapier!—for your manager is in love! Yea, he loveth!

Assist me, some god of extemporal rhyme, for I am sure I shall turn sonnet! Devise, wit; write, pen!—for I am whole volumes!—in folio!

Humming to himself the old melody of “The King and the Beggar,” he sits down to compose a love letter.

Chapter Three Bargaining Begins

France has sent its princess, a lady of thirty-five, as emissary to the King of Navarre. Accompanied by several lords and ladies, attended by many servants, she has finally arrived with her regal train this afternoon—only to find herself *kept waiting.* Her white-and-gilt carriage stands just outside the tall, black-iron gates—closed and locked—before the palace.

She steps down, assisted by a footman, as Lord Boyet, tall, elegant and, at fifty, a skilled and experienced French negotiator, comes to her and bows.

“Now, madam, summon up your dearest spirits!” he urges “Consider *who* the king your father sends, to *whom* he sends, and what’s his embassy: *yourself,* held precious in the world’s esteem, to parley with the sole inheritor of all perfections that a man may own, matchless *Navarre*—the plea of no less weight than Aquitaine!—a *dowry* for a *queen!*”

“Be now as prodigal with all dear *grace* as Nature was in *making* graces dear, when she did stave the general world aside, and prodigally *gave them all to you.*”

The princess laughs. “Good Lord Boyet, my beauty, though but mean,”—average, “needs not the painted flourish of your praise. Beauty is bought by *judgment of the eye,* not by uttered coinage of merchants’ *tongues!*”

“I am less proud to hear you *count up* my worth than are *you*—much willing to be accounted wise—to *spend* your wit in the praise of mine.” She well understands her assignment: persuading the king of Navarre to marry her would eliminate the Aquitaine issue and ally their realms.

Her father’s counselor bows, graciously accepting the chiding.

“But now to task the *tasker*,” she says. “Good Boyet, you are not ignorant—all-telling Fame doth noise it abroad—that Navarre hath made a *vow*: till painful study shall outwear three years, no *woman* may approach his silent court. Therefore to us it seemeth a needful course, before we enter his forbidden gates, to know his pleasure; and in that behalf, for your bold worthiness,” she says with a smile, “we single *you* as our best-moving, fair solicitor”—amiable attorney.

She thinks. “Tell him the daughter of the King of France, craving *quick dispatch* of serious business, importunes personal conference with his grace. Hasten to signify as much—while *we* attend, like *humble*-visaged suitors, *his high will*,” says the piqued princess pointedly.

Boyet perceives her tactic; he smiles. “*Proud* of the employment, willingly I go!”

“*All* pride is willing pride, and *ours* is so.” She seldom expresses awareness of royal dignity; today she has a reason to.

Boyet goes to meet the King of Navarre.

The princess turns to the other French nobles, now gathered beside her coach. “Who are the votaries, my loving lords, that are *vow*-fellows with this virtuous king?”

“Lord Longaville is one,” says a baron who has met him.

“Know you the man?”

“I know him, madam,” Lady Maria volunteers. “At the marriage-feast between Lord Perigort and the beauteous heir of Jacques Falconbridge, solemnized in Normandy, I saw this Longaville.

“He is esteemèd a man of sovereign parts: *well fitted* in arts, *glorious* in arms! Nothing becomes in him ill that he would do well!

“The only soil on his fair virtue’s gloss—if *Virtue’s* gloss will stain with *any* soil—is a *sharp wit*, whose edge hath power to cut, matchèd with *too blunt a will*!—which wills that it should spare none who come within his power.”

“Some *merry, mocking* lord, belike,” says the princess. “Is’t so?”

Maria nods. “They say so most who most his humours know.”

“Such short-lived wits do *wither* as they *grow*”—in rising, demean others, says the princess. “Who are the rest?”

“The young *Dumaine*,” notes Lady Katherine, “a well-accomplished youth, beloved by all who love *Virtue* for *virtue*—with *most* power to do harm, yet 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 of what good I *saw*, much too little is my *report*, compared to his great worthiness!”

Lady Rosaline—like the other two noblewomen, in her mid-twenties—steps forward. “*Another* of these students was there at that time with him, if I have heard the truth.

“‘*Be-rowne*’ they *call* him,”—a play on *be round*, be challenging, “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 into a mirth-moving *jest*!—which his fair tongue, imagination’s expositor, delivers in such apt and gracious words that agèd ears are quite refreshed by his tales, and younger hearers play truant, so sweet and voluble is his discourse!”

Cries the princess, amused, “*God bless my ladies!*—they are all so *in love* that every one her *own* hath garnished with bedecking ornaments of *praise!*”

“Here comes Boyet,” the baron tells her, as that nobleman returns.

“Now, what admittance, lord?” asks the princess, as he arrives.

“Navarre had *notice* of your fair approach,” Boyet reports, bowing, “and he and his partners in oath were all addressèd to meeting you, gentle lady, before I came.

“Marry, thus much I have learnt,” he says hurriedly. “He means, rather than make a *dispensation* from his oath to let you enter his unpeopled house,”—the duke’s staff now perform duties elsewhere on the estate, “*to lodge you in the field*, like one who comes here to *besiege* his court!”

He glances back, toward the opening gate. “Here comes Navarre.”

The king, followed by Lords Longaville, Dumaine and Berowne, with their attendants, strides to the visiting retinue. He smiles politely at the French king's daughter, and bows. "Fair princess, welcome to the court of Navarre!"

"Fair' I give you *back* again," she says sharply; "and '*welcome*' I *have* not yet! The roof of *this* court"—the open sky—"is too high to be *yours*; and welcome to these wide *fields* too base to be mine!"

The king is discomfited before his imperious visitor. "You *shall* be welcome, madam, to my court!"

"I will be well come *then*," she counters. "Conduct me thither," she demands, turning toward the gate.

"Hear me, dear lady," pleads the king. "I have sworn an *oath*—"

"Our Lady, help my lord," says the princess coldly, annoyed, "for he'll be *forsworn*."

"Not for the *world*, fair madam, by *my* will!" says the king.

"Well, will *shall* break it! Will and nothing else!"

Says the king, defensive about the vows—one of which he has already broken by speaking to her, "Your Ladyship is ignorant what it *is*!"

"Were *my lord* so," she retorts. "His ignorance were *wise*, while now his knowledge must prove *ignorance*. I hear Your Grace hath sworn off house-keeping"—and thus hospitality. "'Tis sin to break that oath, my lord—and a *deadly* sin to *keep* it!"—offend royal guests.

"But pardon me: I am too bold; to teach a *teacher* ill beseemeth me."

Abruptly, she takes a document from an attendant and thrusts it at the king. "Vouchsafe to read the purpose of my coming, and instantly resolve me in my suit."

The king bows. "Madam, I *will*, if immediately I *may*." It is his habit to apply careful deliberation—often more—before acting. He opens it and begins to read.

You will the sooner, so that I were away! she thinks—hopes—watching the king, who, stealing a glance at her, now blushes. *For you'll prove perjured if you make me stay!*

While those attending wait to hear their respective royals' decisions, Lord Berowne drifts into the presence of Lady Rosaline. "Did not I dance with you at Brabant once?" he inquires, smiling.

"Did not I dance with *you* at Brabant once?"

His smiles widens. "I know you *did*!"

"Then how needless was it to ask the question."

"You must not be so quick!" says he.

"'Tis you that *spur* me with such questions," says she.

"Your *wit's* too hot; it speeds too *fast*!" chides Berowne. "'Twill tire."

Rosaline laughs. "Not till it leave the *rider* in the mire!"

Berowne looks around; he sees that the princess is still waiting, the king still reading. "What time o' day?" he wonders aloud.

"The hour when *fools* should ask," says Rosaline.

"Now *fair* befall your mask!"

"Fair 'fall the *face* it covers!"

"And send you many lovers!"

"*Amen*," says Rosaline, "if *you* be none!"

Berowne only smiles. "Nay, then will I be *gone*." But he does not budge from her side.

The king looks up from the document. "Madam, your father here doth *intimate* the payment of a hundred thousand crowns—that being *one-half* of an entire sum disbursèd by my father in his wars.

"But, says he, for *we who have received neither sum*, there remains yet unpaid a hundred thousand more, in surety for which one *part* of *Aquitaine* is bound to us—although it is not valued at the money's worth!

"But that, it seems, he little *purposeth*!—for here he doth claim to have *repaid* a hundred thousand crowns!—and demands, after that payment of a hundred thousand crowns, *to have his*

title live in Aquitaine!—which *we* had much rather *depart withal*, and have the *money* spent by our father, than Aquitaine, so gelded as it is!

“Dear princess,” says the king, politely but firmly, “were not his requests so far from *reason’s* wielding, your fair *self* should make a *yielding*, ’gainst some reason in *my* breast, and go well satisfied to France again.”

The princess is impressed by his discernment, and pleased with the compliment—but still, her eyes flash angrily. “You do the king my father too much *wrong!*—and wrong the reputation of your name, by so unseemingly *denying* receipt of that which hath so faithfully been *paid!*”

The king shrugs. “I do protest I never heard of it! But if you *prove* it, I’ll *repay* it!—or yield up Aquitaine!”

“We arrest your word!” says the princess haughtily. “Boyet, you can produce acquittances for such a sum from special officers of Charles, his father.”

The king regards the French nobleman. “Satisfy me so.”

Boyet has been taken by surprise; but he tells the king, “So please Your Grace, the packet is not come wherein that and other specifications are bound. Tomorrow you shall have a sight of them.”

The king nods. “It shall suffice me; at which interview all liberal reason I will yield unto.

“Meantime, receive such *welcome* at my hand as Honour—without *breach* of honour—may make tender of to thy true worthiness! You may not, fair princess, come in my gates—but here, without, you shall be so received that you shall deem yourself lodged in my *heart*, though denied fair harbour in my house!

“Your own good thoughts excuse me, and farewell,” he says, bowing. “Tomorrow shall we visit you again.”

The princess curtsseys. “Sweet health and fair *desires* consort with Your Grace.”

He meets her gaze—and blushes again. “Thine *own* wish I *wish thee*, in every place!”

He tells attendants to begin erecting a large pavilion for the guests.

He ambles back through the gate, pondering—and his cheeks still burn.

The others take leave as well.

Berowne smiles again at dark-eyed Rosaline. “Lady, I will commend you—to mine own *heart!*”

“Pray you do *my* recommendation: I would be glad to *see* it!”—view his heart exposed.

He winces. “I would you’d heard it *groan!*”

“Is the fool sick?”

“Sick to the heart!”

“Alack, let it bleed.”

“Would *that* do it good?”

“*My* physic”—medicine—“says aye!”

Berowne grins. “Would you *prick* it with your *aye?*”

“No *point*,” she retorts. “With my *knife!*”

Berowne sounds appalled. “Now God save thy life!”

“And *yours*—from long living!”

Berowne sees that the king has gone. “I cannot stay for *thanks-giving*,” he says dryly, and heads back past the gate.

“Sir, I pray you, a word!” says Lord Dumaine to Lord Boyet. “What lady is that same?”

“The heir of Alençon, *Katherine* her name.”

“A gallant lady,” says Dumaine, watching her thoughtfully. “Monsieur, fare you well.” He, too, reenters the palace grounds.

Lord Longaville is curious. “I beseech you, a word,” he says to Lord Boyet. “What is she in

the white?"—common usage for *who*.

The Frenchman smiles. "A *woman* sometimes, if you saw her in the light."

"Perchance *light* out of the light," quips the young man, trying to sound experienced. "I desire her *name*."

Boyet plays the fool: "She hath but one for *herself*; to desire *that* were a shame!"

"Pray you, sir, whose daughter?"

"Her mother's, I have heard."

Longaville makes a face. "God's *blessing* on your beard!"

Boyet chuckles. "Good sir, be not offended," he says, touching the young man's sleeve. "She is an heir of *Falconbridge*."

"Nay, my choler is ended," Longaville assures him, staring, entranced, at Maria. "She is a most sweet lady!" he breathes.

Boyet smiles kindly. "Not *unlikely*, sir; that may be."

Longaville returns, enchanted, to the palace—without even learning her first name.

"What's her name, in the cap?" asks Berowne.

"*Rosaline*, by good hap," says Boyet.

"Is she wedded or no?"

"To her *will*, sir, only so."

"You are welcome, sir. Adieu." Berowne strides away.

Thinks the courtier, annoyed, '*Well come*' to me, sir, and '*Fare well*' to you!

"That last is Berowne, a merry, madcap lord," Maria tells Boyet. "Not a word with him is but a jest!"

"And every jest but a *word*." The accomplished nobleman has found Berowne's curt abruptness a symptom of arrogance.

Boyet commends the princess for her dealing with the king. "It was well done of you to 'take him at his word'"—to gain time.

She smiles, grateful for his swift support of her ruse: pretending the proof she promised the king exists. "I was as willing to *grapple* as *he* was to board!"—terms of nautical warfare.

Lady Maria grins about *grappling*: "Not as two *ships*, marry!"

"And wherefore *not* ships?" asks Boyet. "*Ships*, sweet lamb—lest I fall upon your *lips*!"

Maria laughs. "*You* ship,"—leave, "and I'll be *pasture*!"—*past you*. "Shall that finish the jest?"

"If you *grant* pasture for me!" says Boyet, leaning as if to kiss her.

Maria pushes him away, laughing. "Not *so*, gentle beast! My lips are no *common*,"—public grazing land, "though severals they be!"

"Belonging to whom?"

"To my *fortunes* and *me*!"

The princess laughs. "Good wits *will* be jangling, but, gentles, agree: this civil warring of wit were much better used on Navarre and his *book*-men; for theirs is *abusèd*."

Boyet pursues Maria's point. "If my observation, which very seldom lies, deceive me not, now by the *heart's* silent rhetoric disclosed by *eyes*, Navarre"—the king—"is *infected*!"

"With what?"

"With that which we *lovers* entitle *affected*!"

"Your reason?" asks the princess.

"Why, all his behaviors did make their retire into the court of his *eye*—peeping out thorough *desire*!"

"His *heart*, impressèd with *your* print and proud of its *form*, *expressèd* pride in his eye like an *agate*! His *tongue*, all disturbèd by not *seeing* while *speaking*, did *stumble* with haste, his *eyesight* to free! All senses to *that* sense did make their repair, to feel only by *looking*, on fairest of fair!

“Methought *all* his senses were locked in his eye, as *jewels* in crystal for some prince to buy—which, tendering their own worth from where they were glassed, did invite *you* to buy them, along as you passed!

“His face’s own margent did quote such amazes that all eyes saw *his* eyes, enchanted with gazes!

“I’ll give you Aquitaine and all that is his, if you’ll give him, for my sake, but one loving *kiss!*”

Glancing at the ladies, the princess scoffs. “Come, to our *pavilion*—Boyet’s *indisposed!*” But she is quite pleased with his assessment of her prospects—political and personal.

Lord Boyet smiles confidently. “By speaking that in words which his eye hath disclosed, I’ve but made a *mouth* for his eye, by adding a tongue which I know will not *lie!*”

Rosaline teases the lord. “Thou art an old *love*-monger, and speakest *skilfully!*”—purposefully; he shares the mission here.

“He is *Cupid’s* grandfather,” laughs Maria, “and learns news from *him!*”

“And is like Venus, his mother; for his *father*”—Mars, “was but grim!” says Rosaline, of the love-god’s parentage.

Boyet would protest. “Do you *hear*, my mad wenches—”

“*No!*” laughs Maria.

“What?—then do you *see?*”

“*Aye,*” says Rosaline, “—our way to be *gone!*”

The princess is on her way to inspect their large and colorful pavilion.

“You are too *hard* for *me!*” says Boyet, laughing, as they all follow.

Their temporary court of canvas is being pulled up on poles just outside the palace gates.

Chapter Four Sweet Rhetoric

On a sunny greensward at one side of the palace, Don Adriano, sated by his noon meal this warm summer day, is reclining on the grass, listening languorously as his page, sitting cross-legged nearby, finishes singing the ballad of love which the knight has asked to hear. “*Warble*, child; make *passionate* my sense of *hearing!*”

Moth, peeved by the interruption, stops.

“A sweet air!” sighs Don Adriano. “Go, tenderness of years; take this key. Give enlargement to the swain, and bring him festinately hither. I must employ him with a letter to *my love!*”

The boy frowns. “Master, would you win your love with a *French brawl?*”

“How meanest thou? Brawling *in French?*”

“*No*, my complete master!—by *jigging* a tune off the tongue’s end!—*canarying* to it with your feet!—*coloring* it by turning up your eyebrows! *Sigh* a note, then *sing* a note: sometimes through the throat, as if you *swallowed* love with singing love, sometimes through the *nose*, as if you *snuffed up* love by *smelling* love!

“With your *hat* set penthouse-like o’er the shop of your eyes; with your *arms* crossed upon your upper doublet—*hands* like rabbits on a spit, or in your *pockets*, like an old man’s in a painting! And keeping not too long in *one* tune, but a *snip* and *away!*”

“These are but *compliments!*—these are *fine moves* to betray wenches who would be betrayed *without* these! And—do you *note* me—these make men who most affect them *men of note!*”—notorious.

The knight stares at the boy. “How hast *thou* purchased *this* experience?”

“By my penny of *observation!*”

Don Adriano’s song is sincere. “*But O—but O—*”

“—*the hobby-horse is forgot!*” sings Moth, of adults’ ardent desires.

The knight frowns. "Callest thou my love '*hobby-horse*'?"—a rude term for a too-accessible woman.

"No, master." Moth pictures Jaquenetta. *A hobby-horse is but a colt—and your love perhaps a hackney!* The play on one breed also suggests *a ride available for hire*. "But have you forgotten your love?" he asks the yawning Spaniard.

"Almost I had," admits the drowsy gentleman, still thinking a nap might be in order before supper.

"Negligent student! Learn her by heart!"

"By heart and *in* heart, boy."

"And *out* of heart, master! *All those three* I will prove."

"What wilt thou prove?"

"A *man*, if I live. And this, upon the instant: *by, in, and without!*

"*By* heart you love her, because your heart cannot *come by* her; *in* heart you love her, because your heart is in love with her; and *out of* heart you love her, being out of heart in that you cannot enjoy her."

The knight nods sadly. "I *am* all those three."

Thinks the boy, *And three times as much more, yet nothing at all!*

Don Adriano stirs, trying to rouse himself. "Fetch hither the swain; he must carry a letter for me."

"A message *well* sympathized," mutters Moth, nimbly rising. "A *horse* to be ambassador for an *ass*."

"*Huh?*" The knight looks up, blinking. "*Hmm... What sayest thou?*"

"Marry, sir, you must send *that* ass upon a *horse*, for he is very *slow-gaited*. But I go."

"The way is but short. Away!"

"As swiftly as *led*, sir," replies Moth, stretching.

Don Adriano's eyes narrow. "The *meaning*, my pretty ingenious? Is not *led* a mettle *heavy, dull, and slow?*"

"*Minime*, honest master." *Lead* is low-value metal. "Or rather, master, *no*."

"I say *led* is *slow!*"

"Sir, you are too swift to *say* so. Is that lead slow which is *fired from a gun?*"

"Sweet *smoke of rhetoric!*" cries Don Adriano. "He refutes me with a *cannon!*—and the *bullet*, that's *he!*" He waves for the lad to go. "I *shoot* thee at the swain."

Moth laughs. "*Boom!* then, and I fly!" He trots away.

Thinks the don, watching the rascal, *A most acute juvenile: volatile and free of grace!*—like a ball fired from a cannon.

He stands, straightens, and gazes up at the sky. *By thy favour, sweet welkin, I must sigh in thy face.*

Most rude Melancholy, *Valour yields to thee place!*

He sees that the page is bringing Costard. *My herald is returnèd.*

Cries Moth. "A *wonder*, master!—here's a *costard* with a broken *shin!*"

Don Adriano anticipates a colorful explication. "Some *enigma*, some *riddle!* Come!—thy *l'envoy*"—pithy summary. "Begin!"

Costard is alarmed by what he takes to be a call for a purgative. "No *egma!*" he cries. "No *riddle*, no *l'envoy*; no '*salving the mail,*'—for speed, "sir! Oh, sir, *plantain*, a plain *plantain!*"—a soothing leaf applied outside the injury.

The knight shakes his head at him. "By thy *virtue* thou enforcest *laughter!*—thy silly thought *stirs my spleen!* The *heaving of my lungs* provokes me to *smiling in ridicule!* Oh, pardon me, my stars!" He turns to Moth. "Doth this *unconsidering* one take the word *l'envoy* for a *salve?*"

"Do the *wise* think them *otherwise?*" demands Moth. "Is not an *envoy* a *salve?*"—a palliative to chafing between governments.

"No, page, it is an *epilogue* to a *discourse*, to make plain some obscure precedence that hath

theretofore been said. I will example it: 'The fox, the ape, and the humble-bee were ever at odds—being but *three*.' There's the *moral*; now the *l'envoy*—"

"I will add the *l'envoy*," Moth tells him. "Say the *moral* again."

"The fox, the ape, and the humble-bee, were ever at odds—being but *three*."

"Until the *goose* came out of door, and *stayed* the odds by *adding*: four!"

"Now will I begin with your *moral*," says Moth, "and do you follow with thy *l'envoy*. 'The fox, the ape, and the humble-bee, were ever at odds—being but *three*....'"

Don Adriano complies: "Until the goose came out of door, staying the odds by *adding to four*!"

A bird that can compute. The mischievous lad laughs. "A good *envoy* ending—a *goose*!"—someone easily tricked. He asks the swain, "Could you desire *more*?"

Costard is laughing, too. "The boy hath sold him a '*bargain*'—a goose that's *flat*! Sir, your *penny's* worth is good but as your goose be *fat*!"

"Let me see: a fat *envoy*... aye, *that's* a fat goose! To sell a '*bargain*' well is as cunning as '*fast and loose*.'" He has not forgotten Don Adriano's gibe.

"Come hither, come *hither*," demands the Spaniard, annoyed by digression. "How did this discussion *begin*?"

"By saying that a costard was broken in the shin," Moth reminds him. "Then you called for the *l'envoy*."

Costard concurs. "True, and I for a plantain; thus came your argument in, then the boy's fat *l'envoy*, the goose that you bought—and there ended the market."

"But *tell* me," insists Don Adriano, "how *was* there a costard broken in a shin?"

"I will tell you *sensibly*," the boy proposes, thinking a kick would clarify.

"Thou hast no *feeling* for it, Moth," Costard tells the child. "I will speak that *l'envoy*." He relates the recent incident with Jaquenetta: "I, Costard, *running out*,"—ejaculating, "was safely *within*!—'fell over the *threshold*' and 'broke my *shin*!'"

Señor Armado is impatient. "We will talk no more of this matter."

"Till there be more *matter* in the *shin*!" grins Costard; his member is still tender.

Don Adriano wants to proceed; he pulls the letter to Jaquenetta from his coat. "Sirrah Costard, I will *enfranchise* thee—"

"*Oh no!*—*marry* me to one of *France's*?" cries Costard. "I smell some *l'envoy*, some *goose*, in *this*!"

"By my sweet soul, I mean *setting thee at liberty*!—*enfreedoming* thy person!" says Don Adriano. "Thou wert *immured*—restrained, captivated, *bound*."

"True, true," says Costard. "And will *you* now be my *purgation*, and let me *loose*?"—a dig, with plays on *set free* and *relieve by laxative*.

The knight persists. "I give thee thy *liberty*!—set thee from *durance*," he says grandly, "and in lieu thereof impose on thee nothing but this: bear this signification to the country maid Jaquenetta."

He hands the young man the letter, then counts out three coins from a pocket. "There is remuneration!—for the *best* ward of mine honour is *rewarding* my dependents!" The penniless page's eyeballs roll, unnoticed by his penurious master. Says the Spaniard, already moving across the lawn toward the white doors into the palace, "Moth, *follow*."

"Aye, like a *sequel*," says the boy. "Señor Costard, adieu!"

Costard bows, sweeping off his hat with mock courtesy. "My sweet *ounce* of *man's* flesh!—my *miserly* icon!"

With a crude finger-gesture, Moth departs.

Now will I look to his '*remuneration*,' thinks the swain; he opens his hand. '*Remuneration*'—*ah, that's the Latin word for three farthings!*

Each farthing is worth one fourth of a penny.

Three farthings: 'remuneration.' He imagines uses for of his new word: '*What's the price of*

this inkle?—‘*One penny.*’—‘*No, I’ll give you a remuneration.*’ *Why, that carries it!* he thinks happily of his new haggling option.

Remuneration!—*why, it is a fairer name than ‘French crown!’*—the term for a venereal ailment, not the coin. *I will never buy and sell without this word!*

He looks up as Lord Berowne hurries toward him across the lawn.

“Oh, my good knave *Costard!* Exceedingly well met!”

“Pray you, sir, how much carnation ribbon may a man buy for a remuneration?”

“What is the remuneration?”

The man shows him. “Marry, sir, halfpenny and farthing.”

“Why, then, three farthings’ worth of silk,” says the nobleman.

Costard pockets his pittance. “I thank Your Worship! God be wi’ you!”

“Oh, *stay, slave; I must employ thee!*” says Berowne. “As thou wilt win my favour, good my knave, do one thing for me.”

“When would you have it done, sir?”

“This afternoon.”

“Well, I will do it, sir! Fare you well.”

Berowne frowns. “Thou knowest not what it *is.*”

“I *shall* know, sir, when I have done it.”

“Why, villain, thou must know *first!*”

But Costard has been paid to take the knight’s letter to Jaquenetta—and he wants to enjoy his new liberty with her. “I will come to Your Worship tomorrow morning.”

“Oh, but it must be done *this afternoon!*” insists the lordly lover. “Hark, slave, it is *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 sealed-up counsel!

“There’s thy guerdon,” he says, rewarding him with a shilling. “*Go!*”

Costard is delighted. “‘Garden,’ Oh, sweet ‘*garden!*’ Better than *remuneration*—‘*levenpence-farthing* better! Most sweet ‘*garden!*’

“I will *do* it, sir, *in print!*”—for certain. “Garden! Remuneration!” The prospering swain, with two letters now tucked inside his coat, goes to find a lady and a milkmaid.

Lord Berowne ruminates about the slender, pale, and dark-haired beauty from France.

He is amazed—and distressed. *Am I, forsooth, in love?*

I, who have been Love’s whipper!—the very beadle to a moody sigh!—a critic, nay, a night-watch constable!—a domineering pedant o’er the boy as whom no mortal is so magnificent!

This whimpled, 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 comparatives!

Oh, my little heart!—am I to be a corporal of his field, and wear his colours like a tumbler’s hoop? What, I?

I, love? I, sue? I, seek a wife—a woman that’s like a German clock: always in good repair, never out of frame—on watch every night, to see if it goes aright! —to monitor fidelity.

He thinks of his friends and their pledges. *Nay, to be perjured!*

And what is worst of all: among three to love the worst of all!—a wightly wanton with a velvet brow—with two pitch-balls stuck on her face for eyes!

Aye!—and by heaven, one who will do the deed though *Argus* —the hundred-eyed giant—were her eunuch and her guard! Attractiveness, he assumes, implies concupiscence—a notion he has relished in the past.

Am I to sigh for her? To watch for her? To pray for her?

Go to! It is the plague that Cupid will impose for my neglect of his dreadful, almighty little might!

Well, I will love, write, sigh, pray, sue and groan! Some men must love 'my lady'—and some a 'Joan'!—any common woman.

W as that the *king* who spurred his horse so hard against the steep uprising of the hill?" asks the princess. She has been watching the lords of Navarre as they ride nearby in the park.

Lord Boyet replies. "I know not, but I think it was he."

"Whoe'er he was, he showed a *mounting* mind," says the lady—much aware of the nobleman's vigorous thrusting forward in the saddle. "Well, lords, today we shall have our dispatch," she tells her courtly party glumly, of the Aquitaine documents' imminent arrival. "On Saturday we will return to France."

Ready to begin the sporting ritual of the hunt, she turns to a green-clad yeoman.

"Then, forester, my friend, where is the bush that we must stand and play the *murderer* in?"

"Hereby, upon the edge of yonder coppice—a stand where you may make the fairest shot," he tells her, assuming she has little, if any, ability as an archer.

She laughs. "I thank my beauty if I who *shoot* am fair, and thereupon thou speak'st the '*fairest*' shot."

The forester blushes. "Pardon me, madam, for I meant not so!"

"What, *what?*—first praise me, and then say *no*? Oh, short-lived pride! Not *fair*? Alack for woe!"

"Yes, madam!" cries the flustered forester, "*fair!*"

She feigns distress. "Nay, never *paint* me *now!* Where fair is not, *praise* cannot mend the brow." But then she laughs, and gives him a gold coin. "Here, my good glass,"—kindly mirror—"take this for *true*, though fair payment for false words be more than is due."

The forester bows. "Nothing but *fair* is that which *you* inherit," he says—and he means it.

"See, *see,*" the princess tells her ladies-in-waiting, Rosaline, Maria and Katherine, "*my* beauty will be saved by *merit!* Oh, heresy against 'fair,' fit for *these* days: a *giving* hand, though foul, shall have fair *praise!*"

"But come, the bow." She accepts her own well-polished weapon, usually aimed toward straw targets. "Now *Mercy* goes to *kill*; not shooting *well!*"—leaving the prey hurt and suffering—"is accounted ill. And wounding were beneath my skill, that, more for *praise* than *purpose*, is meant to kill." They are not hunting to obtain food.

"As I for praise alone now seek to spill the poor deer's blood, my heart means no ill. Thus will I save my credit in the shoot: by not wounding; pity would not let me do't."

She sighs, resigned to the royal obligation to join in—excel at—the lethal sport. "Beyond question, so it is, sometimes, that glory grows guilty of detested crimes, when—for *fame's* sake, for praise of *outward* part—we bend not to the working of the *heart!*"

Boyet challenges: "Do not *curst* wives"—*shrews*—"hold their self-sovereignty only for *praise's* sake, when they strive to be lords o'er their lords?"

The princess laughs. "*Only* for praise! And praise we may *accord* to any lady that subdues a lord!"

Boyet sees Costard approaching across the broad green lawn. "Here comes a member of the *commonwealth.*"

"*God-dig-you-den*, all!" is the rustic *good-evening* of the uncouth youth. "Pray you, which is the head lady?"

"Thou shalt know her, fellow," says the princess, "by the rest, that *have* no heads."

"Which is the *greatest* lady, the *highest?*"

"The thickest, and the tallest."

Costard regards her, then glances at her younger companions. "The thickest and the tallest.... It is *so*; truth is truth. If your *waist*, mistress, were as slender as my *wit*, one o' *these* maids' girdles for *your* waist should be fit.

“Are not you the chief woman?—you are the thickest here.”

Thick can also mean *dense*, and the princess ignores Lord Boyet’s not-quite-suppressed laugh as he discreetly turns away. “What’s your will, sir?” she asks Costard sharply, “what’s your will?”

“I have a letter from Monsieur Berowne to one *Lady Rosaline*.”

The princess feigns delight: “*Oh*, thy letter, thy *letter!*” she cries, reaching for it. “He’s a *good friend of mine!* Stand aside, good bearer,” she tells Costard, unfolding the paper. The youth bows, and walks out of earshot. She hands the letter to her chief advisor. “Boyet, you can *carve*—break ope this capon!”—a delicious delicacy for teasing Rosaline.

Boyet replies in kind: “I am bound to *serve*.” But then he sees the name on the missive. “This letter is mistook; it importeth no one here. It is writ ‘To Jaquenetta.’”

The princess notes Rosaline’s disappointment, but she craves more agreeable amusement than loosing arrows at innocent animals. “*We* will read it, I swear!” says she, eyes twinkling merrily. “Break the neck of the wax,” she commands, motioning for the other ladies to come closer, “and everyone give ear!”

Boyet reads aloud the elaborately amatory asseverations of Señor Don Adriano de Armado:

“By *heaven*, that thou art *fair* is most *infallible*; *true* that thou art *beauteous*; *truth itself* that thou art *lovely!* O more *fairer* than fair, *beautiful* than beauteous, *truer* than Truth, have *commiseration* on thy heroical vassal!

“The *magnanimous* and most illustre *King Cophetua* set eye upon the pernicious and indubitate *beggar Zenelophon*; and he it was that might rightly say, “*Veni, vidi, vici,*” which—to annothanize in the vulgar—oh, base and obscure vulgar!—*videlicet*: he came, saw, and *overcame!*

“He came, *one*; saw *two*; overcame, *three*. *Who* came? The *king!* *Why* did he come? To *see!* *Why* did he see? To *overcome!* To *whom* came he? To the beggar. What *saw* he? The beggar. *Who overcame* he? *The beggar!*

“The conclusion is: *victory!* On whose *side?* The *king’s!* The capture is *enriching* on whose *side?* *The beggar’s!*

“The catastrophe is: *a nuptial!* On whose *side?* The *king’s?* *No!*—on *both* in *one*, or *one* in *both!*

“I am the *king*—for so stands the comparison—*thou* the *beggar*; for so witnesseth thy lowliness. Shall I *command* thy love? I may. Shall I *enforce* thy love? I could. Shall I *entreat* thy love? I *will!*

“What shalt thou *exchange?* For rags?—*robes!* For tittles?—*titles!* For thyself?—*me!*

“Thus, expecting thy reply, I profane my *lips* on thy foot, my *eyes* on thy picture, and my *heart* on thy every part!

“Thine, in the dearest design of industry, *Don Adriano de Armado!*

“Thus dost thou hear the *Nemean lion* roar,
’Gainst *thee*, thou *lamb*, that standest as his prey!
Submissive fall his princely feet before,
And he from *forage* will incline to *play!*
But if thou *strive*, poor soul, what art thou *then?*
Food for his *rage*, *repasture* for his *den!*”

The princess is laughing so heartily that she has tears in her eyes. “What *plume of feathers* is he that indited *this* letter?” she gasps. “What *weather* cock—what *vane?* Did you ever hear *better?*”

Boyet smiles. “I am much deceived if I don’t recognize the *style!*”

“Else your memory *went bad*, going o’er it erewhile!” she laughs, wiping her eyes.

“This Armado is a Spaniard,” Lord Boyet tells her, “who keeps here in court: a *phantasime*, a *popinjay*, and one that makes *sport* for the prince and his bookmates.”

The princess waves to summon Costard. “Thou, fellow, a word.” When he reaches her, she

shows him Señor Armado's proposal. "Who gave thee this letter?"

"I told you: my lord."

"To whom shouldst thou give it?"

"From my lord to my lady."

The princess is patient with the man. "From *which* lord to *which* lady?"

"From my lord *Berowne*, a good master of mine, to a lady of France that he called *Rosaline*."

"Thou hast mistaken his letter." She returns the missive. "Here, sweet, put this away. 'Twill be *thine* for another day." She strides to her retinue, who are readying their horses, borrowed for the hunt; a groom stands waiting with her steed. "Come, lords, away!"

As the princess prepares to ride, Costard slides the letter back into his coat pocket.

Boyet is teasing Rosaline: "Who is the *suitor*? *Who is the suitor*?"

"Shall I teach you to know?" she asks coyly, as Costard approaches them.

"*Aye*, my continent of beauty!"

"Why, she that *bears the bow*," says Rosaline—as if he'd asked about *the shooter*. "Finely *sent off*!"—*a good shot*, she adds, commending her own jest.

Boyet laughs. "My lady goes to *kill horns*," he replies. "But *if thou marry*, hang me by the neck if *horns*"—symbols of the cuckolded husband—"that year miscarry!"

"Finely *put on*!" he adds.

Rosaline laughs, too. "Well, then *I* am the shooter!"

"And who is your '*deer*'?"

"If we choose by the *horns*"—on a buck, the bigger the better—"yourself come not *near*!"

Rosaline warns. "*Finely* put on, *indeed*!" she crows.

Lady Maria laughs at them both. "You still *wrangle* with her, Boyet, while she *strikes at the brow*!"—where horns grow.

"But she herself is hit *lower*!" says Boyet provocatively. "Have I *hit* her *now*?"—scored.

Rosaline, eyes flashing, asks, "Shall I *come* upon thee with an old saying that was a *man* when King Pepin of France"—Charlemagne's father—"was a little *boy*, as touching on '*hit it*'?"

Boyet shrugs. "If I may *answer* thee with one as old, that was a *woman* when Queen Guinevere of Britain was a little *wench*, as touching on '*hit it*.'"

Rosaline sings a lyric: "'*Thou* canst not *hit it*, hit it, hit it, *Thou* canst not *hit it*, my good man!'"

Sings Boyet, "'If I cannot, cannot, cannot, If I cannot, *another can*!'"—suggesting, too, *another butt*.

Lady Rosaline waves Boyet away. Still chuckling at his retort, she takes Lady Katherine by the hand, and they go to join the hunting party.

Costard gapes in amazement. "By my troth, most *pleasant*!—how both did fit it!" he says to Lady Maria.

"A mark *marvellous* well-shot," says she, "for they *both* did hit it!"

Cries Boyet, "A *mark*!" The word for *target* is also a rude term for *pudenda*. "Oh, *mark* but that mark! '*A mark*,' says my lady!" he laughs. "Let the mark have a *prick* in't!—to *mete*, as it may be!" A shooter, by comparing the size of the distant wooden peg to the weapon's grip, can *mete*, gauge, distance.

"Not with a *bow* hand," laughs Maria. "I' faith, *your* hand is out!"—its private use revealed.

Costard can grasp that. "Indeed, he must shoot *nearer*, or he'll ne'er hit the clout!"—cloth at the target's center.

Boyet claps a hand on his shoulder. "And if *my* hand be out, then belike *your* hand is in!"

"Then will she get the *upshot* by *cleaving to the pin*!"

Lady Maria blushes, but she can't help but laugh. "Come, *come*, your lips grow *fowl*!—you talk *greasily*!" she protests.

"She's too *hard* for you at *pricks*, sir!"—at archery, says Costard. "Challenge her to *bowl*!"

Boyet shakes his head. "I *fear* too much *rubbing*!" A *rub* is an impediment to balls' progress.

The hunters, he sees, are nearly ready to begin their ride together into the nearby woods. “Good night, my good owl!” he tells the wisacre, and he escorts Lady Maria to join the other nobles.

Costard considers Boyet. *By my soul, a swain—a most simple clown! Lord, Lord, how the ladies and I have put him down! O’ my troth, most sweet jests! Most laconic, vulgar wit, when it comes off so smoothly!—so obscenely, as it were—so fit!*

He contrasts the Frenchman with the Spaniard: *Armado, on th’ other hand—a most dainty man! To see him walk before a lady and to bear her fan! Then to see him kiss his hand, and how most sweetly he will swear!*

And his page, on t’ other hand—oh, heavens, that handful of wit!—is a most pathetic nit!

But the assessments are interrupted by the riders’ cries as their horses trot past, and by the insistent, blaring calls of the hunters’ horns. Costard spots Don Adriano, straggling along after the other riders—and he remembers the knight’s still-undelivered letter to Jaquenetta.

Costard hurries away, headed for the dairy barn behind the palace of Navarre.

Chapter Five Scholars and Gentlemen

Just before noon this Saturday, three village stalwarts have met as usual in the rectory. Today they have discussed the nature of the royal hunt—in particular, the one conducted earlier by nobles of Navarre and France.

“Very *reverend* sport, truly,” says the curate, Nathaniel, “and done in the testimony of a good conscience!” The princess’s clean kill this morning attested, he finds, to her piety.

“The deer was, as you know, *sanguis*, in blood,”—a female in heat, notes the schoolmaster, Holofernes, “ripe as the fruit which now hangeth like a jewel in the ear of *caelo*, the sky, the welkin, the heaven, and anon falleth like an apple on the face of *terra*, the soil, the land, the earth.”

“Truly, Master Holofernes, thy terms are sweetly *varied*—like a *scholar’s*, at least,” says Nathaniel, who aspires to poetry. “But, sir, I assure ye, it was a *buck* of the first head”—young, with small, budding horns, not antlers.

The teacher shakes his head. “Nathaniel, *haud credo*”—I doubt it.

“’Twas not a ‘*haud credo*,’” argues Constable Dull, “’twas a *pricket*”—a young buck.

“Most *barbarous* intimation!” says Holofernes, scoffing at the officer’s attempt to participate in elevated conversation, “only a kind of *insinuation*, as it were—in *via*, by way of explication; *facere*, as it were, *replication*; or rather, *ostentare*, to *show*, as it were, his *inclination*, after his undressed, unpolished, uneducated, unpruned, untrained, or rather, unlettered, or *ratherest*, unconfirmèd *fashion*—to assert again my ‘*haud credo*’ as a *deer*!”

Dull protests: “I said the deer was *not* a ‘*haud credo*’!—’twas a *pricket*!”

“*Twice*-said simplicity, *bis coctus*,” sighs the schoolman. “O thou monster *Ignorance*, how deformèd dost thou look!”

Says the minister condescendingly, after a glance at poor Dull, “Sir, he hath never fed on the dainties that are bred in a *book*. He hath not *eaten paper*, as it were; he hath not *drunk ink*! His *intellect* is not *replenished*; he is only an animal, only sensible in the duller parts.

“But barren *plants* are set before us so that we should be *thankful*—which we of *taste* and *feeling are*!—for those parts that do fructify in *us* more than in he. For, as it would ill become *me* to be vain, indiscreet, or a *fool*, so were there a *patch* set on learning were *he* seen in a *school*!”

“But *omne bene*,”—all’s well, “say I, being of an old father’s mind: ‘Many can *brook* the weather that love not the wind.’”

Wind indeed; Dull challenges his loquacious companions: “You two are book-men; can you tell me, by your wit, what was a month old at *Cain’s* birth that’s not *five weeks* old as yet?”

“*Dictynna*, Goodman Dull,” replies the schoolteacher, who is, of course, familiar with riddles. “*Dictynna*, Goodman Dull!”

“What is ‘*dicked in a...*’?”

“A title for *Phoebe*, for *Luna*—for the *moon*,” says Nathaniel, explaining the name.

The teacher answers Dull’s riddle: “The moon was a *month* old when Adam was no more,”—no older, “and raught not to *five* weeks,”—never shined for more than four weeks, “even when he came to *five-score*.”

Nathaniel confirms the chestnut’s accuracy: “The allusion holds in the exchange.”

Says Dull, “’*Tis true indeed* the collusion holds in the exchange,—”

“God comfort thy incapacity!” says Holofernes, feeling sorry for the official. “I said, the *allusion* holds in the exchange.”

“—and *I* say a *pollution* holds in the exchange!” cries the constable, “for the moon is never but a month old! *And I* say, beside, that *’twas a pricket* that the princess killed!”

Holofernes now perks up. “Nathaniel, will you hear an *extemporal epitaph* on the death of the deer? And to humour the ignorant, I’ll *call* the deer the princess killed a pricket.”

Nathaniel nods. “*Perge*, good Master Holofernes, *perge!*”—proceed. “So it shall please you to abrogate *scurrility*.”

The schoolmaster is ready. “I will somewhat affect a *letter*, for it augurs facility:

“‘The prayerful princess pierced and pricked a pretty, pleasing pricket! Some say a *sore*,’—a four-year buck—“but not *a-sore* till now *made* sore with *shooting!*”

“‘The dogs did yelp! Add ‘L’ to ‘sore’ and *sorrel* jumps from thicket!

“Whether *pricket* sore or else *sorrel*, the people fall *a-shooting!*”

“‘If sore be *score*, then ‘L’ plus score”—that Roman numeral with the word—“makes *fifty score* of sorrel! Of *one* sorrel I *an hundred* make, by adding but one *more* ‘L!’” The numeral LL is twice fifty.

The pleased pastor grasps and shakes his friend’s hand. “A *rare talent!*”

Dull comments to himself: *If a talon be a claw, look how he claws with the talon!*

Master Holofernes smiles modestly. “This *is* a gift that I have—simply a sample of foolish, extravagant spirits—full of forms, figures, shapes, objects, ideas, apprehensions, motions, revolutions. These are *begot* in the ventricle of memory, *nourished* in the womb of *pia mater*,”—the brain, “and *delivered* upon the mellowing of *occasion!*”

“But the gift is *good*, for those in whom it is acute, and I am *thankful* for it,” he assures the receptive Reverend Nathaniel.

“Sir, I praise the Lord for *you*,” says the minister, “and so may my *parishioners*; for their sons are well *tutored* by you—and their daughters profit very greatly under you!” he says, in complete innocence. “You are a good member of the commonwealth!” he adds—intending no gibe with *member*, a term for *penis*.

“*Mehercle*,”—by Hercules, “if their *sons* be ingenuous, they shall want no instruction!” says Holofernes; he means they’ll not lack teaching. “If their *daughters* be capable, I will put it to them!” he adds, as blameless as the pastor. “But *vir sapit qui pauca loquitur!*”—*he is thought wise who says little*, says the teacher, oblivious to the irony of his saying so.

He sees Jaquenetta at the door, with Costard in tow. “A soul *feminine* saluteth us.”

The milkmaid curtsies to Nathaniel. “God give you good morrow, Master Parson.”

“‘Master *Parson*,’ *quasi* ‘*parse one*,’” muses Holofernes, as the young woman comes into the house. “And if one *should* be parsed, which is the one?”

Costard makes a guess: “Marry, Master Schoolmaster, he that is likest to a *hogshead*”—a barrel, ready to be tapped.

“*Piercing* a hogshead.” Holofernes regards the rustic, and nods. “A good *lustre* of conception in a tuft of *earth*; *fire* enough from a *flint*; *pearl* enough for a *swine*. ’Tis pretty,” he concludes. “It is well.”

Jaquenetta hands Nathaniel a folded paper. “Good Master Parson, be so good as read me this

letter. It was given me by Costard, but sent me from *Don Armado*. I beseech you, read it.”

The cleric breaks the wax seal and begins to study the sheet.

Holofernes, peeved at not being offered the task, pointedly recites a line of poetry in Latin—one alluding to cud-chewing cows: “*Fauste, precor gelida quando pecus omne sub umbra ruminat*—” and so forth. *Ah*, good old *Mantuan*,” he sighs. “I may speak of thee as the traveller doth of Venice: ‘*Venetia, Venetia, chi non ti vede, non ti pretia*’—*who sees you not, praises you not*. ”O *Mantuan*, old *Mantuan*, who understandeth *thee* not?” His lines were not Vergil’s, though, but a passage most commonly cited in grammar-school texts.

The teacher craves acknowledgement, but the minister continues to read. Holofernes clears his throat, loudly; Nathaniel does not hear him. The teacher sings a few notes: “*Do, re, sol, la, mi, fa...*” He frowns at Nathaniel. “Under pardon, sir, what are the *contents*? Or rather, as Horace says in *his*,”—in the contents of *Ars Poetica*, ‘*What, my soul?—verses?*’”

“Aye, sir,” Nathaniel tells him, “and very learned!”

Holofernes raises an eyebrow. “Let me hear a staff, a stanze, a verse! *Lege, domine!*”—read, master.

Nathaniel reads aloud Berowne’s sonnet:

“If *loving* makes me *forsworn*, how can I swear to love?
I never faith could hold, if not to *beauty* vowed;
Though to myself forsworn, to *thee* I’ll faithful prove!
Thoughts that to me were *oaks*, to thee like *willows* bowed!
Study its bias leaves, and makes its book *thine eyes*,
Where all those *pleasures* live that *art* would comprehend!
If *knowledge* be the mark, to know *thee* shall suffice!
Well learned is that tongue that well can thee commend,
All ignorant that soul that sees thee without *wonder*—
Which is for me some praise, as *I* thy parts *admire!*
Thine eye Jove’s lightning bears, thy voice his dreadful thunder,
Which, not to anger bent, is *music* and *sweet* fire!
Celestial as thou art, *oh* pardon, love, this wrong,
That singeth heaven’s praise with such an earthly tongue!”

The schoolmaster disdains the cleric’s rendition. “You find not the *apostrophas*, and so miss the *accent!* Let me supervise the *canzonet*.” He looks over the poem. “Here are only *numbers*”—metrical beats—“ratified; as for the elegancy, facility, and *golden* cadence of poesy, *caret!*”—deficient.

“Ovidius Naso”—the poet Ovid—“was the man,” Holofernes opines. “And why, indeed, *Naso*, but for smelling out the odouriferous flowers of *fancy?*—the petals of *invention!* *Imitari* is nothing!—so doth the hound his master, the ape his keeper, the tired horse his rider!”

He turns to Jaquenetta. “But, *damosella* virgin, was this directed to *you?*”

Costard replies. “Aye, sir, from one of the king’s *foreign* lords.”

Holofernes doubts it. “I will overglance the superscript,” he says, and reads it aloud: “‘To the snow-white hand of the most beauteous *Lady Rosaline*.’ I will look again on the intellect of the letter, for the nomination of the party writing to the person written to....

“‘Your Ladyship’s in all desired employment, *Berowne*.’”

The teacher regards the preacher, both frowning. “Sir, this *Berowne* is one of the votaries with the king; and here he hath framed a letter to a sequent of the foreign queen’s, which accidentally, or by the way of progression, hath miscarried!”

Holofernes urges Jaquenetta, “Trip, my sweet, and deliver this paper into the royal hand of *the king!* It may concern him *much!* Stay not for thy compliments,”—thanking him, “I forgive thy duty! *Adieu!*”

“Good Costard, go with me!” says she, curtsying to the schoolmaster. “Sir, God save your

life!” She heads quickly for the door.

“Have with thee, my girl!” says Costard, following eagerly.

Nathaniel commends his friend. “Sir, you have done this in the fear of God, very *religiously*; and, as a certain Father saith—”

“Sir, tell me not of the Father; I do fear *colourable* colours,” Holofernes tells him; they have long debated issues of ministry and priesthood, truth and equivocation. “But to return to the verses: did they please you, Nathaniel?”

“Marvellous well,” says the pastor, “for the *penning!*” The antiquary can see little to admire in lines recently written by a libertine lord.

It is nearing noon. “I do dine today at the father’s of a certain pupil of mine,” Holofernes tells Nathaniel, “where, if before the repast it shall please you to gratify the table with a *grace*, I will, on my privilege I have with the parents of the foresaid child, our *pupil*, undertake your ‘*ben venuto*’—welcome. “There I will *prove* those verses to be very unlearnèd, savouring of neither poetry, wit, nor invention! I beseech your society.”

Nathaniel bows, accepting. “And I *thank you*, too!—for *society*, saith the text,”—Scripture, “is the happiness of life!”

“And, *certes*, the text most *infallibly* concludes it,” says the secular scholar dryly. He turns to Constable Dull. “Sir, I do invite *you*, too—you shall not say me nay!

“*Pauca verba!*”—*few words*, he pronounces—much too late.

“Away,” he says. “The gentles are at their *game*,”—sport, with a play on the animals hunted, “and we will to our *recreation!*”

Dappled with noon sunlight, the shady greenwood is nearly still now; palace grooms slowly walk the royal hunting parties’ sleek, wet horses to help them cool down, while the king and his French guests enjoy a repast.

But in a dell of the woods, beside a shallow brook, Lord Berowne sits alone, his back against the trunk of an old tree, turning his sharp cleverness inward.

The king, he is hunting the deer; I am coursing myself! They have pitched a toil; I am toiling in a pitch—pitch that defiles! Defile!—a foul word!

Well, ‘Set thee down, Sorrow!’ For so they say the fool said—and so say I; then I am a fool! Well provèd, wit!

By the Lord, this love is as mad as Ajax: it kills sheep!—it kills me!—I a sheep! Well proved again o’ my side!

I will not love! If I do, hang me! I’ faith, I will not!

Oh, but her eye!—by this light, but for her eye, I would not love her! And more for her two eyes!

Well, I do nothing in the world but lie, and lie in my throat! By heaven, I do love! And it hath taught me to rhyme and to be melancholy! he thinks, still amazed.

And here is part of my rhyming, here my melancholy! He opens a paper on which he has written. *Well, she hath one o’ my sonnets already: the fool sent it, the clown bore it, and the lady hath it! Sweet fool, sweeter clown, sweetest lady!*

He folds the new poem and puts into his coat.

By the world, I would not care a pin, if the other three were in! And just then he spots someone approaching among the trees. *Here comes one with a paper! God give him grace to groan!* Hoping to hear something revealing, Berowne climbs up quickly into concealment, and stands on a low but solid branch above, peeking around the big tree’s bole as the king enters the silent glade.

The sovereign, too, is distraught. “Ay, me!” he moans.

- Gazing down, Berowne is delighted: *Shot, by heaven! Proceed, sweet Cupid!—thou hast thumped him with thy bird-bolt under the left pap!*—at the heart. He watches as a folded sheet is opened. *In faith, secrets!*

The king looks at the paper, then tries reading aloud his piece, written for the princess:

“So sweet a kiss the golden *sun* gives not
To those fresh, morning drops upon the rose,
As *thine eye-beams*, when their fresh rays have smote
The dew of night that on my cheeks down flows!
Nor shines the silver moon one-half so bright
Through the transparent bosom of the deep,
As doth *thy* face through tears of mine give light!
Thou shinest in every tear that I do weep!
No drop but as a coach doth *carry thee!*—
So ridest thou, triumphing in my woe!
Do but behold the tears that swell in me,
And they thy glory through my grief will show!
Love not but *thyself*, and thou wilt keep
My tears for mirrors, and ever 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 of my griefs? he wonders—although he has already visited the lady in her tent once, shyly, and will do so again. *I’ll drop the paper*, he decides; she will know who must have left it.

He addresses the forest’s sheltering boughs. *Sweet leaves, shade folly!* He hears footsteps. *Who is he comes here?* Quickly, he hides behind some brush. *What—Longaville! And reading! Listen, ears....*

- Berowne, aloft, has been very pleased, watching the king. *Now, in thy likeness, one more fool appears!*

Lord Longaville, too, has sought solitude in the woods—and carries a letter. “*Ay, me,*” he sighs, “I am forsworn!”

- *Why, he comes in like a perjurer wearing papers!* laughs Berowne to himself; one so convicted could be sentenced to wear notes, pinned to his coat, correcting the lies.

- The king is gleeful as he ducks down behind the bushes. “*In love, I hope! Sweet fellowship in shame!*” he murmurs.

- Berowne heard. *One drunkard loves another of that name!*

Longaville sits beside an elm. “Am I the first that have been perjured so?” he asks himself pensively.

- Berowne replies, silently. *I could put thee in comfort:* not by two *that I know of! Thou makest up a triumvir, the tri-corner-cap of society, the shape of Love’s Tyburn, —public gallows— that hangs Simplicity!*

“I fear these stubborn lines lack power her to *move,*” frets Longaville, scanning the verse he has written. “O sweet *Maria, empress* of my love!”

He groans in frustration. “These numbers”—lines of poetry—“will I tear, and write in *prose!*”

- Berowne would object: *Oh, rhymes are sewn on wanton Cupid’s hose; disfigure not his shows!*

Longaville relents. “This same shall go.” He reads aloud, to reassure himself:

“Did not the heavenly rhetoric of *thine eye,*
’Gainst which the *world* cannot hold argument,
Persuade my heart to this false perjury?
Vows for *thee* broken deserve not punishment!
All women I forswore; but I will prove,
Thou being a *goddess*, I forswore not *thee!*
My vow was earthly, thou a *heavenly* love—

Thy grace, being gainèd, cures all *dis*grace in me!
Vows are but breath, and breath a vapour is;
Then thou, fair *sun*, which on my earth dost shine,
Exhale this vaporous vow—in *thee* it is!
If broken, then it is no fault of mine!
If by *me* broke, what fool is not so wise
As to lose an oath—to win a *paradise!*”

- Thinks Berowne, *This is the vain desire which makes flesh a deity, a green goose a goddess! Pure, pure idolatry! God amend us, God amend! We are much out o’ the way!*

Longaville has refolded his sonnet. “By whom shall I send this?” Startled by the snap of a trodden twig, he looks around as footsteps near. *Company!*

Stay, he decides; and he steps behind a dense clump of green.

- Berowne is mightily amused. *All hid!—all hid, as old infants play! Like a demigod, here I sit in the sky, and wretched fools’ secrets heedfully o’ereye!*

He sees yet another lover searching for seclusion. *More sacks to the mill! O heavens, I have my wish!* he notes gratefully, as a fourth nobleman wanders into the hollow. *Dumaine, transformed! Four woodcocks in a dish!*—baking together.

Lord Dumaine clutches a paper covered with poetry, pressing it to his heart. “O most *divine Kate!*”

- *O most profane coxcomb!* laughs Berowne to himself, watching his friend.

“By heaven, a *wonder* in a mortal eye!”

- *By earth, she’s corporeal! There you lie!*

“Her amber hair for a foul hath *amber* quoted!”—accusing it of imitating.

- *An amber-coloured raven was well noted!*

“As upright as the *cedar wild!*”

- *Stooped, I say! Her shoulder is with child!*—has a hump.

“As fair as day!”

- Berowne shrugs. *Aye, as but some days—when no sun dost shine!*

“Oh, that I had my wish!” moans Dumaine.

- Longaville sighs. *And I had mine!*

- The king prays. *And I mine too, good Lord!*

- Thinks Berowne, *Amen!*—*so long as I had mine!*—*is not that a good word?*

Dumaine paces on the leaf-littered ground, distracted. “I would forget her; but like *fever* she reigns in my blood, and will *remembered* be!”

- Berowne barely suppresses a laugh. *A fever in your blood!*—*why then incision would let her out in saucers! Sweet misprision!*

“Once more I’ll read the ode that I have writ,” says Dumaine, hopefully.

- *Once more I’ll mark how love can alter wit!* thinks Berowne.

Dumaine reads his poem, aloud:

““On a day—*alack* the day!—
Love, whose month is ever May,
Spied a blossom surpassingly fair
Playing in the wanton air.
Through the velvet leaves the wind,
All unseen, can passage find;
Thus the lover, sick to death,
Wishes *he* were the heavens’ breath!
‘Air,’ quoth he, ‘thy cheeks may blow;
I would that *I* might triumph so!’
But, *alack*, *my* hand is sworn

Ne'er to pluck thee from thy thorn!
A vow, *alack*, for youth *unmeet*—
Youth so apt to *pluck* a sweet!
Do not call it sin in me,
That I am forsworn for *thee!*—
Thou, for whom *Jove* would swear
His wife, Juno, but a shadow were,
And deny himself of being *Jove*—
Turning *mortal* for *thy* love!

“This will I send—and something else more plain, that shall express my true love’s fasting pain.” He folds the poem, carefully, and slides it into a pocket of his coat.

“Oh, would that the king, Berowne, and Longaville, were lovers, *too*,” he sighs. “Ills to *example* ill would from my forehead wipe the ‘perjurer’ note; for *none* offends where all *alike* do dote!”

Suddenly Longaville bursts from the brush. “Dumaine, *that* wish is *most uncharitable!*

“*You* may look *pale*, but *I* would *blush*, I know, to be o’erheard and taken napping so!”

But now the king steps boldly forward. “Come, sir, *you* blush!” he tells Longaville. “As his, *your* case is such!—you chide at him, offending *twice* as much!

“*You* do not love Maria,” he says with heavy sarcasm. “Longaville did never a *sonnet* for her sake compile, nor never lay his wreathèd arms athwart his loving bosom to keep down his heart!”

He regards the much-abashed noblemen. “I have been closely shrouded in this bush, and marked you both—and *for* you both did blush!

“I heard your guilty rhymes, observed your fashion, saw sighs reek from you, noted well your passion!

“*Ay, me!* says one; *O Jove!* the other cries; one, *her* hairs were *gold, crystal* the other’s eyes!

“*You* would for ‘*paradise*’ break faith and troth!” he tells Longaville. “And *Jove* for *your* love would revoke an oath!” he tells Dumaine.

The king shakes his head. “What will *Berowne* say, when that he shall hear faith so infringèd, which such *zeal* did swear? How he will *scorn!*—how he will spend his wit! How he will *triumph*, leap and *laugh* at it!

“For all the wealth that ever I did *see*,” says the king, “I would not have him know so much of *me!*”

Berowne swings down from the branch and comes around the tree trunk, startling all three. “Now step I forth to *whip hypocrisy!*” He strides to them, glowering. “Ah, good my liege, I pray thee, *pardon* me! Good heart, what grace hast *thou*, thus reproving these worms for loving, who art *most* in love?”—the highest in rank.

Berowne, too, can scourge with scorn. “*Your* eyes do make no coaches; in *your* tears there is no certain princess that appears; *you’ll* not be perjured—’tis a *hateful* thing! None but *minstrels* like of *sonneting!*

“But are you not *ashamed?*—nay, are you not, *all three of you!*—to be thus much o’ershot?”

He gestures: “You found *his* mote; the king *your* mote did see—but *I* a beam do find in *each of three!*

“Oh, what a scene of foolery have I seen!—of sighs, of groans, of sorrow and of grief! *Oh, me*, with what strict patience have I sat, to see a *king* transformèd to a gnat!—to see great *Hercules* whipping a gig,”—spinning a children’s top, “and profound *Solomon* turning a *jig!* And *Nestor*”—the ancient Greeks’ oldest and wisest sage—“play at push-pin with the boys, and critic *Timon*”—a famous misanthrope—“laugh at idle toys!

“Where lies thy *grief*, oh, tell me, good Dumaine? And gentle Longaville, where lies thy *pain*? And where my liege’s? All about the *breast!*”—in the heart. “A caudle, *ho!*”—a batch of sugared wine, used as medicine.

“Too *bitter* is thy jest!” says the downcast king—a complaint Berowne has often heard

before. "Are we betrayèd thus to thine over-view?"

"Not you to me, but *I* betrayed *by you!*" cries Berowne. "I, that am *honest!*—I, that hold it *sin* to break the vow I am engagèd in! *I* am betrayed, by keeping company with men like *you*, men of *inconstancy!*"

"When shall you see *me* write a thing in rhyme? Or groan for *love?* Or spend a minute's time in *pruning* me?"—trimming beard and hair. "When shall you hear that *I* will praise a hand, a foot, a face, an eye, a gait, a state, a brow, a breast, a waist, a leg, a limb?"

He stands erect, frowning in high indignation—and then he starts to bolt, having spotted a disquieting arrival.

"*Soft,*" cries the king, seizing his arm, "whither away so *fast?* A *true* man?—or a *thief* that gallops so!"

"I post *from* love!" claims Berowne. "Good lover, let me *go!*"

But the king 's grip is firm, as Jaquenetta and Costard hurry down the slope to the conclave.

The man bows; the woman curtseys, and says, "God bless the king!"

The monarch sees that she has a folded paper. "What present hast thou there?"

Costard blurts out, "Some certain *treason!*"

The king, grasping his sword-hilt, frowns warily at the commoners. "What makes Treason here?"

"Nay, it *makes* nothing, sir," says the youth.

The king calms. "If it *mar* nothing neither, the treason and you go in peace away together." He turns back to his fellow compact-breakers.

But Jaquenetta pushes Costard aside. "I beseech Your Grace, let this letter be *read!* Our parson misdoubts it—'twas *treason*, he said!"

"Berowne, read it over," the king tells the senior lord, handing him the paper. "Where hadst thou it?" the king asks Jaquenetta.

"From Costard."

The king asks him, "Where hadst *thou* it?"

The overawed swain gulps. "From Dun Adramadio, *Dun Adramadio!*"

"How *now!* What is *in* you?" cries the king, as Berowne rips the letter in half, and again. "Why dost thou tear it?"

"A toy, my liege, a *toy!*" Berowne assures him, dropping the pieces. "Your Grace needs not fear it."

"It did move *him* to passion," Longaville tells the others suspiciously, "and therefore let's *hear* it!"

Dumaine snatches up the fragments and examines one. "It is Berowne's writing—and here is his name!"

Berowne glares at Costard. "Oh, you whoreson *loggerhead!*—you were born to do me shame!" He faces the king. "Guilty, my lord, *guilty!* I confess, I confess!"

"What?" asks the king.

"That *you* three fools lacked *my* fool to make up mess!"—comprise a supper-table foursome. "*He, he, and you*, my liege, and *I* are pick-purses in love, and we deserve to die!

"Oh, dismiss this *audience,*" he says, motioning angrily at Costard, "and I shall tell you more."

Dumaine smirks. "*Now* the number is *evened!*"

"True, true; we are four," Berowne admits. "Will these turtledoves be *gone?*"

The king tells the milkmaid and the delinquent deliverer, "Hence, sirs; away!"

"*Walk aside* the *true* folk, and let the *traitor* stay!" grumbles Costard as they return to the dairy.

Berowne hurriedly pleads his case: "Sweet lords, sweet *lovers*, oh, let us embrace! As true are *we* as flesh and blood *can* be: the sea *will* ebb and flow, *heaven* show its face!—young *blood* doth not obey an old *decree!* We cannot cross the cause why we were *born*; therefore of all those

bonds *must* we be forsworn!”

“What, did these rent lines show some *love of thine?*” demands the king, examining the torn letter.

“*Did* they, quoth you?” says Berowne. He recites some of his own words:

“Who sees the heavenly Rosaline,
That—like rudest man of savage kind
At the first opening”—dawning—“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?”

The king frowns at “majesty”—royalty’s reserved appellation. “What *zeal*, what *fury* hath inspired *thee* now? *My* love, her *mistress*, is a gracious *moon*; she”—Rosaline—“an attending star, scarce seen *alight!*”

“*My* eyes are then *no* eyes—nor I *Berowne!*” cries that smitten lord. “Oh, but for *my* love, day would turn to *night!* Of all complexions, the cullèd *sovereignty* do meet, as at a fair, in her fair cheek, where several worthies make one dignity!—where nothing is lacking that *want itself* doth seek!

“Lend me the flourish of all *gentle* tongues....

“*Fie*, painted *rhetoric!*—oh, *she* needs it not! To *things for sale* a *seller’s* praise belongs; she *surpasses* praise!—then praise, too short, doth *blot!*”

“A withered hermit, five-score *winters* worn, might shake off *fifty*,”—half of them, “looking in her eye! *Beauty* doth varnish age as if *new-born*, and gives the *crutch* the *cradle’s* infancy! Oh, ’tis the *sun* that maketh *all* things shine!”

The king scowls. “By heaven, *thy* love”—in comparison to his luminous princess—“is black as *ebony!*”

“Is ebony like *her?*” cries Berowne. “O wood *divine!*—a *wife* of such wood were felicity! Oh, who cannot give it in *oath?*—where is a Book, so that I may *swear!* Beauty doth *beauty* lack, if she learn not from *her* eye how to look! No face is *fair* that is not fully so *black!*”

“Oh, *paradox!*” says the king scornfully. “Black is the badge of *hell*, the hue of *dungeons*, and the shoal *at night*—but *Beauty’s* crest”—the sun—“becomes the *heavens* well!”

“Devils soonest *tempt* by resembling spirits of *light*,” counters Berowne. “Oh, if in *black* my lady’s brows be decked, it *mourns* that painting and usurping hair”—cosmetics and dye—“should ravish doters with a *false* aspect! And therefore is she born to *make black fair!*”

He plunges on recklessly: “*Her* favour”—face—“*turns* the fashion of the days, for native blood is accounted *painting* now!—and therefore *red* that would avoid dispraise paints itself *black*, to imitate her brow!”

Dumaine, doubting that lampblack will replace rouge, laughs. “To look like her are *chimney-sweepers* black!”

“And since *her* time are colliers counted *bright!*” cries Longaville.

“And *shadows* of their sweet complexion *crow!*” adds the king.

“Dark needs no *candles* now,” laughs Dumaine, “for dark is *light!*”

Berowne retorts, “*Your* mistresses dare never come out in *rain* for fear their colours should be washed away!”

“’Twere good *yours* did,” says the king, “for, sir, to tell you plain, I’ll find *fairer* a face *not washèd* today!”

Even Berowne laughs, but he remains defiant. “I’ll prove her fair, or talk till *Doomsday* here!”

“No *devil* will fright thee *then* so much as *she!*” laughs the king.

Dumaine shakes his head in mock dismay. "I never knew man to hold vile stuff so dear!"

Longaville points to a black shoe. "Look, *here's* thy love: my *foot* and her *face* see!"

But Berowne only laughs: "Oh, if the streets were *pavèd* with *thine eyes*, her *feet* were much too dainty on such to tread!"

"*Oh, vile!*" cries Dumaine, appalled by their imagery. But he gives a rascally grin. "Then, as she goes, what *upward* lies that street would *see*, as she walkèd overhead!"

All of the noblemen now must laugh.

The king returns to their shared problem. "But what of *this*: are we not all *in love*?"

Says Berowne, "Nothing's so *sure*—and thereby all *forsworn*."

"Then *leave this chatter!*" The king turns to the most ingenious lord. "And good Berowne, now *prove* our loving to be *lawful*, and our faith not torn!"

Dumaine seconds: "Aye!—marry, there's *some* flattery for this evil!"

Longaville concurs." Or some authority how to *proceed*—some trick, some quillet, how to cheat the Devil!"

"Some *salve* for *perjury*," says Dumaine dourly.

Berowne nods. "'Tis more than needed! *Have at you*, then, infection's *men-at-arms!*" He paces, thinking. "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!*

"Now, as for not looking on a woman's face: you have in that forsworn *the use of eyes!*—and forsworn *study* too—the *causer* of your vow! For where is any *author* in the world that teaches *Beauty* as doth a *woman's eye*?

"From women's *eyes* this doctrine I derive: *they* are the ground, the books—the *academies* from whence doth spring the *true* Promethean fire! And as you have vowed to *study*, lords, *in that* each of you has *forsworn his book!*—can you merely *dream*, not *pore* and thereon *look*?

"For when would you, my lord—or you, or you—in leaden contemplation have found such *fiery* figures,"—inspiring ideas, "the ground of study's *excellence*, as the prompting eyes of a *woman's face*, *Beauty's tutors*, have enriched you with?"

He faces the others with rising enthusiasm. "Why, universal plodding *poisons!*—*pents up* the nimble *spirits* in the arteries, just as motion of long-enduring action tires the sinewy vigour of the traveller!

"Learning is but an *adjunct* to our selves—and where *we* are, our learning likewise is! Then when ourselves we see in *ladies' eyes*, *with* ourselves do we not likewise see our *learning* there?"

"Other, *slow arts* keep entirely to the *brain*—and, therefore finding *barren* practises, scarce show a *harvest* for their heavy toil!

"But *love*, first learnèd in a lady's eyes, lives not immured in the brain alone, but within the motion of *all* elements!—it courses as swiftly as thought in *every* power, and gives to every power a *doubled* power, above their functions and their offices! It adds a *precious* seeing to the eye: a lover's eyes will gaze an *eagle* blind! A *lover's ear* will hear the lowest sound when the *most suspicious* head is deaf to theft!

"Love's *feeling* is more soft and sensitive than are the tender horns of *cockled snails*; love's *dainty* tongue proves Bacchus *gross* in taste! As for *valour*, is not love a *Hercules*? The Hesperides' *ever-climbing trees of golden apples!*—subtle as a *sphinx!*—and sweet and musical as bright *Apollo's lute*, strung with his hair!

"And when *lovers* speak, the voices of all the gods make *heaven* calm with their *harmony!*

"Never durst poet touch a pen to write, til its ink were tempered with *love's sighs!* Ah, *then* his lines would ravish *savage ears*, and plant in *tyrants* mild *humility!*

"Then *fools* were you, these women to forswear—or *keeping* what is sworn, you will *prove* fools!

"For the sake of *wisdom*, a word that *all men love*—or for *love's* sake, a word that loves *all men*—or for the sake of *men*, the *authors* of these women—or *women's* sake, *by* whom we men

are men!—let us at once *lose* our oaths, to find *ourselves!*—else *keeping* our oaths we *lose* ourselves!

“It is *religious* to be *thus* forsworn!” he proclaims, “for *charity itself* fulfills *God’s* law—and who can sever *love* from charity?”—sharing.

The king, well satisfied, applauds happily, along with the others. “*Saint* Cupid, then! And, soldiers, *to the field!*”

They will conquer the women. “Advance your *standards!*”—flags and banners, “and *upon* them, lords!” cries Berowne. “Pell-mell, *down* with them!” he adds, exultantly—and without bawdy intent.

Still, he can picture the smart and sharp-tongued Lady Rosaline. “But be advised that in conflict you *first get the sun of them!*” Ladies are best approached when they face into the sun, whose light can dazzle even their much-extolled eyes.

“Now to *plain* dealing; *lay by* these glozes”—useful notions, demands Longaville. “Shall we resolve to *woo* these girls of France?”

“And *win* them too!” cries the king. “Therefore let us devise some *entertainment* for them in the park!”

“First, from their tents let us *conduct* them thither,” says Berowne, “then *homeward* every man attach the hand of his fair mistress!

“In the afternoon we will *solace* them with some strange pastime!—such as the shortness of the time can shape. Let *revels* and *dances*, *masques* and *merry hours* forerun each fair lover, strewing her way with flowers!”

“Away, *away!*” commands the king. “No time shall be omitted that will be betime, and may by us be fitted!”

“*Along!*” cries Berowne, “*along!*”

Still, as they go, he frets: *Sowed* cockleshell *reaps* no corn, and *Justice* always *whirls* in equal *measure*. *Light wenches* may *prove* *plagues* to men forsworn....

He shrugs, and, again exuberant, hurries through the woods. *If so, our copper* buys no better *treasure!*

Chapter Six Would-be Worthies

S *atis quod sufficit*—satisfied is enough, says Master Holofernes as he and his two acolytes return to the rectory after their free noon meal in town.

“I praise God for you, sir!” says the good Pastor Nathaniel. “Your reasons at dinner have been sharp and pleasant: sententious without *scurrility*, witty without *affectation*, audacious without *impudency*, *learnèd* without *opinion*, and unusual without *heresy*.”

He shakes his head, recalling a contrasting experience. “I did converse this *quondam* day”—yesterday—“with a companion of the king’s, who is intitulèd, nominated, or callèd Don Adriano de Armado.”

Holofernes makes a face. “*Novi hominem tanquam te!*”—*I perceive him as well as I do you*. “His manner is *lofty*, his discourse *peremptory*, his tongue *filèd*, his eye *ambitious*, his gait *majestical*—and his general behavior *vain*, *ridiculous*, and *thrasonical!* He is too *pickèd*, too *spruce*, too *affected*, too *odd*—as it were, too *peregrinate*, I may call it!”

“A most *singular* and *choice* epithet!” declares Nathaniel happily. He pulls a ledger book from his desk; in its columns are noted his rhetorical finds and their usages, and soon he has added *peregrinate*, paired with *too widely discursive*.

Holofernes continues: “He draweth out the *thread* of his verbosity finer than the *staple* of his *argument!* I abhor such fanatical *phantasimes*, such insociable and *point-devise*”—overly precise—“companions, such *rackers* of orthography as to speak ‘dout’—sans *b*, when he should

say 'dowbt'—'det' when he should pronounce *deb't*—*d, e, b, t!*—not *d, e, t!* He 'clepeth a *calf*, 'caf'; *half*, 'haf'; *neighbour*, *vocatur* 'nay-bore'—*nei-gh* abbreviated to 'nay!'

"This is abominable!—which *he* would call 'abominable!' It insinuateth of *infamie!*—*ne intelligis, domine?*"—*do you understand?* "Making one *frantic, lunatic!*"

"*Laus Deo, bon intelligo!*"—*Praise God, I understand well*, Nathaniel assures him.

"'Bone!'" says Holofernes, aghast at the minister's French-sounding mispronunciation. "'Bon,' for *bene*, Priscian?" he asks Nathaniel, recalling that antique scholar of Latin. "A little scratched," he says, forgivingly. "'Twill serve," he tells the silent, aptly-yclept Dull.

Nathaniel looks toward the open doorway. "*Videsne quis venit?*"—Do you see who's coming?

"*Video, et gaudeo*"—*I see, and I'm delighted*, says Holofernes dryly.

Don Adriano de Armado, knight replete, with cloak, plumed hat and rapier, is followed by his page and Costard. "*Chirrah!*"—Hail! cries the knight.

As he approaches, Holofernes asks Nathaniel, softly, "*Quare 'chirrah,' not 'sirrah'?*"

Don Adriano is smiling. "Men of peace, *well encountered!*"

"Most military sir, *salutation,*" replies Holofernes.

Moth glances at Costard as they come in behind the Spaniard. "They have been at a great feast of languages—and stolen the *scraps.*"

Costard nods. "Oh, they have long lived off the alms-basket of *words!*" He grins down at the boy. "I marvel thy master hath not eaten *thee* for a word!—for thou art not so long up to the head as *honorificabilitudinitatibus!* Thou art easier swallowed than a flap-dragon!"—a raisin nipped from a spoonful of flaming brandy.

Moth punches his arm. "*Peace!* The peal begins...." He is eager to hear the pedants' ringing exchanges.

Don Adriano knows the constable, and Nathaniel wears pastoral garb; the knight assumes that Holofernes is the teacher. "Monsieur, are you not lettered?" he asks politely.

"Yes, *yes,*" Moth tells him, "he teaches boys the hornbook"—pupils' printed examples, protected by a thin sheet of translucent horn tacked onto a small board. The page steps forward to challenge the schoolmaster. "What is '*a, b,*' spelt backward, with *horn* on its head?"

Holofernes replies, comfortably, "'Ba,' *pueritia,*"—child, "with a horn added."

"'Baa!' laughs Moth, "most silly *sheep* with a horn!" He looks at Costard. "You hear *his* learning!"

Holofernes frowns. "*Quis, quis?*"—who? "Who is a *sheep*, thou *consonant!*"—shorter than a vowel, he demands.

Moth is ready: "The *third* of the five vowels, if *you* repeat them," he answers, "or the *fifth*, if I."

"I will repeat them," insists Holofernes with dignity. "*A, e, i—*"

"The *sheep!*" cries Moth, pointing at the teacher upon hearing *I*. "The other two conclude it: *o, u!*"—Oh, *you!*"

Don Adriano is delighted. "Now by the salty wave of the *Mediterranean*, a *sweet* touch!—a *venue* of *wit!* *Snip, snap!*—quick, and *home!* It rejoiceth my *intellect: true wit!*"

"Offered by a child to an old man who is *wit-old!*" adds Moth. A *wittold* is an accepting cuckold.

Holofernes unwittingly supports the jest by missing it, looking instead for a rhetorical device. "What is the figure? What is the *figure?*"

"*Horns!*" laughs Moth.

Holofernes scoffs. "Thou disputest like an infant! *Go, whip thy gig!*"—spin a whirligig.

The boy retorts, "Lend me your *horn* to *make* one, and I will whip about *circum circa,*"—proclaim everywhere, "your *infamy:* the gig of a *cuckold's* horn!"

Costard laughs himself into coughing. "If I had but *one penny* in the *world,*" he tells Moth, red-faced with mirth, "*thou* shouldst have it to buy *gingerbread!* Hold," he says, fishing a coin

from his pocket, “there is the very remuneration I had of my master, thou *halfpenny purse* of wit, thou *pigeon-egg* of discretion!

“Oh, if the heavens were so pleased that thou wert but *my* bastard, what a joyful father wouldst thou make me! *Go to!* Thou hast it *ad dunghill*—‘at the fingers’ ends,’ as they say!”

“Oh, I smell *false* Latin!” chides Holofernes. “‘Dunghill’ for *unguem!*”—fingernail.

But Don Adriano de Armado has come to the teacher for a reason. “Arts-man, re-*ambulate*,” he says, stepping forward. “*We* will be singled from the *barbarous*. Do you not *educate youth*, at the charge-house on the top of the mountain?”

“Or *mons*—the *hill*,” amends Holofernes.

“As for the mountain, *your* sweet pleasure.”

“*I do*, sans question.”

Don Adriano continues. “Sir, it is the *king’s* most sweet pleasure and affection to congratulate the *princess* at her pavilion in the posteriors of this day—which the rude multitude call ‘the afternoon.’”

Holofernes nods to the similarly supercilious foreigner. “The *posterior* of the day, most generous sir, is *liable, congruent* and *measurable* as the *after noon*. The word is well *cullèd*, chosen!—sweet and *apt*, I do assure you, sir; I do *assure*.”

“Sir, I do assure *ye*, the king is a noble gentleman, and my *familiar*—a very good *friend*,” says Don Adriano. “As for what is *inward* between *us*,”—to be kept secret, “let it pass.”

He frowns; in the warm room, the teacher has removed his hat—an unacceptable breach of decorum, in the knight’s view. “I do beseech thee, remember thy *courtesy*; I beseech thee, apparel thy head.

“Among other *important* and *most serious* designs—and indeed of *great import*, too—” He pauses, implying deep discretion. “But let that pass. For I must tell thee: by the *world*,”—he would avoid vain mention of God, “sometimes it will please his grace to lean upon my poor *shoulder*, and, with his royal finger thus,”—he twirls his whiskers—“dally with my excrement—with my *mustachio*... But, sweet heart, let that pass.”

He sees doubt on the townsmen’s faces. “*By the world*, I recount no *fable!* Some certain special honours it pleaseth his greatness to impart to *Armado*—a *soldier*, a man of *travel* that hath *seen the world!*—but let that pass.”

He wants to entice Holofernes with an opportunity. “The very *all of all* is—but, sweet heart, I do implore *secrecy!*—that the king would have me present the princess, sweet chuck, with some delightful *ostentation*, or show—or *pageant*, or *antic*, or *firework!*

“Now, understanding that the curate and your sweet self are good at such eruptions and sudden *breakings-out of mirth*, as it were, I have *acquainted* you withal, to the end of craving *your assistance!*”

Holofernes’ face lights up. “You shall present before her ‘*The Nine Worthies!*’ Sir, as concerning some *entertainment of time*, some *show* in the posterior of this day, to be rendered by *our* assistance”—he, too, adopts the royal usage—“and *this* most gallant, illustrious, and learned gentleman’s,” he says with a nod to Nathaniel, “at the *king’s* command before the *princess*, I say none is so fit to present as ‘The Nine Worthies!’”

Nathaniel is staring. “Where will you find men *worthy* enough to present *them?*”

Holofernes proposes players for the roles. “*Joshua*, yourself; this gallant gentleman, *Judas Maccabaeus*; this swain, because of his great limb, or *joint*, shall pass as *Pompey the Great*; the page, *Hercules*—”

“*Pardon*, sir; *error!*” Don Adriano must protest: “He is not *quantity* enough for the end of *that* Worthy’s *club!* He is not so big as his *thumb!*”

Holofernes flushes. “Shall I have audience? He shall present Hercules *in minority*”—as a child. “His entry and exit shall be strangling a snake, and I will have an apology”—an introductory speech—“for that purpose.”

As it’s often used by others, *strangling a snake* has a crude meaning. “An *excellent* device,”

says Moth sourly. “If any of the audience *hiss*, you may cry, ‘Well *done*, Hercules!—how thou *crushest* thy snake!’ That is the way to make an *offence gracious*—though few have the grace to *do it!*”

Asks Don Adriano, “And for the rest of the Worthies?”

“I will play three *myself*,” Holofernes offers modestly.

“*Thrice-worthy gentleman!*” says Moth—using the standard compliment dryly, with a glance at Costard.

But Don Adriano is clearly pleased. “Shall I tell you a thing?”

“We attend,” nods Holofernes.

Cries the knight, delighted: “We will have, if this fadge not, *an antique!*” He means a *classical production*. “I beseech you, *follow*.” He will lead them all into the village to obtain festive supplies; he heads toward the door.

“*Via*, Goodman Dull!” says Holofernes. “Thou hast spoken no word all this while.”

“Nor understood none neither, sir,” the constable confesses.

“Along!” cries the tutor eagerly, rubbing his hands together in anticipation of the pageant. “We will *employ* thee!”

Dull considers. “I’ll be one in a *dance* or so... or I will play on the tabour for the Worthies, and let *them* dance on the hay.”

Holofernes claps an arm around his shoulders. “*Most* dull, honest Dull!”

Leading Nathaniel out of the rectory, he cries, “To our sport, *away!*”

Beauties of the French court—Katherine, Rosaline, and Maria—have joined her royal highness this afternoon, in the bright pavilion beside their tents. Gifts have just been delivered.

“Sweet hearts, we shall be *rich* ere we depart, if fairings come thus plentifully in!” the princess wryly tells the ladies-in-waiting. She displays a silver-rimmed brooch, its ivory center painted with a miniature portrait. “A lady walled about with *diamonds*—look you what *I* have, from the loving *king!*”

“Madame, came nothing else along with that?” asks Lady Rosaline. But her experience is that men—whose full intent may be unclear even to them—prefer customary gestures to specific expression.

“Nothing but *this*.” The princess unfolds a letter. “Yes,” she laughs, “as much *love in rhyme* as could be crammed onto a sheet of paper!—write on both sides of the leaf, margin and all, such that he was fain to *seal over* Cupid’s name!”

“That was a way to make his godhead *wax*,”—a play on *grow*, “for he hath been five thousand years a *boy*,” quips Rosaline.

“Aye, and a wickedly unlucky *hangman*, too!” adds Lady Katherine; the winged Roman god of love is also considered a sort of executioner, for his ending of the carefree life.

“You’ll ne’er be friends with *him*,” says Rosaline. “He killed your sister!”

“He made her *melancholy*, sad and *heavy*; and so she died,” says Kate. Her eyes flash a mischievous glance at Rosaline. “Had she been *light*, like *you*—of such a merry, nimble, stirring spirit!—she might ha’ been a *grandam* ere she died! And *so may you*, for a light heart lives long!”

Rosaline’s eyes narrow; *light* may not be a compliment. “What’s your *dark meaning*, mouse, of this *light word?*”

Blonde Katherine smiles smugly. “A *light* condition in a beauty *dark!*”

Raven-tressed Rosaline pretends to be piqued. “We need *more* light to find your *mean-ing* out!”

“You’ll *mar* the light by *taking it in snuff!*”—taking offense. “Therefore I’ll darkly end the matter,” laughs Katherine.

“So that what *you* do, you’ll always do *in the dark!*” says Rosaline.

“*You* needn’t do so, for you are a *light* wench!”

Rosaline tells the other noblewoman. “Indeed I *weigh* not as you—and *therefore* am light!” Katherine feigns a frown “You weigh me not?”—*do not value me*. “Oh, that’s you *care* not for me!”

“*Great* reason,” says Rosaline, eyeing her hips, “for ‘past *cure* is ever past *care!*’”

The princess laughs at their tennis-like exchange of twitting: “Well bandied, *both*; a set of wit well played! But Rosaline, you have a favour too! Who sent it?—and what is it?”

“I would *you* knew,” says Rosaline, who has no patience with male diffidence in speaking, or voluptuousness in writing. “If my face were but as great as yours, my *favour* were as fair.” Favour can mean both *gift* and *visage*. “Be witness to *this*.” From a pocket she draws a golden brooch. “Aye, and I have *verses* too!—I thank Berowne, their *numbers* true”—a dig; the meter is proper, if not the poet’s sentiments. “And, were the numbering”—enumeration—“*too*, I were the fairest goddess on the ground! I am compared to *twenty thousand* ‘fairs!’

“Oh, he hath *drawn my picture* in his letter!” she says dryly, pocketing the brooch and withdrawing a paper. She unfolds it.

“Anything you like?” asks the princess.

“Much in the *letters*,”—the calligraphy, “nothing in the praise.”

Says the princess, “Beauteous as *ink!* A good conclusion!”

Katherine laughs, too, and gibes, “Fair as the *text* in a *copy-book!*”—dark as a primer’s print.

Rosaline lifts her hands in feigned defense against schooling. “Beware!—*pencils, ho!* Oh that your face were not so full of *Os!*”—blemishes marking the skin in red, as are a calendar’s special days. “Let me not die your debtor, my *golden Sunday*,” she says, “my *red letter!*”

“A *pox* on *that* jest!” laughs the princess, “and I beshrew all *shrews!*”

“But, Katherine, what was sent to *you*, from fair Dumaine?”

“Madam, this glove,” says she, pulling an embroidered one, bejeweled and perfumed, from the pink band at her waist.

“Did he not send you *twain?*”

“Yes, madam—and, moreover, some *thousand verses* of a *faithful lover*—a huge *translation* compiled vilely into *Hypocrisy!*—profound *duplicity!*” The language of hyperbole, however pretty, is insincere—and unflattering, in that it does not truly pertain.

They all look, now, at Lady Maria. She shows them her letter. “This, and these pearls”—she holds up an armlet—“to me sent *Long-a-vile!* The letter is too long by *half a mile!*”

The princess glances at the pages’ crowded handwriting. “*No less*, I think!” she says, as Katherine and Rosaline look at the lustrous bracelet, tautly held around Maria’s clasped hands.

The princess grins. “Dost thou not wish, at heart, the *chain* were *longer*, and the letter shorter?”

“*Aye*,” laughs Maria, “or I would these hands might *never* part!”

The princess touches the pinned-on flowers sent by her suitor; the others have received blossoms as well. “We are not wise girls,” she says, a bit defensively, “to mock our lovers so....”

“*They* are worse!—fools to *purchase* mocking so!” protests Rosaline. “That same Berowne I’ll *torture* ere I go! Oh, if I knew he were nearby but a *week!* How I would make him fawn, and beg and seek!—and await the *season*,”—opportune moment, “observe the *times!*—and spend his prodigal wits in *bootless rhymes!*—and shape his service wholly to my tests—and make him proud to make *me* proud—who *jests!*”

“So pertly *taunting* would I o’ersway his state that he should be my *fool*, and I his *Fate!*”

The princess nods. “None is so *surely* caught when he is catchèd as *wit* turned fool! Folly in *wisdom* hatchèd hath wisdom’s warrant, and the help of *school*—and wit’s own grace, to grace a *learnèd* fool!”

Adds Rosaline, “The blood of *youth* burns not with such excess as *gravity*’s revolt to wantonness!”

Adds Maria, “Folly in fools bears not so strong a note as *foolery* in the *wise*, when wit doth *dote*, since all the *power* thereof it doth apply to prove by wit the worth of *simplicity!*”

The princess sees the advisor. “Here comes Boyet—and *mirth* is in his face....”

“Oh, I am *stabbed with laughter!*” cries Lord Boyet, holding his sides as he approaches Katherine. “Where’s her grace?” he gasps. He goes to the princess and bows, still chuckling.

“Thy news Boyet?”

“*Prepare, madam, prepare!*” He turns to the three ladies in mock alarm: “*Arm, wench, arm!* Encounters are mounted *against your peace!*”

“*Love doth approach—disguisèd!—armed with arguments!*” He warns: “You’ll be *taken by surprise!* Muster your *wits*; stand in your own defence!—or hide your heads like cowards, and *fly hence!*”

The princess smiles, picturing the adversaries. “Saint Denis”—the patron saint of her native France—“*against Saint Cupid!*”

“Who are they that charge their breaths against us?” she demands regally. “Say, scout, *say!*”

Boyet tells them his tale. “Under the cool shade of a sycamore I thought to close mine eyes some half an hour—when, *lo*, to interrupt my purposed rest, toward that shade I might behold, address, the king and his companions!

“Warily I stole into a neighbour thicket, and overheard what *you* shall overhear: that, by and by, *disguisèd*, they will be *here!*”

He has watched the lords preparing little Moth. “Their ‘herald’ is a pretty, knavish *page*, who well by heart hath conned his embassy! *Action* and *accent* did they teach him there: ‘Thus must thou speak,’ and ‘thus thy body bear.’”

“And ever and anon they worried that a presence *majestical*”—the princess’s—“would put him off. ‘For,’ quoth the king, ‘an *angel* shalt thou see!—yet fear thou not, but speak audaciously!’” The princess is amused—and pleased. “The boy replied, ‘An angel is not *evil*; I should have *feared* her had she been a *devil!*’ With that, all laughed and clapped him on the shoulder—making the bold wag, by their praises, *bolder!*”

“One rubbed his elbow, thus,”—he pats his arm vigorously, “and cheered, and swore a better speech was never spoken before! Another, with his finger and his thumb,”—forming a circle, “cried, ‘*Viva!* We will *do’t*, come what will come!’ The third, *he* capered, and cried, ‘All goes *well!*’ The fourth *turned on a toe*—and down he *fell!*”

“With that, they all did tumble to the ground with such a zealous *laughter*, so *profound*, that in this spleen ridiculous appears, to check their folly, passion’s solemn *tears!*”

He laughs again, remembering.

“But what?” says the princess, “but *what?*—come they to *visit* us?”

“They do, they *do!*” says Boyet, “and are apparelled thus: like *Russians!*—or Muscovites, as I guess”—commoners, not the emperor’s courtiers. “Their purpose is to *parle*, to *court* and *dance*; and every one his love-feat will advance unto his special mistress—whom they’ll know by particular *favours* which they did bestow.”

Says the princess, annoyed by the proposed prank, “And *will* they so? The gallants shall be *tasked!*—for, ladies, we shall every one be *masked*, and not a man of them shall have the grace, despite of suit, to *see a lady’s face!*”

She sends an attendant to fetch some decorated masks they have used at the French court.

“Hold,” she tells Rosaline, “take thou *this* favour, my sweet, and give me thine.” They exchange the corsages and jewelry sent to them. “So shall *Berowne* take *me* for Rosaline; and then the *king* will court *thee* for his dear!

“And exchange *your* favours too,” she tells Maria and Katherine. “So shall your loves woo *contrary*, deceived by these removes!”

Rosaline laughs. “Come on, then!” she urges, pinning the princess’s flowers high on her own gown’s shoulder. “Wear the favours most in sight!”

Katherine adjusts Maria’s flowers on her own wrist. “But in this exchanging, what is your intent?”

“The *effect* of my intent is to *cross theirs!*” says the proud princess. “They do it but in

mocking merriment—and *mock-for-mock* is my only intent! The several counsels they unbosom shall be to loves *mistook*, and so be mocked withal upon the *next* occasion that we meet, with visages *displayed* to talk and greet!”

“But shall we dance, if they desire to do’t?” asks Rosaline, as they receive their feathered, sequined masks.

“*No!* To the *death* we will not move a *foot!*—nor to their *pennèd* speech”—carefully prepared lines of artful words—“render we any grace; and while ’tis spoke, each turn away her face!”

Boyet fears that, discouraged so, the suitors may simply abandon their efforts—and end his amusement. “Why, that contempt will kill the speaker’s *heart*, and quite divorce his memory from his *part!*”

The princess nods. “Therefore I *do* it!—as I make no doubt the rest will ne’er come in, if *it!*”—the heart—“be *out*.

“There’s no such sport as sport *by sport o’erthrown!*—to make theirs *ours*, and ours none but our *own!*” The princess, highly esteemed in France, resents being taken lightly in Navarre. “So shall we stay, *mocking* intended game—and they, well *mockèd*, depart away with *shame!*”

“The *trumpet sounds!*” cries Boyet, eager for the encounter, as heralds, approaching along the path among the French tents, proclaim the noblemen’s arrival. “Be masked!—the *maskers* come!” He moves behind the ladies to watch.

Each of the noblewomen holds before her face a colorful mask fastened to the end of a rod; they can see through openings beneath the high-arching, painted eyebrows.

And now, to the lively music of pipe, tabor and lute, dancers—local lads, their faces stained a nut-brown—skip and prance into the pavilion.

The lively bunch soon divides to make way, and a procession passes between, approaching the noblewomen. A wiry, blond-haired boy, with something like a toga draped over his small shoulder, steps forward, followed by four Russians. Their white-painted masks look stark above dark, full beards, and each is dressed in a loose black cassock.

Moth bows to the ladies, and cries, “*All hail the richest beauties on the earth,—*”

“*Beauties no richer than rich taffeta,*” says Boyet.

The boy continues: “—a *holy* parcel of the *fairest* dames—”

The ladies turn to face the other way, distracting him. “—that ever turned their backs to mortal views!”

“*Their eyes,*’ villain!” hisses Berowne, “*their eyes!*”

Moth corrects: “—‘that ever turned their eyes to mortal views! *Out...*’” He looks down, thrown off track.

“*True,*” says Boyet. “*Out indeed!*”

Moth resumes. “*Out of your favours, heavenly spirits, vouchsafe not to behold—*”

“*Once to behold,*’ rogue!” prompts Berowne.

“—*once to behold with your sun-beamèd eyes!*”—the boy stares at four masses of pinned-up hair—“*with your sun-beamèd eyes...*”

“They will not answer to *that* epithet!” chuckles Boyet. “You were best call it *daughter-beamèd eyes!*”

Moth turns to Berowne. “They do not *mark* me!” he whispers in frustration, “and that brings me out!”

“*Is this your ‘perfectness?’*” demands the exasperated lord. “*Be gone,* you rogue!” Not altogether unhappily, the boy steps back.

Rosaline, still facing away, asks Lord Boyet—in a deeper, more commanding voice, as if she were the princess, “What *would* these strangers? Know their minds, Boyet. If they do speak our language, ’tis our will that some man plainly recount their purposes. Know what they would.”

Boyet bows, and comes to confront, haughtily, the lowly Russians. “What would you with the princess?”

“Nothing but *peace* and gentle *visitation!*” says Berowne.

“What *would* they, say they?” calls Rosaline.

“Nothing but peace and gentle visitation,” Boyet tells her.

“Why, that they have. And so bid them be gone.”

“She says you *have* it,” Boyet tells the four, “and you may be gone.”

The king steps closer. “Say to her, we have measured *many miles*, to *tread a measure*”—dance—”with her on this grass!”

Boyet calls again: “They say that they have measured many a mile to tread a measure with you on this grass.”

“It is not so,” says Rosaline. “Ask them how many *inches* are in one mile! If they have measured *many*, then the measure of *one* is easily told.”

“If to come hither you have measured miles, and *many miles*,” Boyet repeats blandly, “the princess bids you tell how many inches do fill up one mile.”

“Tell her we measure them by *weary steps!*” says Berowne.

Boyet turns, but stops as Rosaline raises a slender, white-gloves hand. “She hears, herself.”

She demands, “How *many* weary steps, of many weary miles you have o’ergone, are numbered in the travel of one mile?”

“We *number* nothing that we spend for *you!*” says Berowne unctuously. “Our duty is so *rich*, so *infinite*, that we may do it ever, without accompt!”

“Vouchsafe to show the *sunshine* of your face, that we, like savages, may *worship* it!”

She does not turn. “My face is but a *moon*—and *clouded*, too.”

The king thinks he is addressing the princess: “*Blessèd* are clouds, to do as *such* clouds do! Vouchsafe, bright moon and these, thy stars, to *shine*—those clouds *removèd*,”—with masks lowered, “upon our watery eyne!”

Rosaline laughs. “O vain petitioner! Beg a greater *matter*—now thou request’st but *moonshine* on the *water!*”

“Then, in your measure do but vouchsafe one *’change!*”—one dance, pleads the king. “Thou *bid’st* me beg,” he notes. “Thus begging is not *strange!*”—improper.

“Play *music*, then,” says Rosaline. “Nay, you must do it *soon!*” she insists, sounding piqued. “Music plays not *yet!*” she cries angrily. “*No dance!*”

“Thus change I—like the moon.”

“Will you not *dance?*” asks the disappointed king. “How come you thus *estrangèd?*”

Rosaline shrugs. “You took the moon at full, but now she’s changèd.”

The lutenist, at Master Holofernes’ frantic urging, finally plucks his strings.

The “royal” lady stands motionless.

“Yet still she is the moon,” mutters the king, “and I the...,”—*buffoon*, he realizes; but he says “man.” He calls to the pretended princess. “The music *plays*; vouchsafe”—commend—“some *motion* to it!”

“Our ears vouchsafe it.”

“But your *legs* should do it!”

Acting as the princess, Rosaline motions to the other masked ladies, who turn toward the noblemen. “Since you are strangers, and come here by chance, we’ll not be strict. *Take hands*,” she commands, and her companions proffer them daintily. But just as the lords touch the ladies, her regal voice announces, imperiously, “We will *not* dance.”

Asks the king, holding hers. “Why take we hands, then?”

“Only to *part friends*,” says Rosaline. “Curtsy, sweet hearts,” she tells the ladies, “and so the measure ends.”

“More *measure* for this measure!” the king beseeches. “Be not precise!”

Masked Rosaline looks the austerely disguised men up and down. “We can afford no more at such a price.”

Asks the king, “Prize you *yourselves*, what buys your company?”

“Your *absence* only.”

“That can never be!”

“Then we cannot be bought! And so, adieu—*twice* to your visor, and *half* once to you!”

The king is desperate. “If you deny to dance, let’s hold more *chat!*”

Rosaline sighs, wearily. “In private, then.”

“I am best pleased with that!” The king steps away, to the side, and speaks to her quietly.

Berowne approaches the lady who wears the flowers he sent to Rosaline. “White-handed mistress, one sweet word with thee!” he asks—of the masked princess.

“*Honey*, and *milk*, and *sugar*—there are *three*.”

“Nay then, *two* treys, an if you grow so nice: *metheglin*, *wort*, and *malmsey*”—all sugared drinks. “Well run, dice! There’s half-a-dozen sweets!”

“*Seventh* sweet: *Adieu!* Since you can *cog*,”—cheat at cards and dice, “I’ll play no more with you!”

“One word in *secret*,” Berowne pleads.

“Let it not be ‘sweet,’” she warns.

He moans in feigned suffering. “Thou grievest my gall!”—chafe his wound.

“Gall,” she nods. “Bitter!”

“Therefore *meet*,” says Berowne—*meet* as in both *confer* and *appropriate*.

She goes aside with him to talk.

Dumaine asks the lady with Katherine’s corsage, “Will you vouchsafe to exchange a word with me?”

“Name it,” says masked Maria.

“Fair lady—”

Two words; she cuts him off. “Say you so? ‘*Fair lord*’—take *that*, for your ‘fair lady!’”

Instead, Dumaine takes her hand. “Please it you, as much in *private*, and I’ll bid adieu,” he promises.

They, too, converse apart from the others.

Katherine regards the bashful Lord Longaville. “What, was your vizard”—false face—“made without a *tongue*?”

He blushes. “I know the reason, lady, why you ask...”

“Oh, for your *reason!*” cries Katherine with sarcasm. “Quickly, sir—I *long!*”

The gentleman is quiet, not simple. “You have a *double* tongue within *your* mask, and could afford my speechless vizard *half*.”

She nods. “Well,”—she pronounces it *ve-ull*, “quoth the Dutchman!” Katherine regards him through her mask. “Is not ‘veal’ a calf?”

“A *calf*, fair lady?”

“No, a fair *Lord Calf!*”—a childish man.

Longaville longs for a new topic. “Let’s part the word.”

“No, I’ll not be *your* half! Take *all* and *wean* it!”—the calf. “It may prove an ox!”

“Will you give *horns*,”—cuckold, “chaste lady?” Longaville smiles. “Do not so. Watch how you butt *yourself* with these sharp mocks.”

Katherine shrugs. “Then die a calf, before your horns do grow!”

Longaville laughs gently. “One word in private with you, ere I die....”

“Bleat *softly* then; the *butcher* hears you cry!”

Apart from the others, they chat quietly.

Lord Boyet smiles, observing as the four mismatched couples spar.

The tongues of mocking wenches are as keen as is the razor’s edge—invisible, cutting a smaller hair than may be seen—beyond the sense of sense! So sensible seemeth their conference:

their conceits have wings fleeter than arrows, bullets!—wind, thought, swifter things!

“Not one word *more*, my maids!” calls Rosaline’s adopted voice. “Break off, *break off!*”

The black-clad visitors leave the ladies and meet together. Even Berowne feels battered. “By heaven, all *dry-beaten* with pure *scoff!*”

“Farewell, mad wenches!” calls the king, looking back as they start to go. “You have single wits!”—are like-minded—and unamiable.

The “princess” cries, with a wave, “*Twenty adieus*, my frozen Muscovits!”

The crestfallen sovereign, his three lords, and their village accomplices trudge out of the pavilion.

“Are *those* the breed of wits so *wondered* at?” the princess asks Boyet of Navarre’s scholars, as the ladies lower their masks.

The nobleman laughs. “*Tapers!* They are with your sweet breaths *puffed out!*”

“Well, *liking* wits they have!” says Rosaline, of the flattery. “Gross, *gross!* *Fat, fat!*”—exaggerated, and salty.

“Oh, *poverty* of wit, *kingly* poor—*flat!*” scowls the princess. “Will they not, think you, *hang themselves* tonight? Or ever again but in *vizards* show their faces? This pert Berowne was out of countenance quite!”

“Oh, they were *all* in lamentable cases!” says Rosaline—complaining about the cassocks too. “The king was *weeping-ripe* for a good word!”

“Berowne did swear himself beyond *all* suit!” the princess tells her.

“Dumaine was at my service—and his *sword,*” laughs Maria, speaking of Katherine’s lord. “No *point,*’ quoth I—and my servant straight was *mute!*”

“Lord Longaville said I o’ercame his heart,” Katherine tells Maria. “And trow you what he *callèd* me?”

The princess pictures the shy and smitten lord. “A *qualm*, perhaps?”

“Yes, in good faith!” laughs Katherine.

The princess, laughing, motions her away: “*Go, sickness* as thou art!”

“Well, *better* wits have worn plain *statute-caps!*”—wool ones that peasants are required to wear on Sundays, says Rosaline in disgust. “But, will you hear?—the king is *my* love sworn!”

“And quick Berowne hath plighted faith to *me!*” says the princess.

“And Longaville was for *my* service *born!*” laughs Katherine.

“Dumaine is *mine,*” crows Maria, “as sure as bark on tree!”

Boyet shares their amusement; but now the counselor interrupts. “Madam, and pretty mistresses, give ear! Immediately they will *again* be here—in their *own* shapes, for it can never be that they will *digest* this harsh indignity.”

“Will they return?” asks the princess.

“They will, they *will*, God knows—and leap as for *joy*, though they are lame with *blows!* Therefore exchange favours; and, when they repair, blow like a sweet rose in this summer air!”—bloom.

“How *blow?*” cries the princess, feigning indignation, “how *blow?* Speak to be *understood!*”

But old Boyet regards them thoughtfully. “Fair ladies *masked* are roses *in the bud; dis-*masked, their sweet damask commixture shown, are *angels’* availing clouds, or roses *blown!*”

“Avaunt, *perplexity!*” the princess tells him, tired of men’s flowery analogies. She looks to the other ladies. “What shall we do, if they return in their own shapes to woo?”

Rosaline is severe. “Good madam, if by me you’ll be advisèd, let’s mock them *still*, as well when *known* as disguisèd! Let us complain to them what *fools* were here, disguisèd like Muscovites in shapeless gear, and wonder who they *were*—and to what *end* their shallow shows, and *prologue* vilely penned, and their rough carriage, so *ridiculous*, should be presented at our tent to us!”

“Ladies, *withdraw,*” warns Boyet, “the gallants are at hand!”

The princess quickly leads the ladies away. “Whip to our tents, as roes run o’er land!”

Chapter Seven Confession, and Revelation

The King of Navarre strides, unheralded, into the French visitors’ pavilion, with Lords Berowne, Longaville, and Dumaine following closely. The masks and cassocks are gone; their own fine clothes and plumed hats are back.

“Fair sir, God save you!” says the king to Lord Boyet. “Where’s the princess?”

Boyet bows. “Gone to her tent. Please it Your Majesty command me any service to her thither?”

The king nods. “That she vouchsafe me audience for one word.”

Boyet smiles and bows again. “I will—and so will she, I know, my lord!” He heads toward the royal tent.

Berowne watches the influential emissary leave. “This fellow *pecks up* wit as pigeons *peas*, and utters it again when *gall* doth please! His wit’s a *pedler*, and retails his *wares* at wakes and wassails, meetings, markets, fairs! And we who sell by the *gross*, the Lord doth know, have not the grace to grace it with such *show*!

“*This gallant pins the wenches on his sleeve! Had he been Adam, he had tempted Eve!*

“He can *curvet*,”—dance like a show horse, “too—and *lisp*! Why, this is he that *kissed his hand away*, for courtesy!” Kissing one’s hand is a gesture of flirting—a courtly affectation in France, as well as in Navarre. “This is the *ape* of form, Monsieur the *Nice*, that, when he plays at tables, in *honourable* terms *chides the dice*! Nay, he can sing a mean”—melody—“most *meanly*; and when a-courting, *mend him who can*!

“The *ladies* call him *sweet*; the *stairs*, as he treads on them, *kiss his feet*! This is a follower that *smiles on everyone*—to *show his teeth*, as white as whale’s bone! And consciences that will not die in *debt* pay him the due of ‘*honey-tongued Boyet*!’”

“*A blister* on his sweet tongue, with all my heart!” mutters the king, “for putting Armado’s page out of his part!”

“See where it comes,” scowls Berowne, as all of Boyet emerges. “*Behavior*, what *wert* thou till this madman *showed thee*?—and what art thou *now*?” While in disguise as a commoner, he was nevertheless irked that Boyet had not accorded him the respect due to a nobleman.

Ushered by Lord Boyet, the princess, followed by Rosaline, Maria, and Katherine, comes to hear their host, the King of Navarre.

The king bows. “All hail, sweet madam, and fair time of day!”

The French princess frowns. “Fair in ‘all *hail*’”—a hailstorm—“is *foul*, as I conceive!”

“Construe my speech as better, if you may.”

“Then *wish* me better,” she counters. “I will give you leave.”

“We came to visit you, and purpose now to lead you *to our court*!” says the king generously. Smiling, he motions toward the way to the castle. “Vouchsafe it, then.”

“This *field* shall hold *me*—and so hold *you* to your *vow*! Neither God nor *I* delights in *perjured* men!”

“Rebuke me not for that which you *provoke*!” protests the king. “The virtue of *your eye* most breaks my oath!”

“You *nickname* virtue: ‘vice’ you should have spoke; for *virtue*’s office never breaks men’s *troth*!

“Now by my maiden honour, yet as pure as the unsullied lily, I protest: a world of torments though I should endure, I would not yield to be *your house*’s guest, so much I’d hate to be the cause of breaking heavenly oaths, vowèd with integrity!”

“Ah, but you have lived in *desolation* here—*unseen, unvisited*, much to our shame,” he

claims shamelessly.

“Not *so*, my lord!—it is not so, I swear! We have had pastimes here—and a pleasant *game*: a mess of Russians left us but of late!”

“*What*, madam?—*Russians*?”

“Aye, in truth, my lord!—trim *gallants*, full of courtship, and of *state*!”

“Madam, speak *true*!” scolds Rosaline. “It is not so, my lord! My lady, in the manner of *these* days, as courtesy gives the *undeserving* praise!

“We four indeed confronted were, with four in Russian habit. Here they stayed an hour, and talked apace; but 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!”

“This jest is *dry to me*,” says Berowne apologetically, stepping toward her. “Fair, gentle sweet, your wit makes *wise* things foolish! When we greet, with eyes’ best seeing, in *heaven’s* fiery eye”—the morning sun—“by light we *lose* light! Your *capacity* is of that nature: to your huge store, wise things seem *foolish*, and rich things but *poor*!”

She replies wryly: “That proves you *wise* and *rich*! For in my eye—”

“—I am a *fool*, and full of *poverty*,” says Berowne, smiling.

Rosaline is surprised; but she doesn’t show it. “As you take what doth to you *belong*, it were no fault to snatch words from my tongue.”

“Oh, *I* am yours,” says Berowne, taking her hand, “and all that I possess!”

Rosaline begins to smile. “*All* the fool *mine*?”

He bows—still holding her hand. “I cannot give you less.”

“Which of the vizards was it that you wore?”

Berowne feigns ignorance. “Where? When? What vizard? Why demand you this?”

“*There, then!*” she laughs, pointing at his head. “*That* vizard, a superfluous case that *hid* the worse, and showed a *better* face!”

- The king blanches. “We are descried,” he whispers to Dumaine. “They’ll mock us now downright!”

- The peer proposes, behind a hand, “Let us confess, and turn it to a jest!”

The princess is watching. “*Amazèd*, my lord? Why looks Your Highness grave?”

Cries Rosaline in mock alarm, “*Help!*—behold his brows!—he’ll *swoon*! Why look you pale?” she demands of the king. “*Sea-sick*, I think—coming from *Muscovy*!”

Berowne accepts defeat. *Thus pour the stars down plagues for perjury! Can any face of brass hold longer out?*

“Here I stand, lady,” he says, spreading his arms wide. “*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 conceits!—and I will wish me never more to dance, nor never more in Russian habit wait!

“Oh, never will I trust to speeches *penned*, 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-pile *hyperboles*, spruce *affectation*, figures *pedantical*—those summer-flies have blown me full of *maggot ostentation*! I do *forswear* *them*!—and I here protest, by thy white glove—how white the *hand*, *God* knows!—henceforth my wooing mind shall be expressed in russet *yea’s* and honest, kersey *no’s*!

“And, to begin, wench—so *God* help me!” he declares, “my *love* to thee is *sound*, sans crack or flaw!”

“Sans ‘*sans*,’ I pray you,” says Rosaline; but she is smiling.

“I still have the trick of the *old* rage. Bear with me—I am *sick*!” His elaborate vow of plainness accepted, Berowne accedes. “I’ll leave it by *degrees*.”

“Soft... let us see,” he says, glancing at the sheepish noblemen. “Write ‘*Lord* have *mercy* on us’ on those three,” he tells Rosaline. “They are *infected*! In their *hearts* it lies; they have a

plague—but *caught it from your eyes!*

“These lords are *stricken*; but *you* are not free—for these lords’ *tokens* on you do I see!” They are wearing the jewelry and flowers—their own, this time.

“No,” retorts the princess, “they were *free*, who gave these tokens to us!”

Says Berowne, “Our *states* are forfeit!—seek not to *undo us!*”—to leave them bankrupt.

“It is not so,” says Rosaline, “for how can this be true?—that *you* stand forfeit, being those that *sue!*”

“*Peace*,” laughs Berowne, “for I will not have *to-do* with you!”

Bright-eyed Rosaline grins—still holding his hand: “Nor *shall* not, if I do as I intend!”

Berowne laughs. “Speak for yourselves,” he tells his friends, “*my wit* is at an end!”

The king goes to the princess. “Teach us, sweet madam, for our rude transgression some fair *excuse*.”

“The *fairest* is *confession*. Were not you here but even now *disguisèd?*”

“Madam, I was.”

“And were you well advisèd?”—well aware.

“I was, fair madam.”

“When you then were here, what did you whisper in your lady’s ear?”

“That *more than all the world* I did respect her!”

The princess scoffs. “When she shall *challenge* this, you will *reject* her!”

“*Upon mine honour, no!*” swears the king.

“Peace, *peace!* Forbear,” says the princess. “Your oath broken once, force you not to *forswear!*”

“*Despise* me, when I break this oath of mine!” he tells her.

“I will!” she says sharply. “And therefore *keep* it!”

“Rosaline,” she asks, “What did this Russian”—she motions toward the king—“whisper in your ear?”

“Madam, he swore that he did *hold me dear*, precious as *eyesight*—and did *value* me above this *world!*—adding thereto, moreover, that he would *wed* me, or else die my *lover!*”

Says the princess dryly, “God give thee joy of him.” She shakes her head. “Thy noble lord most *honourably* doth uphold his word!”

The king is perplexed. “What *mean* you, madam?” he asks Rosaline. “By my *life*, my *troth*, I never swore this lady such an oath!” he tells the princess.

“By *heaven*, you did!” says Rosaline, “and to *confirm* it plain, you gave me *this!* But take it, sir, again!” she says disdainfully, handing him a ring.

The king gapes, stunned. “My pledge and this *to the princess* I did give!—I knew her by this jewel on her sleeve!” He points to the little brooch pinned at the royal lady’s wrist.

“Pardon me, sir,” says the princess, “this jewel did *she* wear—and Lord *Berowne*, I thank him, is *my dear!*” She looks at that astonished lord. “What—will you have *me*, or your pearl again?”

“Neither of *either!*—I remit both twain!” says Berowne. “I see the trick of’t! Here was a *consent*, knowing aforehand of our merriment, to *dash it* like a Christmas comedy!”

“Some *carry-tale*,” he says, glowering at Lord Boyet, “some *please-man*, some slight *zany*, some *mumble-news*, some *supper-knight*—some Dick that *smiles* his cheeks into *tears*, and knows the trick to make my lady *laugh* when she’s indisposed—*told our intents before!*”

“Which once disclosèd, the ladies did exchange favours—and then *we*, following the signs, wooed but the *signs* of shes! Now, to our perjury to add *more* terror, we are *again* forsworn: in will, and in *error!*”

“It is much upon *this*: then might not *you* have forestalled our sport, that made us thus untrue?” he demands of Boyet. “Do you not use my lady’s *fool* as thy *esquire*, and *laugh* upon that apple of her eye?—stand between her back, sir, and the fire, *holding a platter*,”—like a lowly servant, “jesting merrily?”

The French courtier only smiles, hardly disturbed by being called obsequiously loyal.

“*You put our page out!*” cries Berowne angrily. “*Go*, you are *allowèd*”—privileged, as is a jester. “But die when you will, a *smock*”—a woman’s undergarment—“shall be your shroud!”

Lord Boyet’s smile is benign, his demeanor calm.

“You leer upon me, do you? *There’s* an eye that wounds like a *leaden* sword!” mutters Berowne. He knows he sounds peevish. He feels the warm touch of Rosaline’s hand. His annoyance is rapidly waning.

Boyet finally speaks. “Full *merrily* hath this brave manage, this careering, been run.”

“*Lo*, he is tilting *straight!*” grumbles Berowne. But after a moment’s pause, he smiles at Boyet, and bows. “Peace. I have done.” The Frenchman nods graciously.

Berowne sees Costard hurrying into the pavilion. “Welcome, *pure wit!* Thou part’st a fair fray!”

“Oh, *Lord*, sir!” nods the swain. He bows. “They would know whether the three Worthies shall come in or no.”

“What, are there but *three?*”

“No, sir; but it is still fine, for every one *presents* three!”

“And three times thrice is nine.”

“Not so, sir! Under your correction, sir, I *hope* it is not so!” laughs Costard. “You cannot bag *us*, sir; I can assure you, sir, we know what we *know!* I hope, sir, three times thrice, sir—”

“Is *not* nine?”

Costard chuckles confidently. “Under correction, sir, we know whereuntil it doth amount!”

“By Jove, I always took three threes for nine!”

“Oh, *Lord*, sir!—it were pity if *you* should get your living by *reckoning*, sir!”

Berowne frowns. “How much *is* it?”

“Oh, *Lord*, sir!—the parties themselves, the actors, sir, will *show* whereuntil it doth amount! As for mine own part, I am, as they say, to ‘perfect’ but *one* man in one poor man: Pompion the Great, sir.”

“Art *thou* one of the Worthies?”

“It pleased *them* to think me worthy of Pompion the Great. For mine own part, I know not the degree of the Worthy, but I *am* to *stand* for him,” he says modestly.

Lord Berowne waves him away. “Go, bid them prepare.”

Costard bows. “We will turn it finely off, sir! We will take some care!” He hurries away, returning to the villagers who are waiting outside the pavilion, already dressed for their roles.

The king, more hospitable now, is alarmed. “Berowne, they will *shame* us!—let them not approach!”

“*We* are shame-*proof*, my lord!” laughs Berowne. “And ’tis some policy to have *one* show worse than the king’s and his company.”

The sovereign, still smarting, is far from convinced. “I say they shall not come!”

The princess intervenes. “Nay, my good lord, let me o’errule you now. That sport *best* pleases that doth least know *how!* Where *zeal* strives to content, there the *content* dies in the zeal of that which it *presents!* When great things perish in the *labouring* at their birth, then form *confounded* makes form into *mirth!*”

“A right description of *our* sport, my lord,” Berowne points out.

With a smile and a nod, the king yields to the princess.

All eyes are now drawn to Señor Don Adriano de Armado, who sweeps before the lords and their ladies. “Anointed,” he says, bowing, and addressing the king, “I implore so much expense of thy royal sweet breath as will utter a brace of words”—*two*. He offers a document, which the sovereign examines.

- The princess asks Berowne, “Doth that man serve God?”

- “Why ask you?”

- “He speaks not like a man of *God’s* making!”

“That is ‘*well done!*’ my fair, sweet, honey monarch,” says Don Adriano, “for, I protest, the schoolmaster is exceeding fantastical—too, too vain—too, too *vain!*”

“But we will put it, as they say, to *fortuna de la guerra!*” He bows to the king and the princess—“I wish you the peace of mind, Most Royal Couplement!”—and returns to the other performers.

The king examines the list, written in Holofernes’ careful hand. “Here is likely to be a *good* presence of Worthies!” He nods toward the departing Spaniard. “*He* presents *Hector of Troy*; the swain, *Pompey the Great*; the parish curate, *Alexander*; Armado’s page, *Hercules*; the pedant, *Judas Maccabaeus*. And if these Worthies in their *first* show thrive, four will change habits, and present the other five!”

“There is *five* in the first show,” says Berowne.

The king’s smirk is like Costard’s. “You are deceived; ’tis not so.”

Berowne, irritated, counts on fingers: “The pedant, the braggart, the hedge-priest, the fool—” He laughs, reaching the thumb. “And the *boy!*”—four and a *part*.

“Abate throw at *novum*,”—leave out game-like random chance, he laughs, “and the whole *world* cannot prick out *five* such, take each one in his vein!”

The king notes the first player’s arrival: “The ship is under sail, and here she comes amain!”

Costard swaggers forth, wearing a new-made toga thought, in town, to look like a Roman general’s, with a makeshift shield held before him. “*I Pompey* am—”

“You lie; you are not he!” cries Boyet.

“*I Pompey am!*—”

“With libbard’s head on *knee?*” The shield, actually a painting, depicts the heraldic emblem of Pompey, a leopard—but a dead one, its tongue lolling out, being displayed by a kneeling hunter.

“Well *said*, old mocker!” laughs Berowne. “I must needs be friends with thee!” he tells Boyet.

Costard begins again. “*I Pompey* am, Pompey surnamed the Big—”

“The *Great*,” Dumaine corrects.

Costard thinks. “*It is* ‘Great,’ sir,” he admits. He proceeds: “Pompey, surnamed the *Great*—that oft in field, with sword and shield, did make my foe to sweat! And travelling along this coast, I here am come by chance, and lay my arms before the legs of this sweet lass of France!”

Boyet wisely refrains from laughing at that image—one of an intimate position.

Costard places a borrowed rapier and a yeoman’s knife on the grass. “If Your Ladyship would say, ‘Thanks, Pompey,’ I had done.”

“*Great* thanks, great Pompey!” says the princess quickly.

Costard is pleased. “’Tis not worth so much; but I hope I was perfect”—perfected in the role. “I made a little fault in ‘Great,’” he confesses.

Berowne wagers—sourly: “My hat to a halfpenny Pompey proves the *best* Worthy!”

Costard makes way as Pastor Nathaniel comes forward, struggling, using both hands, to swing a rusty old broadsword. Once the point has been stuck into the turf—to the relief of those nearby—he declaims: “When in the world I lived, I was the world’s *commander*: by east, west, north, and south, I spread my conquering might! My scutcheon plain declares that I am *Alexander!*”

“Your *nose* says *No, you are not*,” calls Boyet, “for it stands too right!”—somewhat bobbed, unlike a Roman one.

Berowne, who is nearer Nathaniel, tells the French lord, “Your nose smells not this most tinder-smelling knight!” The pastor’s coat holds the hearth’s aroma.

The princess waves them to silence. “The conqueror is *dismayed*,” she says, watching the minister. “*Proceed*, good Alexander!”

Nathaniel tries again. “When in the world I lived, I was the world’s commander—” But now—suddenly aware of all the noble eyes upon him—he freezes, forgetting his lines.

“Most *true!*” laughs Boyet “’Tis right: when in the world you *lived*, you *were* so, Alexander!”

Berowne summons: “Pompey the Great...”

“Your servant, in Costard,” the swain replies.

“Take away the conqueror—take away Alexander,” Berowne orders.

Costard chides Nathaniel: “Oh, sir, you have *overthrown* Alisander the Conqueror! You”—Alexander—“will be scraped out of the painted cloth for this! Your lion, that holds its pole-axe sitting on a close-stool”—despite the bumpkin’s wording, the fabled king’s animal emblem is *not* portrayed on a toilet—“will be given to Ajax! *He* will be the ninth Worthy!

“A *conqueror*, and afeard to *speak!* Run away for *shame*, Alisander!”

Nathaniel tugs the old sword free and drags it to the side, flushing deeply.

Costard tells the royals, “There, an’t shall please you, is a foolishly *mild* man—an *honest* man, look you, but soon dashed. He is a marvellous good *neighbour*, in faith—and a very good bowler! But for Alisander—alas, you see how ’tis—a little o’erparted.”

Costard assures the courtly audience, “But there are Worthies a-coming will speak their mind in some other sort!”

Holofernes, as Judas Maccabaeus, military leader of the Jews a century before the birth of the Nazarene, comes before the nobles, accompanied by Moth.

“Great *Hercules* is presented by this imp,” the schoolman reveals, “whose club killed Cerberus, that three-headed *canis*; and when he was a babe, a child, a shrimp, thus did he strangle serpents in his *manus*. *Quoniam* he seemeth in minority; *ergo* I come with this apology.”

Standing before all the nobles’ unmasked faces, Moth is stricken; the boy stands, wide-eyed and silent, his cloth snake dangling.

Holofernes gently urges the child, but to no avail. “Keep some *state* in thy *exit*, and vanish!” he whispers. Poor Moth edges back to Nathaniel.

Holofernes begins. “Judas I am—”

“A *Judas!*” cries Dumaine.

“Not *Iscariot*, sir! Judas I am, yclep’d *Maccabaeus*.”

“Judas Maccabaeus’ *clipped* is plain *Judas!*”

“A kissing *traitor!*” cries Berowne. “How art thou *approvèd*, Judas?”—what can be his defense?

Holofernes tries to ignore the rude rascals. “Judas I am—”

“The more *shame* for you, Judas!” calls Dumaine.

Holofernes frowns, annoyed. “What *mean* you, sir?”

He means, *intends*, “To *make* Judas *hang himself!*”

The teacher draws himself up with dignity. “*Begin*, sir,” he says, adding, with heavy sarcasm, “you are my *elder*.”

“Well followed!” laughs Berowne. “Judas was hanged on an elder!”

“I will not be put out of countenance!” insists Holofernes.

“Because thou *hast* no face!” hoots Berowne.

Demands Holofernes, pointing to his own countenance, “*What is this?*”

“A *cittern*-head,” laughs Boyet; the stringed instrument typically sports a fancifully carved head.

“The head of a *bodkin!*”—a dagger, similarly featured—cries Dumaine.

“A *Death*’s-face on a ring!” says Berowne.

“The face on an old Roman *coin*, barely seen!”—*nearly worn away*, Longaville offers.

Boyet: “The *pommel* on Caesar’s falchion!”

Dumaine: “The carved-bone face on a *flask!*”

Berowne: “Saint George’s half-cheek on a *brooch!*”

Dumaine: “Aye—and on a brooch of *lead!*”

“Aye!—one worn on the cap of a *tooth-puller!*” says Berowne. “And now *forward*,” he urges the red-faced schoolmaster, “for we have put thee in countenances.”

“You have put me *out* of countenance!” cries Holofernes.

“False,” insists Berowne. “We have *given* thee faces!”

“But you have *out*-faced them all!”—turned them inside out, retorts Holofernes.

Taking that as *stared down*, Berowne affects defiance: “An thou wert a *lion*, we would do so!”

Boyet refers to a lion-hide disguise found in a fable: “Therefore, as he is an *ass*, let him go! And so *adieu*, sweet Jude!” But the teacher stands his ground. “Nay, why dost thou stay?”

“For the *latter* part of his name,” says Dumaine.

“*Give* it him!” says Berowne. “Add the *ass* to the Jude: Jude-*ass*, *away!*”

Holofernes watches the laughing lords, quite disappointed. “This is not generous, not gentle, not humble.”

The princess agrees—and she sees Rosalind and Katherine exchange solemn glances.

“*Alight* from Monsieur Jude-*ass!*” says Boyet. “It grows *dark*; he may stumble!”

Holofernes steps aside, shaking his head sadly, to join his predecessors.

The princess has been disturbed, but not by the Worthies’ acting. “Alas, poor Maccabaeus, how hath he been *baited!*” Holofernes bows to her, gratefully.

Don Adriano de Armado strides forth, coming before the royal company in the role of Hector, the Trojan warrior who pursued a great Greek hero.

“Hide thy head, Achilles!” warns Berowne loudly, “here comes *Hector* in *arms!*”

Seeing the old knight in “classical” garb draws even Dumaine into the other noblemen’s madcap mood. “Though my mocks come home to me, I will now be *merry!*” he laughs.

Cries the king, seeing the splendid Spaniard, “Hector was but a *troyan*”—a term for common drinking companion—“compared to *this!*”

Boyet frowns. “But is this *Hector?*”

“I think Hector was not so *clean*-timbered,” says the king, regarding Don Adrian’s nearly hairless while shins.

“His leg is too *big* for Hector’s,” says Longaville, pointing at the portly gentleman.

“More *calf*, certainly!” gibes Dumaine.

“No, *he* is best endowed in the *small!*”—the ankle, argues Boyet.

“This cannot be *Hector!*” says Berowne.

“He’s a god, or a *painter*,” Dumaine offers, as the knight frowns, “for he *makes faces!*”

Don Adriano assumes an heroic stance, and tries to speak his lines. ““The armipotent *Mars*, of *lances* the almighty, gave Hector a gift—””

“A gilt nutmeg!” guesses Dumaine.

“A *lemon!*” says Berowne.

“Stuck with cloves!” adds Longaville.

“No, *cloven!*” concludes Dumaine.

“*Peace!*” cries Don Armado; he glares at the obstreperous lords. ““The armipotent *Mars*, of *lances* the almighty, gave Hector a gift as the *heir of Ilion!*—a man so breasted that certainly he would *fight!*—yea, from morn till night!—out of his pavilion! I am that flower—””

“That *mint!*” cries Dumaine.

“That *columbine*,” Longaville offers helpfully.

“Sweet Lord Longaville, reign thy tongue!” pleads Don Adriano, piqued.

“I must rather *give it the rein*,” says the nobleman, “for it *racés* against *Hector!*”—known for the legendary chase.

“Aye,” nods Dumaine, observing Señor Armado’s silvered hair, “and Hector’s a *greyhound!*”

Protests Don Adriano, “The sweet *war*-man is dead and rotten; sweet chucks, *beat not* the bones of the *hurièd!* When he breathed he was a *man!*”

“But I will go forward with my device.” He appeals to the princess. “Sweet Royalty, bestow on me thy sense of *hearing*.”

“*Speak*, brave Hector!” she tells him kindly. “*We* are much delighted.”

Don Adriano bows deeply. "I do adore Thy Sweet Grace's slipper!"

"Loves her *by the foot*," jests Boyet.

Dumaine replies: "He *may* not by the *yard!*"—near the lawn.

Don Adriano continues. "This Hector far surmounted *Hannibal!*" He follows that ill-phrased tribute with a sigh for the deceased hero: "Alas, the party's gone!"

Costard, already agitated, and stricken by hearing *mounted* and *lass*, steps forward with news. "The party *is* gone, fellow! Hector, she is *gone*—she is *two months* on her way!"—*pregnant*, he tells the knight.

"What meanest thou?"

"Faith, unless you play the *honest* Trojan," says Costard, "the poor wench is *cast away!* She's quick: the child *brags* in her belly already: 'tis *yours!*"

Don Adriano is livid. "Dost thou *infamonize* me among *potentates*? Thou shalt *die!*"

Says Costard, angrily, "Then shall Hector be *whipped* for *Jaquenetta*, who is quickened by him, and *hanged* for *Pompey*, who is dead by him!"

"Most *rare* Pompey!" cries Dumaine.

Boyet seconds: "*Renownèd* Pompey!"

"*Greater* than Great!—great, great, *great* Pompey!" exclaims Berowne. "Pompey the *Huge!*"

Dumaine is watching the furious Spaniard. "Hector trembles!"

"Pompey is angry!" notes Berowne. He summons the goddess of strife: "More, *Ate*, more, *Ate!* Stir them on! *Stir them on!*"

"Hector will *challenge* him!" predicts Dumaine.

"*Aye*, if he have no more *man's* blood in's belly than will *sup a flea!*"

Don Adriano glares at Costard, fuming. "By the North Pole, I *do* challenge thee!"

"I will not fight with a *pole*, like a northern man!" says Costard. "I'll *slash!*—I'll do it by the *sword!*" He turns to the princess. "I bepray you, let me borrow my arms again!"

"*Room* for the incensèd *Worthies!*"—space in which they can duel, cries Dumaine.

Costard pulls off his coat. "I'll do it in my shirt!"

Dumaine applauds. "Most *resolute* Pompey!"

- "Master!" whispers Moth urgently to the irate knight, "let me take you a buttonhole *lower!* Do you not see that Pompey is *uncasing* for the combat? What *mean* you?—you will lose your *reputation!*"

Don Adriano de Armado addresses the males of the gathering. "Gentlemen and soldiers, pardon me; I will not *combat* in my *shirt!*"

"You may not *deny* it," Dumaine rules. "*Pompey* hath made that *challenge.*"

"Sweet bloods, I both *may* and *will!*"

"What reason have you for't?" demands Berowne.

The knight is red-faced and humiliated. "The naked truth of it is, I *have* no shirt; I go woolward,"—behind his doublet, skin to coat. "For penance."

Thinks Moth: *True, and it was enjoined him by Rome—for lacking linen! Since then, I'll be sworn, he wore none—but for a dishclout of Jaquenetta's! And that he wears next to his heart for a favour!*

Before the conflict can be continued, though, a French messenger, dusty from travel, rides across the lawn and stops near the princess. "God save you, madam," he says, dismounting. He bows deeply.

"Welcome, Marcadé, but that thou interrupt'st our merriment."

"I am sorry, madam; for the news I bring is heavy in my tongue. The king your father—"

Suddenly pale, she gasps, "Dead, for my life!" The King of France has long been ill.

"Even so," says Marcadé sadly. "My tale is told." He bows again, and turns away; he will soon begin his long journey home.

The princess looks down, her eyes filling with tears.

Berowne goes to the villagers. "Worthies, away," he says solemnly. "The scene begins to

cloud.”

The pageant players, touched by the lady’s sorrow, straggle off.

Don Adriano is relieved—but pensive. *For mine own part, I breathe free breath.*

I have seen a day of wrong, through a little hole in discretion; but I will right myself like a soldier....

Chapter Eight Heartfelt Pledges

How fares Your Majesty?” the king asks tenderly. She is now France’s queen.
“Boyet, prepare,” she orders. “I will away tonight.”

“Madam, not so!—I do beseech you, *stay!*” pleads the king, taking her hand.

“Prepare, I say,” she tells Boyet, who bows and goes.

“I thank you, gracious lords, for all your fair *endeavors*,” she says quietly, “and entreat, out of a newly sad soul, that you vouchsafe, in your rich wisdom, to excuse us—or hide the liberal opposition of our spirits. If over-boldly we have borne ourselves in the converse of breath, your *gentleness* was guilty of it”—prompted it, she tells the king, adapting Berowne’s sophistical sop. “Farewell worthy lord.”

He bows and kisses her hand.

She smiles at him, still tearful. “A heavy heart bears not an humble tongue; excuse my coming too short of thanks for my great suit, so easily obtained.”

The king had hardly intended simply to yield up Aquitaine; but he will. “The extreme partings of Time extremely shape all causes to the purpose of his speed—and often, as in *this* very loss, decide that which long process could not arbitrate.

“And though the mourning brow of progeny”—her duty in royal succession—“now forbids the smiling courtesy of *love*, yet since *love*’s *argument*, the holy suit for which it would fain convince, was *first* afoot, let not the cloud of sorrow justle it from what it purposèd—since to bewail friends *lost* is, by *much*, not so wholesome nor profitable as to *rejoice* at friends but newly *found!*”

She feels, deeply, the loss of her father; and now she must leave her suitor. “I understand you not. My griefs are double.”

Berowne steps before the women. “Honest, *plain* words best pierce the ear of grief; and by *these* badges”—simpler tokens—“understand the king:

“For your fair sakes have we neglected time, played foul with our oaths. Your beauty, ladies, hath much deformed us, fashioning our humours even to the opposite end of our intents.

“And that in us hath seemed ridiculous,” he admits, “as love is full of unbefitting strains—all wanton as a child, skipping and vain, formèd by the eye, and therefore, like the eye, full of straying shapes, of habits and of forms, varying in subjects as the eye doth roll to every varied object in its glance.

“If which parti-coated presence of loose love put on by us have, in your heavenly eyes, misbecomed our oaths and gravities, those very eyes that *look into* these faults incited us to *make* them!

“Therefore, ladies,” says Berowne, “*our* love being *yours*, the error that love makes is *likewise* yours. We do ourselves prove, by being once false, forever to be *true*—to those that make us *both*—fair ladies, you!

“And even *that* falsehood, in itself a sin, thus *purifies* itself, and turns to *grace*,” he concludes confidently.

The queen’s reply is stern: “We have received your *letters* full of love; your *favours*, the *ambassadors* of love—and, in our maiden council, *berated* them!—as courtship *pleasant*, *jesting* courtesy—as *bombast*, and as lining for the time!

“But more devout than that have *we* been in our own respect—and therefore met your loves in their own *fashion*—in a like *merriment*.”

“Our *letters*, madam, showed much more than *jest!*” protests Dumaine.

“So did our *looks!*” asserts Longaville.

“We did not note them so,” says Rosaline.

Pleas the king, again taking the queen’s hand. “Now, at the latest minute of the hour, *grant* us your loves!”

But she demurs. “A time, methinks, too short to make a world-without-end bargain in”—to make a lifetime commitment, or to grant absolution. “No, no, my lord, Your Grace is perjured much, full of dear guiltiness. Your *oath* I will not trust.

“And therefore *this*. If for my love you will do aught—and there is no such *need*—thus shall you *do* for me: go with speed to some forlorn and naked *hermitage*, remote from all the pleasures of the world; there stay until the twelve celestial signs have brought about the annual reckoning.

“If that austere, insociable life *change* not your offer, made in heat of blood—if frosts and fasts, hard lodging and thin garb, nip not the gaudy blossoms of your love, but it bear this trial, and love *lasts*—then, at the expiration of the year, come challenge me—challenge me by *deserving!*”

“And, by this virgin palm now kissing thine, I *will* be thine!

“But till that instant, I will shut my woeful self up in a mourning house, raining the tears of lamentation for the remembrance of my father’s death.

“If this thou do deny, let our hands part, neither entitled in the other’s heart.”

The king takes both of her hands in his. “If this, or *more* than this, I would deny, to flatter up these powers of mine with *rest*, may the sudden hand of *Death* close up mine eye! *Hence ever* then, my heart is in thy breast!”

The younger lords, though, are perplexed.

“But what to me, my love?” Dumaine asks his lady. “What wish for me?”

“A beard, fair health—and *honesty*,” Katherine replies. “With three-fold *love* I wish you all these three!”

His loving gaze searches her face. “Oh, shall I say, ‘I thank you, gentle *wife*’?”

“Not so, my lord. A twelvemonth and a day I’ll mark no words that smooth-faced wooers say. Come when the king doth to my lady come; then, if I have much love,”—her eyes flash—“I’ll give you *some*.”

Dumaine bows and kisses her hand, content. “I’ll serve thee truly and faithfully till then!”

“Yet *swear* not,” says Katherine, “lest ye be forsworn again.”

Longaville regards the beauty he has courted. “What says Maria?”

“At the twelvemonth’s end, I’ll exchange my black gown for a *faithful* friend.”

Longaville bows. “I’ll stay with patience; but the time is long.”

Maria smiles. “The more like *you*: few as tall are so young!”

Berowne approaches the pensive Rosaline to learn his fate. “Studies my lady?”

“Mistress, look on me; behold the window of my heart, mine eye, and what humble suit attends thine answer there. Impose some service on me for thy love!”

Rosaline regards him. “Oft had I heard of you, my lord Berowne, before I saw you; and the world’s large tongue proclaims you for a man *replete* with *mocks*, full of *comparisons* and *wounding flouts*, which you will execute on all estates that lie within the mercy of your wit.

“To weed this wormwood from your fruitful brain—and therewithal to win me, if you please—without the which I am not to be won—you shall, this twelvemonth term, from day to day visit the *speechless sick*, and ever converse with the *groaning wretched*.

“And your task shall be, with all the fierce endeavor of your wit, to induce the pained powerless,” she says softly, “to *smile*.”

Cries Berowne, “To move wild *laughter* in the throat of *Death*? It cannot *be*; it is impossible! *Mirth* cannot move a soul in agony!”

Rosaline is adamant. “That’s the way to choke a *gibing* spirit!—whose insolence is begot of that *loose* grace which shallow, laughing hearers give to *fools!*”

“A jest’s *propriety* lies in the ear of him that *hears* it, never in the tongue of him that makes it. If sickly ears, deafened with the clamours of their own costly *groans*, will hear your idle scorns, then continue, and I will have you *and* that fault withal.”

She touches his hand. “But if they will *not*, *throw away* that spirit—and I shall find you, empty of that fault, right *joyful* for your reformation!”

“A *twelvemonth*,” mutters Berowne, pulling off his hat, and running a hand through his hair. He decides. “Well. Befall what will befall, I’ll jest a twelvemonth in a *hospital!*”

The queen curtsies to the king. “*Ah*, sweet my lord, and so I take my leave.”

“No, madam,” he says gently, offering his arm, “we will bring you along your way.”

Berowne is accustomed to swift satisfaction—and on his own terms. “Our wooing doth not end like an old *play!*—Jack hath not Jill! These ladies’ courtesy might well have made our sport a *comedy*,” he grumbles.

“Come, sir,” says the king calmly, “it wants but a twelvemonth and a day, and then ’twill end.”

Berowne laughs “That’s too long for a *play!*” But he takes Rosaline’s hand; he will undertake his new role earnestly.

Don Adriano de Armado has returned to the pavilion, and he approaches the king. “Sweet Majesty, vouchsafe me—”

“Was not that *Hector?*” asks the queen.

“The worthy knight of Troy,” says Dumaine; he bows to Señor Armado.

Don Adriano kneels before the queen. “I will kiss thy royal finger and take leave.

“I am a *votary*,” he reports, still surprised himself. “I have vowed to Jaquenetta to *hold the plough* for her sweet love, these years.” He blinks, again amazed at the prospect.

He continues: “But, Most Esteemèd Greatness, will you hear the dialogue that the two *learnèd* men have compiled, in praise of the *owl* and the *cuckoo*? It should have followed in the end of our show....”

The king smiles kindly. “Call them forth quickly; we will do so.”

Don Adriano rises and turns toward the pavilion’s opening. “*Holla! Approach!*”

Into the space before the nobles, the pastor and the teacher lead Moth and Costard, followed by the village dancers. They form two congregations facing the lovers.

“This side is *Hiems*, winter,” the knight explains, “this *Ver*, the spring; the one maintained by the owl, the other by the cuckoo.

“*Ver*, begin!”

Nathaniel motions Moth forward to lead his singers in “The Song of Spring.”

“When daisies pied, and violets blue,

And lady-smocks all silver-white,

And dandelion buds of yellow hue

Do paint the meadows with *delight*,

The cuckoo then, on every tree,

Mocks married men—for thus sings he:

Cuckoo, cuckoo! Oh, word of fear,

Unpleasing to a *married* ear!”—because it sounds like *cuckold*.

“When shepherds tread on oaten straws,

And merry larks are ploughmen’s clocks,

When turtledoves pipe at rooks and daws,

And maidens bleach their summer smocks,

The cuckoo then, on every tree,

Mocks married men—for thus sings he:

Cuckoo, cuckoo! Oh, word of fear,
Unpleasing to a *married* ear!”

Happily acknowledging the listeners’ laughter and clapping, the boy and the cleric bow.
Costard nods to Holofernes, and steps forward to perform, with his people, “The Song of Winter.”

“When *icicles* hang beside the wall,
And Dick the shepherd blows his nails,
And Tom bears logs into the hall,
And milk comes *frozen* home in pails,
When blood is nipped, and ways be foul,
Then nightly sings the staring owl:
Tu-whit; Tu-who!—a merry note!—
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot!

“When all aloud the wind doth blow,
And *coughing* drowns the parson’s saw,
And birds sit brooding in the *snow*,
And Marian’s nose looks red and raw,
When roasted apples hiss in the bowl,
Then nightly sings the staring owl,
Tu-whit; Tu-who!—a merry note—
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot!”

The new gentleman-farmer joins in the applause. “The words of Mercury are harsh after the songs of Apollo!

“You that way!” cries Don Adriano jovially, as the nobles leave, “we this way!”