

LOVE'S LABOR'S LOST

A line-by-line translation

Act 1, Scene 1

Shakespeare

Enter FERDINAND king of Navarre, BIRON, LONGAVILLE and DUMAIN

FERDINAND

Let fame, that all hunt after in their lives,
Live register'd upon our brazen tombs
And then grace us in the disgrace of death;
When, spite of cormorant devouring Time,
5 The endeavor of this present breath may buy
That honour which shall bate his scythe's keen edge
And make us heirs of all eternity.
Therefore, brave conquerors,—for so you are,
That war against your own affections
10 And the huge army of the world's desires,—
Our late edict shall strongly stand in force:
Navarre shall be the wonder of the world;
Our court shall be a little Academe,
Still and contemplative in living art.
15 You three, Biron, Dumain, and Longaville,
Have sworn for three years' term to live with me
My fellow-scholars, and to keep those statutes
That are recorded in this schedule here:
Your oaths are pass'd; and now subscribe your names,
20 That his own hand may strike his honour down
That violates the smallest branch herein:
If you are arm'd to do as sworn to do,
Subscribe to your deep oaths, and keep it too.

LONGAVILLE

I am resolved; 'tis but a three years' fast:
25 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.

DUMAIN

My loving lord, Dumain is mortified:
The grosser manner of these world's delights
30 He throws upon the gross world's baser slaves:
To love, to wealth, to pomp, I pine and die;
With all these living in philosophy.

BIRON

I can but say their protestation over;
So much, dear liege, I have already sworn,
35 That is, to live and study here three years.
But there are other strict observances;
As, not to see a woman in that term,
Which I hope well is not enrolled there;
And one day in a week to touch no food
40 And but one meal on every day beside,
The which I hope is not enrolled there;
And then, to sleep but three hours in the night,
And not be seen to wink of all the day—
When I was wont to think no harm all night
45 And make a dark night too of half the day—
Which I hope well is not enrolled there:
O, these are barren tasks, too hard to keep,
Not to see ladies, study, fast, not sleep!



FERDINAND

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

Shakescleare Translation

FERDINAND king of Navarre, BIRON, LONGAVILLE and DUMAIN enter.

FERDINAND

Fame, the thing that we all want in our lives, should be engraved brazenly onto our tombs, commanding us respect even after death has destroyed us. In spite of time's quick passing, the things we have done while alive can embolden us to fight honorably against death and ensure we are remembered forever. Therefore, my brave conquerors , for that is what you are, our recent agreement will be binding and help us to fight the war against our own passions and the desires of this great world. Navarre  will be the wonder of the world. Our court will be like a little university, a place to stop and think about how to live our lives. You three men, Biron, Dumain and Longaville, have promised to stay with me for three years as my fellow scholars, and to obey the rules that are written down in this agreement here. Your oaths have been pledged and now you must sign your names, so that if you break even the smallest detail of this agreement, you will have lost your honor by your own hand. If you are prepared to do what is written here, then sign your names and keep these promises.

LONGAVILLE

I will do it; it is only three years! My mind will indulge in knowledge, even when my body goes hungry. Fat people are stupid, and delicious things makes the stomach larger, but intelligence and wit smaller. *[He signs the oath]*

DUMAIN


My loving lord, I am embarrassed by these things. The rude nature of these worldly pleasures should be left for the lowlifes of this world, like slaves. Let them love, indulge and do extravagant things, I will suffer and die with all the people who have chosen knowledge and wisdom instead.


BIRON

Now that they have finished talking, I feel that I have to say something. My dear lord, I have already promised to study here with you for three years. But as to the other things which you want us to promise: to not see a woman this entire time, which I hope is not written there; to fast for one day a week and to only eat one meal every other day, which I also hope is not written there; to only sleep for three hours every night and to not close your eyes at all during the day, when all I want is to sleep all night and for half of the day as well, I hope is not written there! Oh these tasks are pointless and will be too hard to keep, not to see women, to study, and to not even eat or sleep!

FERDINAND

In your oath you promise to give up these things.

 A reference to them as "conquerors" assumes that they have won this "war" even before it has started.

 Navarre is a region located in northern Spain. During Shakespeare's time, it stood as a kingdom and some scholars have suggested that the play lost popularity as Shakespeare's portrayal of the court became less relevant.

BIRON

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

LONGAVILLE

You swore to that, Biron, and to the rest.

BIRON

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

FERDINAND

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

BIRON

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

FERDINAND

Ay, that is study's godlike recompense.

BIRON

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

FERDINAND

70 These be the stops that hinder study quite
And train our intellects to vain delight.

BIRON

Why, all delights are vain; but that most vain,
Which with pain purchased doth inherit pain:
As, painfully to pore upon a book
75 To seek the light of truth; while truth the while
Doth falsely blind the eyesight of his look:
Light seeking light doth light of light beguile:
So, ere you find where light in darkness lies,
Your light grows dark by losing of your eyes.
80 Study me how to please the eye indeed
By fixing it upon a fairer eye,
Who dazzling so, that eye shall be his heed
And give him light that it was blinded by.
Study is like the heaven's glorious sun
85 That will not be deep-search'd with saucy looks:
Small have continual plodders ever won
Save base authority from others' books
These earthly godfathers of heaven's lights
That give a name to every fixed star
90 Have no more profit of their shining nights
Than those that walk and wot not what they are.
Too much to know is to know nought but fame;
And every godfather can give a name.

FERDINAND

How well he's read, to reason against reading!

DUMAIN

95 Proceeded well, to stop all good proceeding!

BIRON

Then I must say no, my lord, since I only promised to study
with you and stay in your court for three years.

LONGAVILLE

You swore to more than that Biron.

BIRON

Perhaps I did, sir, but I was only joking. Tell me, what is the
point of this study?

FERDINAND

Well, of course, to know things that we didn't know before.

BIRON

Are you talking about things that common sense hides and
conceals from us?

FERDINAND

Why yes, that is the divine advantage of study.



BIRON

Okay then, I will promise to study as you wish, and will
hopefully find out the things which I am not meant to know.
It shall be like this: I must study where I eat, even though I
am now forbidden to eat at all; I must study where I could
meet beautiful women, as all beautiful women are hidden
from common sense. Or, if I have committed myself to an
oath which is too hard to keep, I must learn how to break it
without breaking my faith. If this is the purpose of study,
then studying has a lot to learn itself! Come on then, I will
swear to this oath, and I will never say no to anything.

FERDINAND

These things are the obstacles that stop us from studying
and tempt our minds to pointless pleasures.


BIRON


Well aren't all pleasures pointless? Although the most
pointless, the thing which requires work to get, and also
comes with suffering and difficulty, is the effort required to
make sense of a book to search for the truth. Your vision is
clouded by lies and treachery; eyes, which are searching for
knowledge, often make themselves unable to see properly .
So, before you can find the skill to understand obscure
knowledge, you lose the ability to understand anything
because your eyes no longer work. Let me study how to
please an eye instead, by giving me a beautiful woman's
eye to gaze into, I will be dazzled, and that more beautiful
eye will be my focus and will give me back the power to see.
Study is like the sun, it shouldn't be looked at with rude
glances—people who constantly do dull work have never
learnt much, except common material from other people's
books. The astronomers who have named every star don't
get any greater benefits from the shining night sky, than
the people who walk around and don't know what any of
them are. People who know too much, only learn for the
fame it brings them, but anyone can have a name .


FERDINAND


How intelligent he must be, to even argue against reading!

DUMAIN

He argues well  and stops us in our learning.

 Eyes were thought to create and project the light by which they saw. This section of speech is the first of the play's many reference to eyes and sight.

 "And every godfather can give a name" - in the original the implication is that it is easy for godparents to give names to the person being baptized. Even though learning brings a certain kind of fame for scholars, the type of fame is like a name that anyone can be given.

 The original, "proceeded", plays upon the term "proceed" as used to indicate obtaining a degree.

LONGAVILLE

He weeds the corn and still lets grow the weeding.

BIRON

The spring is near when green geese are a-breeding.

DUMAIN

How follows that?

BIRON

Fit in his place and time.

DUMAIN

100 In reason nothing.

BIRON

Something then in rhyme.

FERDINAND

Biron is like an envious sneaping frost,
That bites the first-born infants of the spring.

BIRON

105 Well, say I am; why should proud summer boast
Before the birds have any cause to sing?
Why should I joy in any abortive birth?
At Christmas I no more desire a rose
Than wish a snow in May's new-fangled mirth;
But like of each thing that in season grows.
110 So you, to study now it is too late,
Climb o'er the house to unlock the little gate.

FERDINAND

Well, sit you out: go home, Biron: adieu.

BIRON

115 No, my good lord; I have sworn to stay with you:
And though I have for barbarism spoke more
Than for that angel knowledge you can say,
Yet confident I'll keep what I have sworn
And bide the penance of each three years' day.
Give me the paper; let me read the same;
And to the strict'st decrees I'll write my name.

FERDINAND

120 How well this yielding rescues thee from shame!

BIRON

[Reads] 'Item, That no woman shall come within a
mile of my court:' Hath this been proclaimed?

LONGAVILLE

Four days ago.

BIRON

125 Let's see the penalty.

Reads

BIRON

'On pain of losing her tongue.' Who devised this
penalty?

LONGAVILLE

He pulls out the wheat ⁶, and leaves the weeds to keep
growing.

⁶ The implication here is that he extracts the very best bits and leaves the weeds to keep growing.

BIRON

When geese lay their eggs, it means that it is almost spring ⁷

⁷ In the original text, Biron speaks a line which is not connected to what the others have been saying, but ends with the word "breeding" to mock the rhyming nature of the prior three lines ("reading," "proceeding," and "weeding").

DUMAIN

What is the next line?

BIRON

Something appropriate to its place and time.

DUMAIN

There is nothing in reason.

BIRON

Then follow with something in rhyme.

FERDINAND

Biron is like an evil, biting frost, that eats away at spring's
young flowers.

BIRON

Well what if I am? Why should the arrogant summer show
off before the birds have a reason to sing? Why should I
enjoy such an unnatural event? When it is Christmas, I don't
hope to see a rose; when it is May and the ground is covered
in flowers I don't hope to see snow—I simply enjoy the
things that do grow in that season. This is the same as your
decision to study now, it is completely pointless. ⁸

⁸ "Climb o'er the house to unlock the little gate". The original line has no precedence, but appears to be a further example of doing something pointless or unnatural to correlate with the rest of Biron's speech.

FERDINAND

Fine, don't sign the oath. Go home, Biron, see you later.

BIRON

No, my good lord. I have promised to stay with you. Even
though I have spoken more against this study, than you
have been able to in favor of this "divine knowledge," I am
confident that I will stick to this oath, and endure this
punishment every day for three years. Come on, give me
the paper. I will read these promises and then sign my
name to these extreme rules.

FERDINAND

At least it saves you from the shame of not agreeing!

BIRON

[Reading] "The first item—that no woman will come within
a mile of my court." Has this been announced?

LONGAVILLE

Four days ago.

BIRON

Let's see what the punishment would be.

BIRON reads.

BIRON

"She would lose her tongue." Who came up with this
punishment?!

LONGAVILLE

Marry, that did I.

BIRON

130 Sweet lord, and why?

LONGAVILLE

To fright them hence with that dread penalty.

BIRON

A dangerous law against gentility!

Reads

BIRON

135 'Item, if any man be seen to talk with a woman
within the term of three years, he shall endure such
public shame as the rest of the court can possibly
devise.'

This article, my liege, yourself must break;
For well you know here comes in embassy

140 The French King's daughter with yourself to speak--

A maid of grace and complete majesty--

About surrender up of Aquitaine

To her decrepit, sick and bedrid father:

Therefore this article is made in vain,

145 Or vainly comes the admired Princess hither.

FERDINAND

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

BIRON

So study evermore is overshot:

While it doth study to have what it would

It doth forget to do the thing it should,

150 And when it hath the thing it hunteth most,

'Tis won as towns with fire, so won, so lost.

FERDINAND

We must of force dispense with this decree;

She must lie here on mere necessity.

BIRON

Necessity will make us all forsworn

155 Three thousand times within this three years' space;

For every man with his affects is born,

Not by might master'd but by special grace:

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

I am forsworn on 'mere necessity.'

160 So to the laws at large I write my name:

Subscribes

BIRON

And he that breaks them in the least degree

Stands in attainder of eternal shame:

Suggestions are to other as to me;

But I believe, although I seem so loath,

165 I am the last that will last keep his oath.

But is there no quick recreation granted?

FERDINAND

Ay, that there is. Our court, you know, is haunted

With a refined traveller of Spain;

A man in all the world's new fashion planted,

170 That hath a mint of phrases in his brain;

One whom the music of his own vain tongue

Doth ravish like enchanting harmony;

A man of complements, whom right and wrong

Have chose as umpire of their mutiny:

175 This child of fancy, that Armado hight,

LONGAVILLE

That was me.

BIRON

Why, sweet friend?

LONGAVILLE

To scare them off with such a harsh punishment.

BIRON

This is a dangerous law that goes against good manners.

BIRON reads.

BIRON

"The next item, if any man is seen talking to a woman within these three years, then he will have to endure whatever public shame the rest of the court can come up with." My lord, you are going to have to break this rule yourself! Did you forget that the French King's daughter is coming here as an ambassador to speak with you? She is a lady of charm and perfect dignity, and wishes to speak with you about the possibility of giving up Aquitaine ⁹ to her weak, sick and bed-bound father. Therefore, this rule is pointless, or else it is pointless for the admired Princess to come here.

⁹ Aquitaine is the archaic name for a region in South-West France. It is now part of the region Nouvelle-Aquitaine.

FERDINAND

What do you think of this, lords? I had quite forgotten about it.

BIRON

Look, once more studying has ignored its own boundaries.

Although it wants you to learn all the things that you wish

to know, it forgets the things that you need to know! Even when it has the thing that it wants the most, it is destroyed, just like a town that has been captured with fire ¹⁰.

¹⁰ Shakespeare here is using a paradox: in the course of capturing a town using fire, that town is therefore destroyed.

FERDINAND

Then it is vital for us to get rid of this rule, it is an absolute necessity that the Princess stays here.

BIRON

I predict that necessity will make us all break these

promises three thousand times within these three years.

For every man is born with his own desires, and these

cannot be controlled by anyone, except God. If I break any

of these promises, then let it be said that I only did it out of

"mere necessity." With this in mind, I will sign my name to

the rules that remain.

BIRON signs his name.

BIRON

The man that breaks any of these oaths even slightly is condemned to eternal shame. I am as prone to temptations as any other man, but I believe, even though I was the most reluctant, I will be the last one to break these oaths. Will we be allowed any entertainment at all?

FERDINAND

Of course there is. Our court, you know, is visited regularly

by a stylish traveler from Spain, who always appears in the

latest fashions and has a variety of witty expressions to

deliver. The words he speaks are like music to me, they

have a magical, enchanting quality. He is a man who is

always polite, and he sits in between right and wrong,

almost like an umpire in their game ¹¹. This fantastic

creature, called ¹² Armado, will be a break from our

studies, and can tell us in noble words, the achievements of

¹¹ In other words, he frequently treads the line between right and wrong.

¹² The original "hight" is an archaic term, meaning "is called", and is used

For interim to our studies shall relate
 In high-born words the worth of many a knight
 From tawny Spain lost in the world's debate.
 How you delight, my lords, I know not, I;
 180 But, I protest, I love to hear him lie
 And I will use him for my minstrelsy.

BIRON

Armado is a most illustrious wight,
 A man of fire-new words, fashion's own knight.

LONGAVILLE

185 Costard the swain and he shall be our sport;
 And so to study, three years is but short.

Enter DULL with a letter, and COSTARD

DULL

Which is the duke's own person?

BIRON

This, fellow: what wouldst?

DULL

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

BIRON

This is he.

DULL

Signior Arme--Arme--commends you. There's villany
 abroad: this letter will tell you more.

COSTARD

195 Sir, the contempts thereof are as touching me.

FERDINAND

A letter from the magnificent Armado.

BIRON

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

LONGAVILLE

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

BIRON

200 To hear? or forbear laughing?

LONGAVILLE

To hear meekly, sir, and to laugh moderately; or to
 forbear both.

many knights from sunny Spain, that have been forgotten
 because of all the fighting we've been doing. I don't know
 what pleases you, my lords, but I must admit, I love hearing
 him lie ¹³ and I will use him for my entertainment ¹⁴.

to introduce this character of many words.

¹³ Shakespeare has used the term "lie" here as it is a common expression used in proverbs and tales to assume that poets and painters are liars.

¹⁴ In the original, "minstrelsy" translates to the company of minstrels who sang and told stories, so they are used here to represent general entertainment.

BIRON

Armado is a very renowned person, he is a man who makes
 up new words, and is a true knight of fashion.

LONGAVILLE

The servant Costard and him will be our entertainment and
 we will study like this. Come on, three years isn't actually
 that long.

DULL enters with a letter, bringing COSTARD with him.

DULL

Which of you represents the Duke?

BIRON

I do, what do you want?

DULL

I too represent the Duke, for I am his thirdborough ¹⁵ in
 this town. Still, I would like to see the Duke himself.

¹⁵ A thirdborough is an under-constable, or a low-ranked police officer, in a town. Dull misspells here and actually says "farborough."

BIRON

I am him.

DULL

Signior Arme...Arma... ¹⁶ hopes you are well. There have
 been bad things happening abroad, this letter will tell you
 more.

¹⁶ Dull is unable to pronounce Don Armado's name. This is backed up by his constant linguistic errors through this scene and the rest of the play.

COSTARD

Sir, the contents ¹⁷ of this letter are about me.

¹⁷ In the original, Costard says "contempts" instead of "contents." Costard, in a similar manner to Dull, is another character who is known for the errors in language that he makes throughout the play.

FERDINAND

A letter from the magnificent Armado.

BIRON

However bad the matter is, I hope to God that he speaks
 with good words.

LONGAVILLE

Good words are a bad sort of thing to hope to God for.
 Instead, let's ask him to give us patience!

BIRON

Patience to listen? Or patience to stop ourselves from
 laughing?

LONGAVILLE

To listen patiently, sir, and only laugh a little, or to do
 neither of these things.

BIRON

Well, sir, be it as the style shall give us cause to climb in the merriness.

COSTARD

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

BIRON

In what manner?

COSTARD

210 In manner and form following, sir; all those three: I was seen with her in the manor-house, sitting with her upon the form, and taken following her into the park; which, put together, is in manner and form following. Now, sir, for the manner,—it is the manner of a man to speak to a woman: for the form,—in some form.

BIRON

215 For the following, sir?

COSTARD

As it shall follow in my correction: and God defend the right!

FERDINAND

Will you hear this letter with attention?

BIRON

As we would hear an oracle.

COSTARD

220 Such is the simplicity of man to hearken after the flesh.

FERDINAND

[Reads] 'Great deputy, the welkin's vicegerent and sole dominator of Navarre, my soul's earth's god, and body's fostering patron.'

COSTARD

225 Not a word of Costard yet.

FERDINAND

[Reads] 'So it is,--'

COSTARD

It may be so: but if he say it is so, he is, in telling true, but so.

FERDINAND

Peace!

COSTARD

230 Be to me and every man that dares not fight!

FERDINAND

No words!

COSTARD

Of other men's secrets, I beseech you.

BIRON

Well sir, let's hope the style is good enough¹⁸ for us to enjoy it.

COSTARD

The matter is related to me, sir, as it concerns Jaquenetta. The fact is, I was found with Jaquenetta¹⁹.

BIRON

Found in what way?

COSTARD

In all three of these ways sir: I was seen with her in the manor-house, I sat with her on a bench, and was caught following her into the park. All three of these things put together have led to my arrest. Now sir, to speak about customs—it is the custom of a man to speak to²⁰ a woman, it is a habit, in some sense.

BIRON

And what we are about to hear?

COSTARD

After it I will be punished, and may God defend me!

FERDINAND

Will you listen to this letter carefully?

BIRON

As if we were listening to a prophecy.

COSTARD

Men are so stupid to not be able to resist women.

FERDINAND

[Reading] 'Great leader, the heavenly commander and only ruler of Navarre, my soul's god on earth and my body's protector.'

COSTARD

No mention of Costard yet.

FERDINAND

[Reading] "So it is..."

COSTARD

That might be true, but telling the truth isn't even worth much nowadays.

FERDINAND

Peace!

COSTARD

Peace be to me and every man who doesn't stick up for themselves!

FERDINAND

Stop talking!

COSTARD

I ask you to stop talking about other men's private affairs.

¹⁸ "Style" has been used as a pun here, with possible references to the height of a country "stile" which must be climbed over, or to a "style" as a sharp, pointed instrument, having sexual connotations.

¹⁹ "The manner of it is, I was taken with the manner"—The sense implied in the original is that Costard has been found in a sexual encounter with Jaquenetta and that is why he is being punished.

²⁰ The implied euphemism here is that it is a custom for a man to have sex with a woman.

FERDINAND

[Reads] "So it is, besieged with sable-coloured melancholy, I did commend the black-oppressing humour 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 beasts most 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 which? which, I mean, I walked upon: it is y-cleped thy park. Then 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 to the place where; it standeth north-north-east and by 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

250 Me?

FERDINAND

[Reads] "that unlettered small-knowing soul,"--

COSTARD

Me?

FERDINAND

[Reads] "that shallow vassal,"--

COSTARD

Still me?

FERDINAND

255 *[Reads]* "which, as I remember, hight Costard,"--

COSTARD

O, me!

FERDINAND

[Reads] "sorted and consorted, contrary to thy established proclaimed edict and continent canon, which with,--O, with--but with this I passion to say wherewith,"--

COSTARD

With a wench.

FERDINAND

[Reads] "with a child of our grandmother Eve, a female; or, for thy more sweet understanding, a woman. Him I, as my ever-esteemed 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."

DULL

'Me, an't shall please you; I am Anthony Dull.

FERDINAND

270 *[Reads]* "For Jaquenetta,--so is the weaker vessel called which I apprehended with the aforesaid swain,--I keep her as a vessel of the law's fury; and shall, at the least of thy sweet notice, bring her to trial. Thine, in all compliments of devoted and heart-burning heat of duty. ADRIANO DE ARMADO."

BIRON

This is not so well as I looked for, but the best that ever I heard.

FERDINAND

[Reading] "So this is what happened. I, filled with the darkest ²⁴ sadness, decided to ease my melancholy by giving it the medicine of some fresh air, and, on my word as a gentleman, I went for a walk. At what time? Around 6pm, the time when most animals eat, most birds peck at their food, and most men sit down to enjoy their evening meal. So much for that. Now you ask, what ground? What ground I walked upon. It is called the park. Then you ask where? Where I mean, that I saw the obscene and ridiculous event, that I have been forced to write about with my white goose-quill pen and my black ink, and that you are being forced to view, witness, analyze and see? As to the place where it happened, it was somewhere in between the north and the north-east from the secret place in the west of your complex ²⁴ garden. It was there that I saw this vile servant, so small that he should be laughed at."

COSTARD

Me?

FERDINAND

[Reading] "That illiterate, stupid boy,"

COSTARD

Me?

FERDINAND

[Reading] "that empty rascal,"

COSTARD

Still me?

FERDINAND

[Reading] "who, if I remember, is called Costard,"

COSTARD

Oh, it is me!

FERDINAND

[Reading] "who associated himself with and mingled, against your fixed oath and your rules, with, oh it pains me to say who with."

COSTARD

With a girl.

FERDINAND

[Reading] "with a child of Eve, a female, or if it helps you to understand it better, a woman. Encouraged by my sense of duty, I have sent him to you to be punished, along with your sweet grace's officer, Anthony Dull—a man who has a good reputation, behavior, manner and opinion."

DULL

That's me, if it pleases you. I am Anthony Dull.

FERDINAND

[Reading] "As for Jaquenetta, as she is the weaker of the two that I caught, I will keep her as a symbol of the law's anger and will, whenever you want me to, bring her to trial. Yours, with respects to my devoted and burning ²³ sense of duty. ADRIANO DE ARMADO."

BIRON

That is not as good a matter as I had hoped for, but it is one of the best letters that I have ever heard.

²⁴ "sable-colored" is related to the color black and the feeling of melancholy. This is one of the 4 humors, which is thought to be the product of too much black bile inside of you.

²⁴ "Curious-knotted" suggests that the garden was covered in an intricate pattern of flowers.

²³ The line reads "heart-burning" which uses the imagery of his heart being inflamed or distressed by his overwhelming sense of duty.

FERDINAND

Ay, the best for the worst. But, sirrah, what say you to this?

COSTARD

280 Sir, I confess the wench.

FERDINAND

Did you hear the proclamation?

COSTARD

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

FERDINAND

285 It was proclaimed a year's imprisonment, to be taken with a wench.

COSTARD

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

FERDINAND

Well, it was proclaimed 'damsel.'

COSTARD

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

FERDINAND

It is so varied, too; for it was proclaimed 'virgin.'

COSTARD

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

FERDINAND

This maid will not serve your turn, sir.

COSTARD

This maid will serve my turn, sir.

FERDINAND

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

COSTARD

I had rather pray a month with mutton and porridge.

FERDINAND

300 And Don Armado shall be your keeper.
My Lord Biron, see him deliver'd o'er:
And go we, lords, to put in practise that
Which each to other hath so strongly sworn.

Exeunt FERDINAND, LONGAVILLE, and DUMAIN

BIRON

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

COSTARD

305 I suffer for the truth, sir; for true it is, I was taken with Jaquenetta, and Jaquenetta is a true girl; and therefore welcome the sour cup of prosperity! Affliction may one day smile again; and

FERDINAND

Yes, it is the best example of something awful. But, boy, what do you have to say for yourself?

COSTARD

Sir, I admit to being with the wench.

FERDINAND

Did you hear the announcement?

COSTARD

I confess that I did hear it but I didn't pay much attention to it.

FERDINAND

It was announced that if you were found with a wench, you would be imprisoned for a year.

COSTARD

I was not found with a wench, sir, I was found with a damsel ²⁴ ²⁴ *In this archaic use of the word, "damsel" means a young, unmarried woman.*

FERDINAND

Well then, the same applies to a "damsel."

COSTARD

Then she was not a damsel either sir; she was a virgin.

FERDINAND

That is just the same thing expressed in different words; it also applies to "virgin."

COSTARD

If that's true then she is not a virgin, I was found with a maid.

FERDINAND

This maid will not help you sir.

COSTARD

This maid did help me ²⁵ sir.

²⁵ *Costard plays on the King's previous line, that the maid will not help him, joking that she will "serve [his] turn" and satisfy him sexually.*

FERDINAND

Sir, I will now announce your punishment. You will fast for a week with only bread and water.

COSTARD

I would rather pray for a month with some mutton and porridge.

FERDINAND

Don Armado shall look after you. My Lord Biron, take him to his house immediately. My lords, we shall go and start to live our lives according to the promises we have made.

FERDINAND, LONGAVILLE, and DUMAIN exit.

BIRON

I know for certain, these oaths and laws will prove to be pointless soon enough. Come on boy.

COSTARD

I will be punished for the truth sir, for it is true, I was found with Jaquenetta and she is a true girl. Therefore bring on my suffering ²⁶! My fortunes ²⁷ might one day turn around and until then, be patient sadness!

²⁶ *This is another error on Costard's part; he says "prosperity" when he probably means "adversity."*

till then, sit thee down, sorrow!

Exeunt

They exit.

²⁷ Another mistake from Costard; he claims that "Affliction may one day smile again" when it would normally be the Heavens of Fortune that would smile down on someone, not affliction.

Act 1, Scene 2

Shakespeare

Enter DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO and MOTH

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Boy, what sign is it when a man of great spirit grows melancholy?

MOTH

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

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

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

MOTH

5 No, no; O Lord, sir, no.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

How canst thou part sadness and melancholy, my tender juvenal?

MOTH

By a familiar demonstration of the working, my tough senior.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

10 Why tough senior? why tough senior?

MOTH

Why tender juvenal? why tender juvenal?

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

I spoke it, tender juvenal, as a congruent epitheton appertaining to thy young days, which we may nominate tender.

MOTH

15 And I, tough senior, as an appertinent title to your old time, which we may name tough.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Pretty and apt.

MOTH

How mean you, sir? I pretty, and my saying apt? or I apt, and my saying pretty?

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

20 Thou pretty, because little.

Shakescleare Translation

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO and MOTH enter.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

What does it mean, Moth, when a happy man becomes melancholy?

MOTH

It simply means, sir, that he is sad.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Well then sadness is always the same, dear child.

MOTH

No no. Oh my Lord, sir, no.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

How can you understand sadness and melancholy, my dear boy?

MOTH

I have often seen how it works, my tough master.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Why "tough master?" Why "tough master?"

MOTH

Why "dear boy?" Why "dear boy?"

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

I said it, dear boy, as a suitable description for your youth, which I consider it dear.

MOTH

And I called you my tough master, as a suitable description for your old age, which we should think of as tough.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Pretty appropriate ²⁸.

²⁸ In the original, the phrase "Pretty and apt" is a literary device called a hendiadys, in which two words meant to go together in order are separated by the word "and," as in common phrases like "lean and mean" or "nice and warm." Moth misinterprets the intended phrase "pretty apt" as "pretty and apt" and gets confused.

MOTH

What do you mean, sir? Am I pretty and my words appropriate or am I appropriate and my words pretty?

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

You are pretty because you are little.

MOTH

Little pretty, because little. Wherefore apt?

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

And therefore apt, because quick.

MOTH

Speak you this in my praise, master?

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

In thy condign praise.

MOTH

25 I will praise an eel with the same praise.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

What, that an eel is ingenious?

MOTH

That an eel is quick.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

I do say thou art quick in answers: thou heatest my blood.

MOTH

30 I am answered, sir.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

I love not to be crossed.

MOTH

[Aside] He speaks the mere contrary; crosses love not him.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

I have promised to study three years with the duke.

MOTH

35 You may do it in an hour, sir.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Impossible.

MOTH

How many is one thrice told?

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

I am ill at reckoning; it fitteth the spirit of a tapster.

MOTH

40 You are a gentleman and a gamester, sir.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

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

MOTH

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

MOTH

I am a little pretty, because I am little. So am I not appropriate at all?

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

And indeed you are appropriate, because you are so quick.

MOTH

Are you praising me, my master?

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

It is well deserved.

MOTH

An eel could be praised in the same way as you have praised me.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

What, is an eel so clever?

MOTH

An eel is quick.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

I meant that your wit is quick! You're making my blood boil.

MOTH

I understand now sir.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

I do not like being contradicted.

MOTH

[To himself] That's difficult when his very words are contradictions 2.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

I have promised that I will study for three years with the Duke.

MOTH

You could do that in an hour, sir.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Impossible!

MOTH

What is one times three?

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

I am not good at calculations, that is the job of the tavern-keeper.

MOTH

You are both a gentleman and a gambler, sir.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

I admit to being both—they are the embellishments 3 of a complete man.

MOTH

Then you must know the total sum of a deuce-ace 4?

2 In the original, the reference to "crosses love not him" is to the idea that coins, which used to have crosses stamped on one side of them, would not be attracted to him.

3 In the original, "varnish" connotes the idea of a finishing gloss on the top of something, so embellishment conveys this sense appropriately.

4 A deuce ace is the number that is the sum of $1 + 1 + 1$, hence why Armado claims "it amounts to one more than two" (i.e., three).

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

45 It doth amount to one more than two.

MOTH

Which the base vulgar do call three.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

True.

MOTH

Why, sir, is this such a piece of study? Now heret
is three studied, ere ye'll thrice wink; and how
50 easy it is to put 'years' to the word 'three,' and
study three years in two words, the dancing horse
will tell you.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

A most fine figure!

MOTH

[*Aside*] To prove you a cipher.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

55 I will hereupon confess I am in love: 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 humour
of affection would deliver me from the reprobate
thought of it, I would take Desire prisoner, and
60 ransom him to any French courtier for a new-devised
curtsy. I think scorn to sigh: methinks I should
outswear Cupid. Comfort, me, boy: what great men
have been in love?

MOTH

Hercules, master.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

65 Most sweet Hercules! More authority, dear boy, name
more; and, sweet my child, let them be men of good
repute and carriage.

MOTH

Samson, master: he was a man of good carriage, great
carriage, for he carried the town-gates on his back
70 like a porter: and he was in love.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

O well-knit Samson! strong-jointed Samson! 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?

MOTH

75 A woman, master.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Of what complexion?

MOTH

Of all the four, or the three, or the two, or one of
the four.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

It amounts to one more than two.

MOTH

Which the common people would call three.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

True.

MOTH

Why are you undertaking this difficult task sir? Here we
have managed to work out three, before we have even
blinked three times. How easy it would be to just add the
word "years" onto the end of the word "three" and there
you have it, three years of study in only two words, as [the](#)
dancing horse [5](#) would tell you.

[5](#) An obscure reference, probably to a performing horse, called Morocco, who was referred to by other writers and who could supposedly dance and count by stamping its hoofs.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

What an excellent figure of speech!

MOTH

[*To himself*] That means [nothing](#) [6](#).

[6](#) A "cipher" is a zero; in math, when placed after a figure, it increases its value. Moth is continuing the mathematical language of the previous lines.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

I must confess to you, Moth, that I am in love. As it is cheap
of a soldier to fall in love, it is only fitting that I have fallen in
love with a cheap girl. If I could fight against my desire to
love and escape these corrupt thoughts, I would take Love
as my prisoner and sell it off to the next French attendant
that bows to me [7](#). It is disgraceful for me to sigh with love
when I should abandon Cupid for good. Comfort me, my
boy—what great men have been in love before?

[7](#) The "new-devised curtsy" referred to a newly invented bow which would have been popular in the fashions of the time.

MOTH

Hercules has, master.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Oh most sweet Hercules! Tell me more, dear boy, tell me
more! And my sweet child, let them be men with good
reputations and behavior.

MOTH

What about Samson [8](#), master? He was a man who carried
a lot of power, immense power in fact, for he carried the
burden of the town-gates on his back and he was in love.

[8](#) Moth is referring to the biblical figure of Samson, who was given immense strength, until he fell in love with Delilah, who betrayed him and cut off all his hair, the key to his strength.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Oh worthy Samson! Oh strong Samson! I may be better
than you with my sword but you are better than me at
carrying town-gates [9](#). I am in love too. Who was
Samson's love, my dear Moth?

[9](#) In one Biblical verse, Samson removed and carried off the gates of Gaza to avoid death after spending the night with a prostitute.

MOTH

A woman, Master.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

What was she like?

MOTH

She was of all the four, or three, or two, or maybe [one of the](#)
[four](#) [10](#).

[10](#) Moth is referring to the four humors (blood, yellow bile, black bile, and phlegm) which were believed to hold influence over one's emotions and personality.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Tell me precisely of what complexion.

MOTH

80 Of the sea-water green, sir.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Is that one of the four complexions?

MOTH

As I have read, sir; and the best of them too.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

85 Green indeed is the colour of lovers; but to have a love of that colour, methinks Samson had small reason for it. He surely affected her for her wit.

MOTH

It was so, sir; for she had a green wit.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

My love is most immaculate white and red.

MOTH

Most maculate thoughts, master, are masked under such colours.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

90 Define, define, well-educated infant.

MOTH

My father's wit and my mother's tongue, assist me!

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Sweet invocation of a child; most pretty and pathetic!

MOTH

95 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,
100 For still her cheeks possess the same
Which native she doth owe.
A dangerous rhyme, master, against the reason of
white and red.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Is there not a ballad, boy, of the King and the Beggar?

MOTH

105 The world was very guilty of such a ballad some
three ages since: but I think now 'tis not to be
found; or, if it were, it would neither serve for
the writing nor the tune.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

110 I will have that subject newly writ o'er, that I may
example my digression by some mighty precedent.
Boy, I do love that country girl that I took in the
park with the rational hind Costard: she deserves well.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Tell me precisely what she was like.

MOTH

She was green like sea-water.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Is that related to one of the four humors?

MOTH

That's what I've read sir, and apparently it's the best of them too.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Green is certainly the color of lovers ¹¹, but it would seem strange for Samson to have chosen a green lover. He must have loved her for her cleverness.

MOTH

I'm sure he did sir, for she had a childish wit. ¹²

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

My own love is the color of purest white and red.

MOTH

Yet dirty thoughts are hidden under these colors, master.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Explain what you mean, my clever child.

MOTH

May my father's wit and my mother's tongue help me!

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Speak my child, with sweet and moving words!

MOTH

If she is the color of white and red ¹³,
No-one will ever know her flaws,
For cheeks blush when people make mistakes
And fear makes a person turn white.
So even if she is scared or does something wrong,
You will never know this by her face,
For her cheeks will always keep the same color
That they have naturally.
A dangerous poem, master, warning against a woman of
white and red.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Is there not a ballad you can sing instead boy, about the King and the Beggar ¹⁴?

MOTH

There used to be a ballad on that subject a long time ago, but by now it has either been lost or, if found, would not be an acceptable subject for such a tale.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

I will have this story written out again, so that I can justify my own actions with a previous example. Boy, I do love that country girl that I found in the park with the rational servant ¹⁵ Costard; she deserves great things.

¹¹ Here Shakespeare refers to green as the "color of lovers" because of its association with jealousy, as in the common phrase "green with envy."

¹² Green was not actually a color connected to the four humors, but was typically associated with innocence.

¹³ Moth's warning against a woman who is the color of white and red could also be linked to a fear of women who wore cosmetics on their faces, and thus "painted" themselves.

¹⁴ "The King and the Beggar" is the story of an African King who was known for his lack of sexual desire, until he falls in love with and marries a beggar woman.

¹⁵ Armado may be trying to describe a "human hind" with "hind" referring to a beast; it is also possible that he

really means to say "irrational" (either an intentional or unintentional error).

MOTH

[Aside] To be whipped; and yet a better love than my master.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

115 Sing, boy; my spirit grows heavy in love.

MOTH

[Aside] And that's great marvel, loving a light wench.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

I say, sing.

MOTH

Forbear till this company be past.

Enter DULL, COSTARD, and JAQUENETTA

DULL

120 Sir, the Duke's pleasure is, that you keep Costard safe: and you must suffer him to take no delight nor no penance; but a' must fast three days a week. For this damsel, I must keep her at the park: she is allowed for the day-woman. Fare you well.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

125 I do betray myself with blushing. Maid!

JAQUENETTA

Man.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

I will visit thee at the lodge.

JAQUENETTA

That's hereby.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

I know where it is situate.

JAQUENETTA

130 Lord, how wise you are!

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

I will tell thee wonders.

JAQUENETTA

With that face?

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

I love thee.

JAQUENETTA

So I heard you say.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

135 And so, farewell.

MOTH

[To himself] She deserves to be whipped more like. Although she also deserves to be loved by someone better than my master.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Sing for me Moth, my heart burns with love.

MOTH

[To himself] And that's quite incredible, when you love a fiery ¹⁶ wench.

¹⁶ The meaning conveyed in the original is hard to replicate for a modern translation. Armado speaks of the "heaviness" in his heart because of his love for Jaquenetta and Moth retorts by calling her a 'light wench' which implies that she is unchaste and promiscuous, hence "fiery".

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

I said sing!

MOTH

Wait until these people have gone.

DULL, COSTARD, and JAQUENETTA enter.

DULL

Sir, the Duke wants you to keep Costard safe and ensure that he has no pleasures and no punishments. He must fast for three days a week. I will keep this maid at the park, she is going to be the dairy-woman. Goodbye.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

I reveal my true feelings by blushing. Maid!

JAQUENETTA

Man.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

I will visit you at the house in the forest.

JAQUENETTA

That's near here.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

I know where it is.

JAQUENETTA

Lord, you are so wise!

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

I will tell you wonderful things.

JAQUENETTA

Really ¹⁷?

¹⁷ "With that face?" could be an implication that Armado has an unpleasant, or dishonest, face.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

I love you.

JAQUENETTA

You have said that before.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Goodbye then.

JAQUENETTA

Fair weather after you!

DULL

Come, Jaquenetta, away!

Exeunt DULL and JAQUENETTA

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

140 Villain, thou shalt fast for thy offences ere thou be pardoned.

COSTARD

Well, sir, I hope, when I do it, I shall do it on a full stomach.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Thou shalt be heavily punished.

COSTARD

145 I am more bound to you than your fellows, for they are but lightly rewarded.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Take away this villain; shut him up.

MOTH

Come, you transgressing slave; away!

COSTARD

Let me not be pent up, sir: I will fast, being loose.

MOTH

150 No, sir; that were fast and loose: thou shalt to prison.

COSTARD

Well, if ever I do see the merry days of desolation that I have seen, some shall see.

MOTH

What shall some see?

COSTARD

155 Nay, nothing, Master Moth, but what they look upon. It is not for prisoners to be too silent in their words; and therefore I will say nothing: I thank God I have as little patience as another man; and therefore I can be quiet.

Exeunt MOTH and COSTARD

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

160 I do affect the very ground, which is base, where her shoe, which is baser, guided by her foot, which is basest, doth tread. 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? Love is a familiar; Love is a devil: there is no evil angel but Love. Yet was Samson so tempted, and he had an excellent strength; yet was Solomon so seduced, and he had a very good wit.

JAQUENETTA

May the sun shine for you!

DULL

Come Jaquenetta, let's go!

DULL and JAQUENETTA exit.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Villain, you will fast for your offenses before you are forgiven.

COSTARD

Well then I hope, when I do it, I can do it on a full stomach ¹⁸

¹⁸ Costard is referring to the proverb, "The belly that is full may well fast," and the association of a "full stomach" with courage.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

You will be heavily punished.

COSTARD

I am closer to you than your servants, for they are only lightly rewarded when I am heavily punished.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Take away this villain, shut him up.

MOTH

Come on, you misbehaving slave. Let's go!

COSTARD

Don't let me be imprisoned sir! I can fast and be free.

MOTH

No sir, that would be unfair ¹⁹. You must go to prison.

¹⁹ Moth's original phrase, "fast and loose" calls on an old, deceitful game that involved an object which appears stuck easily becoming loose.

COSTARD

Well if I ever get to feel the happiness that I have felt before ²⁰, then some people shall see.

²⁰ In the original, the word "desolation" is likely to be a mistake by either Costard as a character, or a compositor. A word like "consolation" or "jubilation" would seem more fitting in relation to what he is saying.

MOTH

What shall people see?

COSTARD

No, nothing, Master Moth, except what they are looking at. It is not right for a prisoner to be that free ²¹ with their words, and so I won't say anything at all. I am grateful that I have as much ²² patience as any other men and so can easily be quiet.

²¹ Another error; instead of silent, the meaning conveyed is the danger of a prisoner being too free or careless with their words, not silent with them.

²² A further error on Costard's part; the meaning intended is "much" but he says "little," a further display of his stupidity in this scene.

MOTH and COSTARD exit.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

I now love even the common ground where her shoe, and indeed her common foot have walked. I am going to break my oath and prove myself to be a liar, if I love her. Can it be true love if it is started under false pretenses? Love is an evil spirit, it is a devil; Love is the only evil angel. Yet even Samson was tempted by this evil angel, and he was incredibly strong; Solomon too was seduced by love, and he was incredibly clever. Cupid's arrow is even more powerful than Hercules' club and so what hope do I have

²³ Physical strength is useless against Cupid and his arrow; he uses fighting imagery to emphasize the

170 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 will not serve my turn;
the passado he respects not, the duello he regards
not: his disgrace is to be called boy; but his
175 glory is to subdue men. Adieu, valour! rust rapier!
be still, drum! for your manager is in love; yea,
he loveth. Assist me, some extemporal god of rhyme,
for I am sure I shall turn sonnet. Devise, wit;
write, pen; for I am for whole volumes in folio.

Exit

with my sword? He doesn't follow any of the rules of fighting ²³—there is no passado ²⁴, there is no duello ²⁵. He may be seen as a boy, but he has the power to destroy men. Goodbye courage! My sword might as well rust, the war drums might as well stop sounding! For your master is in love. Yes, he is in love. Help me, some god of poetry, for I must now become a love poet. Think, brain; write, pen. I must write folios ²⁶ of my love.

ARMADO exits.

futility of his struggle against falling in love.

²⁴ The "passado" is a movement in fencing.

²⁵ A code duello is a set of rules that regulate one on one combat, meant to help prevent vendettas between families.

²⁶ Like many men in love, Armado will compose love poems for the object of his affection; he will compile them into a folio, a book that was made by folding the paper only once.

Act 2, Scene 1

Shakespeare

Enter the PRINCESS of France, ROSALINE, MARIA, KATHARINE, BOYET, Lords, and other Attendants

BOYET

Now, madam, summon up your dearest spirits:
Consider who the king your father sends,
To whom he sends, and what's his embassy:
Yourself, held precious in the world's esteem,
5 To parley with the sole inheritor
Of all perfections that a man may owe,
Matchless Navarre; the plea of no less weight
Than Aquitaine, a dowry for a queen.
Be now as prodigal of all dear grace
10 As Nature was in making graces dear
When she did starve the general world beside
And prodigally gave them all to you.

PRINCESS

Good Lord Boyet, my beauty, though but mean,
Needs not the painted flourish of your praise:
15 Beauty is bought by judgement of the eye,
Not utter'd by base sale of chapmen's tongues:
I am less proud to hear you tell my worth
Than you much willing to be counted wise
In spending your wit in the praise of mine.
20 But now to task the tasker: good Boyet,
You are not ignorant, all-telling fame
Doth noise abroad, Navarre hath made a vow,
Till painful study shall outwear three years,
No woman may approach his silent court:
25 Therefore to's seemeth it a needful course,
Before we enter his forbidden gates,
To know his pleasure; and in that behalf,
Bold of your worthiness, we single you
As our best-moving fair solicitor.
30 Tell him, the daughter of the King of France,
On serious business, craving quick dispatch,
Importunes personal conference with his grace:
Haste, signify so much; while we attend,
Like humble-visaged suitors, his high will.

BOYET

35 Proud of employment, willingly I go.

Shakescleare Translation

The PRINCESS of France, ROSALINE, MARIA, KATHARINE, BOYET, Lords, and other Attendants enter.

BOYET

Now, madam, you must gather all of your energy and consider who the King, your father, sends you to talk to and what message you must deliver. Since the world thinks so highly of you, it is only right that you have been sent to speak with the remarkable King of Navarre, a man who is said to be perfect. You are speaking on behalf of your country ²³, speak with the grace that this important message deserves. Be as graceful as Nature intended for you to be, when she gave you all the honors and beauty of this world and left none for anyone else.

PRINCESS

Good Lord Boyet, although my beauty is only moderate, that does not mean I need you to praise it so much. Beauty is something which only the eye can judge, it cannot be bought and sold in some kind of business deal. I feel more unhappy when you describe my beauty, than you feel wise when praising me with your wit. But now I will give you your task: Good Boyet, you are not stupid, you have heard the many rumors that have spread abroad. It is said that the King of Navarre has made a promise that no women are allowed to enter his silent court until he has spent three years focused on studying. Therefore, it seems necessary that we find out if this is true before we enter his forbidden gates. That's where you come in. We've picked you to be our spokesperson, as we know you are worthy and persuasive. Tell him that the daughter of the King of France needs to talk to him privately about important matters and must return to France as soon as possible. Go quickly and tell him this; we will wait out here to find out what he will say, like some poor and unappealing admirers.

BOYET

I am proud to do this task, I will willingly go now.

²³ The Princess has arrived at the court of Navarre to attempt to regain the region of Aquitaine.

PRINCESS

All pride is willing pride, and yours is so.

Exit BOYET

PRINCESS

Who are the votaries, my loving lords,
That are vow-fellows with this virtuous Duke?

FIRST LORD

40 Lord Longaville is one.

PRINCESS

Know you the man?

MARIA

I know him, madam: at a marriage-feast,
Between Lord Perigord and the beauteous heir
Of Jaques Falconbridge, solemnized
45 In Normandy, saw I this Longaville:
A man of sovereign parts he is esteem'd;
Well fitted in arts, glorious in arms:
Nothing becomes him ill that he would well.
The only soil of his fair virtue's gloss,
50 If virtue's gloss will stain with any soil,
Is a sharp wit matched with too blunt a will;
Whose edge hath power to cut, whose will still wills
It should none spare that come within his power.

PRINCESS

Some merry mocking lord, belike; is't so?

MARIA

55 They say so most that most his humours know.

PRINCESS

Such short-lived wits do wither as they grow.
Who are the rest?

KATHARINE

The young Dumain, a well-accomplished youth,
Of all that virtue love for virtue loved:
60 Most power to do most harm, least knowing ill;
For he hath wit to make an ill shape good,
And shape to win grace though he had no wit.
I saw him at the Duke Alencon's once;
And much too little of that good I saw
65 Is my report to his great worthiness.

ROSALINE

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

PRINCESS

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

PRINCESS

If you are proud to do it, you should always be willing.

BOYET exits.

PRINCESS

Who are the other men, the adoring lords, who have
supposedly agreed to these same promises with our good
Duke?


FIRST LORD


One of them is Lord Longaville.

PRINCESS

[To the ladies] Do you know this man?

MARIA

I know him madam. I met him at a marriage ceremony in
Normandy, between Lord Perigord  and the beautiful
heiress of Jacques Falconbridge. He is said to be a man who
has many excellent qualities: he is gifted in the arts, he is a
strong fighter. Whatever he does he does well and he looks
good doing it. The only flaw on an otherwise perfect
character, if every character must have a flaw, is that he has
a quick wit, but he never uses it. His wit is as sharp as a
knife and could put down anyone that he talked to, if he
chose to use it.

 Perigord is another region in
south-west France that includes the
area of the Dordogne.

PRINCESS

He is more of a happy-go-lucky kind of lord, is that right?


MARIA


People who know his moods the best do say so.

PRINCESS

Such wit is short-lived and inconsequential. Who are the
others?

KATHARINE

The young Dumain, a very talented young man, but he is so
innocent and virtuous that he can end up doing more harm
than good, because he is so unaware of the harm that he is
doing. He is clever enough to make even a bad thing look
good, and his appearance certainly makes him appealing
even when his wit can't. I met him at Duke Alencon's 
house once, and I admit that I didn't see enough of this
talent that he is reported to have.

 To an audience watching in
Shakespeare's time, this reference
would have suggested the French King
Henry III's younger brother Francois
Hercule, Duc d'Alencon, who was
known for his unsuccessful courtship
of Queen Elizabeth.

ROSALINE

Another one of these students was there with him on that
occasion, if I remember correctly. They call him Biron and I
have certainly never chatted with a man who is so amusing.
He finds any opportunity he can to make a witty joke;
everything he sees he manages to turn into a hilarious joke,
which he delivers so cleverly, using such smart words that
older people don't understand his hilarity and young
people are delighted by what they hear—so sweet and
quick is his tongue!

PRINCESS

Oh my poor ladies! You must all be in love, to describe your
lords with such incredible words of praise?

FIRST LORD

Here comes Boyet.

Re-enter BOYET

PRINCESS

Now, what admittance, lord?

BOYET

85 Navarre had notice of your fair approach;
And he and his competitors in oath
Were all address'd to meet you, gentle lady,
Before I came. Marry, thus much I have learnt:
He rather means to lodge you in the field,
90 Like one that comes here to besiege his court,
Than seek a dispensation for his oath,
To let you enter his unpeopled house.
Here comes Navarre.

Enter FERDINAND, LONGAVILLE, DUMAIN, BIRON, and Attendants

FERDINAND

Fair princess, welcome to the court of Navarre.

PRINCESS

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

FERDINAND

You shall be welcome, madam, to my court.

PRINCESS

100 I will be welcome, then: conduct me thither.

FERDINAND

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

PRINCESS

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

FERDINAND

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

PRINCESS

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

FERDINAND

105 Your ladyship is ignorant what it is.

PRINCESS

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

FERDINAND

115 Madam, I will, if suddenly I may.

PRINCESS

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

FIRST LORD

Here comes Boyet.


BOYET re-enters.

PRINCESS

Can we enter now, my lord?

BOYET

The King of Navarre was told that you were coming and him and his partners in oath were preparing to meet you, gentle lady, before I arrived. So far I have learnt this: He has decided that you will stay in the field, as if you were an army coming to attack his court, rather than go against his oath and let you enter his empty house. Here comes the King now.

 Boyet is referring to the oath made between the King of Navarre and the others, swearing off women.

FERDINAND, LONGAVILLE, DUMAIN, BIRON and Attendants enter.

FERDINAND

Welcome to the court of Navarre, fair princess.

PRINCESS

You can take back calling me "fair," and I have not yet been welcomed into the court of Navarre. This sky is far too high to belong to you and being welcomed in these fields is far below me.

FERDINAND

You will be welcome, madam, to the court of Navarre.

PRINCESS

If I am welcome, then lead me inside.

FERDINAND

Listen to me, dear lady, I have made a promise.

PRINCESS

Ladies, we must help my lord! He must break his promise.

FERDINAND

I will not break it for the world, fair madam, not of my own accord.

PRINCESS

Why, in the end you shall break it of your own accord, no one else will force you to do it.

FERDINAND

Your ladyship does not understand our oath.

PRINCESS

Normally my lord, even in your ignorance you are wise, but now a desire for knowledge has made you act foolishly. I have heard that you have promised to stop welcoming guests, my lord. I must warn you, this is a dangerous promise to keep, but now it is a dangerous promise for you to break as well. But you must excuse me, I have said too much. It is not right for me to try to teach an academic like you. *[Giving FERDINAND a piece of paper]* Promise to read why I have come here and answer me immediately.

FERDINAND

Madam, I will, right away.

PRINCESS

You will want me to leave as quickly as possible, or you will end up breaking your promise if I have to stay longer.

BIRON

Did not I dance with you in Brabant once?

ROSALINE

Did not I dance with you in Brabant once?

BIRON

120 I know you did.

ROSALINE

How needless was it then to ask the question!

BIRON

You must not be so quick.

ROSALINE

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

BIRON

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

ROSALINE

125 Not till it leave the rider in the mire.

BIRON

What time o' day?

ROSALINE

The hour that fools should ask.

BIRON

Now fair befall your mask!

ROSALINE

Fair fall the face it covers!

BIRON

130 And send you many lovers!

ROSALINE

Amen, so you be none.

BIRON

Nay, then will I be gone.

FERDINAND

Madam, your father here doth intimate

The payment of a hundred thousand crowns;

135 Being but the one half of an entire sum

Disbursed by my father in his wars.

But say that he or we, as neither have,

Received that sum, yet there remains unpaid

A hundred thousand more; in surety of the which,

140 One part of Aquitaine is bound to us,

Although not valued to the money's worth.

If then the king your father will restore

But that one half which is unsatisfied,

We will give up our right in Aquitaine,

145 And hold fair friendship with his majesty.

But that, it seems, he little purposeth,

For here he doth demand to have repaid

A hundred thousand crowns; and not demands,


On payment of a hundred thousand crowns,

150 To have his title live in Aquitaine;

Which we much rather had depart withal

BIRON

Did I dance with you once in Brabant ?

 Brabant was a state in the Holy Roman Empire, located in what is now the Netherlands.

ROSALINE

Did I dance with *you* once in Brabant?

BIRON

Yes you did.

ROSALINE

Why did you bother asking the question then?

BIRON

You should not be so sharp with me.

ROSALINE


It is only because you encourage me with such silly questions.

BIRON

Your wit is too quick, you will get tired soon.

ROSALINE

I won't tire until I leave you lying in a ditch .

 Rosaline responds to Biron with a rhyme, "tire" and "mire". This is an example of Shakespeare using rhyme as a rhetorical "answering" device, establishing the banter between the two characters.

BIRON

What time is it?

ROSALINE

A time when foolish people ask foolish questions.

BIRON

Well good luck to that mask that you wear!

ROSALINE

May it continue to cover my pretty face!

BIRON

And send you many lovers!

ROSALINE

As long as you're not one of them!

BIRON

I will go then.

FERDINAND

Madam, in this letter your father asks for the repayment of a hundred thousand crowns, which is only half of what my father lent to you in his wars! We have never received that money from you and neither did he, yet you still owe us a hundred thousand more and until we get that, one part of Aquitaine belongs to us, although the land isn't even worth that much. If the King, your father, will give back the half which is not settled by payments, we will give up our power in Aquitaine, and maintain a good relationship with him. But he doesn't seem to want that. For in this letter he claims he is entitled to the hundred thousand crowns, instead of demanding that, for this sum, he can have control over Aquitaine back. We would much rather give up Aquitaine, as it is so separated from the rest of our land, and have the money that was lent by your father. Dear Princess, if these requests weren't so unreasonable, then your beautiful self would be able to convince me to agree, and you could return to France happy again.

And have the money by our father lent
Than Aquitaine so gelded as it is.
Dear Princess, were not his requests so far
155 From reason's yielding, your fair self should make
A yielding 'gainst some reason in my breast
And go well satisfied to France again.

PRINCESS

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

FERDINAND

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

PRINCESS

165 We arrest your word.
Boyet, you can produce acquittances
For such a sum from special officers
Of Charles his father.

FERDINAND

Satisfy me so.

BOYET

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

FERDINAND

It shall suffice me: at which interview
All liberal reason I will yield unto.
175 Meantime receive such welcome at my hand
As honour without breach of honour may
Make tender of to thy true worthiness:
You may not come, fair princess, in my gates;
But here without you shall be so received
180 As you shall deem yourself lodged in my heart,
Though so denied fair harbour in my house.
Your own good thoughts excuse me, and farewell:
To-morrow shall we visit you again.

PRINCESS

Sweet health and fair desires consort your grace!

FERDINAND

185 Thy own wish wish I thee in every place!

Exit

BIRON

Lady, I will commend you to mine own heart.

ROSALINE

Pray you, do my commendations; I would be glad to see
it.

BIRON

190 I would you heard it groan.

ROSALINE

Is the fool sick?

BIRON

Sick at the heart.

ROSALINE

Alack, let it blood.

PRINCESS

You cause offense to my father, the King, and shame your
own name, in refusing to accept that you received this
money from us.

FERDINAND

I maintain that I have never heard of it, but if you can prove
it, I will either repay the money or I will give you back the
region of Aquitaine.

PRINCESS

We will hold you to your word. Boyet, you can collect
documents to prove this deal took place from some of the
officers of his father Charles.

FERDINAND

That would be enough to convince me.

BOYET

So be it. The package containing the contracts hasn't
arrived yet but you will be able to see them tomorrow.

FERDINAND

That will be okay—once I have seen them I will be able
to respond to you in a polite and reasonable manner. Until
then, I hope you feel truly welcomed, as you deserve to be,
but without breaking my oath. Although you cannot come
inside my gates, fair princess, you will be treated so well out
here that you will feel like you are staying in my heart, even
if you can't enter my house. May your good thoughts excuse
me and goodbye, we shall visit you again tomorrow.

PRINCESS

May you have good health and happiness!

FERDINAND

And the same to you!

FERDINAND exits.

BIRON

Lady, I will keep you in my heart.

ROSALINE

Please do, I would be happy to see what goes on in that
organ of yours.

BIRON

I wish you could hear my pains.


ROSALINE


Poor thing, are you sick?

BIRON

Sick in the heart!

ROSALINE

Oh dear, let that wound bleed out .

 A common form of medical
treatment during Shakespeare's time

was to bleed out the patient to try and remove the sickness.

BIRON

Would that do it good?

ROSALINE

195 My physic says 'ay.'

BIRON

Will you prick't with your eye?

ROSALINE

No point, with my knife.

BIRON

Now, God save thy life!

ROSALINE

And yours from long living!

BIRON

200 I cannot stay thanksgiving.

Retiring

DUMAIN

Sir, I pray you, a word: what lady is that same?

BOYET

The heir of Alencon, Katharine her name.

DUMAIN

A gallant lady. Monsieur, fare you well.

205

Exit

LONGAVILLE

I beseech you a word: what is she in the white?

BOYET

A woman sometimes, an you saw her in the light.

LONGAVILLE

Perchance light in the light. I desire her name.

BOYET

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

LONGAVILLE

Pray you, sir, whose daughter?

BOYET

Her mother's, I have heard.

LONGAVILLE

God's blessing on your beard!

BOYET

215 Good sir, be not offended.
She is an heir of Falconbridge.

LONGAVILLE

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

BIRON

Would that help?

ROSALINE

My doctor says it will.

BIRON

Will you stab it with your eye? ⁸

ROSALINE

That's pointless, but I will with my knife?

BIRON

Oh never mind, good luck to you!

ROSALINE

And may you not live long with this pain!

BIRON

Sorry but I cannot stay to thank you.

BIRON moves away.

DUMAIN

[*To BOYET*] Sir, I have a question for you. Who is that lady?

BOYET

That is the heir of Alencon, her name is Katharine.

DUMAIN

A pretty lady. Monsieur, goodbye to you now.

DUMAIN exits.

LONGAVILLE

[*To BOYET*] One quick word sir, who is that wearing white?

BOYET

A woman I believe, if you see her in the light.

LONGAVILLE

I want to know her name.

BOYET

She has only one name for herself, and you should not wish to have it for yourself.

LONGAVILLE

Please sir, whose daughter is she?

BOYET

Her mother's, I have heard.

LONGAVILLE

Come on, grow up!

BOYET

Don't be offended good sir. She is an heir of the Falconbridge family.

LONGAVILLE

Now my anger ⁹ is gone. She is such a sweet lady.

⁸ Biron is playing upon Rosaline's previous comment; "ay" means "yes," but Biron makes a joke of the fact that it sounds similar to "eye."

⁹ "Choler" was one of the four bodily humors, identified with bile and believed to be associated with an irritable disposition.

BOYET

Not unlike, sir, that may be.

Exit LONGAVILLE

BIRON

220 What's her name in the cap?

BOYET

Rosaline, by good hap.

BIRON

Is she wedded or no?

BOYET

To her will, sir, or so.

BIRON

You are welcome, sir: adieu.

BOYET

225 Farewell to me, sir, and welcome to you.

Exit BIRON

MARIA

That last is Biron, the merry madcap lord:
Not a word with him but a jest.

BOYET

And every jest but a word.

PRINCESS

230 It was well done of you to take him at his word.

BOYET

I was as willing to grapple as he was to board.

MARIA

Two hot sheeps, marry.

BOYET

And wherefore not ships?
No sheep, sweet lamb, unless we feed on your lips.

MARIA

235 You sheep, and I pasture: shall that finish the jest?

BOYET

So you grant pasture for me.

Offering to kiss her

MARIA

Not so, gentle beast:
My lips are no common, though several they be.

BOYET

240 Belonging to whom?

MARIA

To my fortunes and me.

BOYET


That is very likely true.

LONGAVILLE exits.

BIRON

What is her name, the one in the hat?

BOYET

Rosaline, it so happens .

BIRON

Is she married or not?

BOYET

To her own will sir, or something like that.

BIRON

Thank you sir, goodbye.

BOYET

Goodbye to me sir, and welcome to you!

BIRON exits.

MARIA

That last lord is Biron, every word he says is some kind of
joke.

BOYET

And every joke is merely one word.


PRINCESS

You did well at fighting back against his word play.

BOYET

I was as willing to have such a fight of words, as he was to
respond.

MARIA

Two hot sheep , indeed.

BOYET

Why can't we be ships instead? We'll only be sheep, my
sweet child, if we can kiss you.

MARIA

If you are a sheep, then I am a field...is that the joke?

BOYET

If your *field* is mine...

BOYET tries to kiss her.

MARIA


No, my gentle animal. Although my lips are parted, that
does not mean they are for any common person to enjoy.


BOYET

Who do they belong to?

MARIA

To my fate, and to me.

 In the original, Boyet completes the rhyme, "cap" and "hap," perhaps teasing Biron about his previous interaction with Rosaline.

 "Grapple" is a term, like "board", which relates to naval warfare. Maria calling them "sheeps" may be a pun on the similar-sounding nature of "sheep" and "ship."

PRINCESS

Good wits will be jangling; but, gentles, agree:
This civil war of wits were much better used
On Navarre and his book-men; for here 'tis abused.

BOYET

245 If my observation, which very seldom lies,
By the heart's still rhetoric disclosed with eyes,
Deceive me not now, Navarre is infected.

PRINCESS

With what?

BOYET

With that which we lovers entitle affected.

PRINCESS

250 Your reason?

BOYET

Why, all his behaviors did make their retire
To the court of his eye, peeping thorough desire:
His heart, like an agate, with your print impress'd,
Proud with his form, in his eye pride express'd:
255 His tongue, all impatient to speak and not see,
Did stumble with haste in his eyesight to be;
All senses to that sense did make their repair,
To feel only looking on fairest of fair:
Methought all his senses were lock'd in his eye,
260 As jewels in crystal for some prince to buy;
Who, tendering their own worth from where they were
glass'd,
Did point you to buy them, along as you pass'd:
His face's own margent did quote such amazes
265 That all eyes saw his eyes enchanted with gazes.
I'll give you Aquitaine and all that is his,
An you give him for my sake but one loving kiss.

PRINCESS

Come to our pavilion: Boyet is disposed.

BOYET

270 But to speak that in words which his eye hath
disclosed.
I only have made a mouth of his eye,
By adding a tongue which I know will not lie.

ROSALINE

Thou art an old love-monger and speakest skilfully.

MARIA

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

ROSALINE

275 Then was Venus like her mother, for her father is but
grim.

BOYET

Do you hear, my mad wenches?

MARIA

No.

BOYET

What then, do you see?

PRINCESS

Clever people will always bicker, but come now friends, and
get along. Save this battle of wits and use it on the king of
Navarre and his book-loving friends; it is wasted here.

BOYET

If my observations are correct, which they normally are, I
have seen in the king's eyes, things which his heart has
tried to hide. I am certain, the king of Navarre is sick.

PRINCESS

With what?

BOYET

The thing that romantics would call being lovesick.

PRINCESS

Why do you think this?

BOYET

Well, all of his emotions were hidden in his eyes, as his
desires peeped out of them. His heart was like a precious
stone, and it was your name that was engraved into it, and
he was proud of this engraving, I could see it in his eyes! His
tongue, desperate to speak, stumbled over his words as he
looked at you. All of his senses made his way to his eye, to
feel what it was like to look at the most beautiful person. I
felt like I could see all of his senses in his eye, like jewels in a
glass container that a prince could buy and, having offered
you everything he could, did hope that you would be
convinced by them, during your conversation. His own face
gave away the amazing things he felt about the Princess, as
everything he saw made his eyes light up. I'll get you
Aquitaine and all that is his, all you have to do is give him
one loving kiss!

PRINCESS

Let's go to our tent, Boyet is in a silly mood.

BOYET

But I am only telling you things that I have seen in his eyes; I
am only telling you about true feelings that he cannot yet
put into words.

ROSALINE

You are an old [match-maker](#)¹² and you speak very well.

MARIA

He is Cupid's grandfather and finds out things from him.

ROSALINE

Then Venus¹³ must be beautiful like her mother, since her
father is ugly.

BOYET

Do you understand what I've told you, you foolish women?

MARIA

No.

BOYET

What then, do you see?

¹² In the original, Rosaline uses the term "love-monger" to indicate that Boyet talks much of love and deals in the affairs of love-similar to what we know as a modern day match-maker.

¹³ Venus, as Cupid's mother, must be the daughter of Boyet for this joke to make sense. The joke is, as Boyet is considered ugly, Venus must have got her incredible beauty from her mother and not her father.

ROSALINE

280 Ay, our way to be gone.

BOYET

You are too hard for me.

Exeunt

ROSALINE

Oh yes, our cue to leave.

BOYET

You are too much for me to deal with.

They exit.

Act 3, Scene 1

Shakespeare

Enter DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO and MOTH

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Warble, child; make passionate my sense of hearing.

MOTH

Concolinel.

Singing

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

5 Sweet air! Go, tenderness of years; take this key,
give enlargement to the swain, bring him festinately
hither: I must employ him in a letter to my love.

MOTH

Master, will you win your love with a French brawl?

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

How meanest thou? brawling in French?

MOTH

10 No, my complete master: but to jig off a tune at
the tongue's end, canary to it with your feet, humour
it with turning up your eyelids, sigh a note and
sing a note, sometime through the throat, as if you
swallowed love with singing love, sometime through
15 the nose, as if you snuffed up love by smelling
love; with your hat penthouse-like o'er the shop of
your eyes; with your arms crossed on your thin-belly
doublet like a rabbit on a spit; or your hands in
your pocket like a man after the old painting; and
keep not too long in one tune, but a snip and away .
20 These are complements, these are humours; these
betray nice wenches, that would be betrayed without
these; and make them men of note--do you note
me?--that most are affected to these.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

How hast thou purchased this experience?

MOTH

25 By my penny of observation.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

But O,--but O,--

MOTH

'The hobby-horse is forgot.'

Shakescleare Translation

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO and MOTH enter.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Sing child, let me hear a song about love.

MOTH

I will sing [Concolinel](#) ¹.

MOTH sings.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Sweet music! Go, young Moth, take this key, release Costard
and bring him here quickly. I must send him to deliver a
letter to my love.

MOTH

Master, are you going to win your love with a [French dance](#) ²
?

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

What do you mean? Should I fight for her in French?

MOTH

No my skilled master, but if you sing a song in the style of a
jig and dance along to it; if you show emotion by gazing
upwards, sighing as you do so; if you sing through your
throat as if you have swallowed love by singing about it; if
you sing through your nose as if you have inhaled love; if
you wear your [hat pulled down over your eyes](#) ³, with
your arms crossed over your [thin-belly](#) ⁴ like a rabbit on a
spit; if you keep your hands in your pockets, like a man
posing for an old painting and if you change from one of
these things to another very quickly you'll do well. These
things will make you look like a gentleman, they will make
you seem whimsical and seduce saucy women who could
be seduced even without these. These things will make you
a man of distinction--are you following me? Because these
things really work.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

How do you know all of this?

MOTH

By all that I have seen.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

But O....but O....

MOTH

[Singing] "The [hobby-horse](#) ⁵ is forgot."

¹ This song has been presumed to either be the Irish lyric "Can cailin gheal" as it would have been pronounced similarly, or a French song that began "Quand Colinelle."

² In the original, a "brawl" referred to a type of dance, but Moth is also continuing the fighting imagery that has persisted throughout the play.

³ When Moth says "penthouse-like," he is referring to a porch with a sloped roof, hence he would pull the hat down and cover his eyes.

⁴ The "thin-belly doublet" was an expression for a doublet (similar to a modern-day jacket) that covered a thin belly because the person was wasting away pining for love.

⁵ Moth is continuing the previous line, "But O, But O" which completes the line of an old folk song which

laments the omission of the costumed characters from the May games.

Armado confuses Moth's words, thinking he is using "hobby horse" as a slang term for a loose woman.

Moth once again makes a confusion of language; he says he will be as "swift as lead", but lead is a heavy metal. He is likely conflating this with the expression "swift as a bullet."

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

30 Callest thou my love 'hobby-horse'?

MOTH

30 No, master; the hobby-horse is but a colt, and your love perhaps a hackney. But have you forgot your love?

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Almost I had.

MOTH

Negligent student! learn her by heart.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

By heart and in heart, boy.

MOTH

And out of heart, master: all those three I will prove.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

35 What wilt thou prove?

MOTH

40 A man, if I live; and this, by, in, and without, upon the instant: 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 that you cannot enjoy her.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

I am all these three.

MOTH

And three times as much more, and yet nothing at all.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

45 Fetch hither the swain: he must carry me a letter.

MOTH

A message well sympathized; a horse to be ambassador for an ass.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Ha, ha! what sayest thou?

MOTH

50 Marry, sir, you must send the ass upon the horse, for he is very slow-gaited. But I go.


DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

The way is but short: away!

MOTH

As swift as lead, sir.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Are you calling my love a prostitute ?

MOTH

No master, a hobby-horse would only be a suitable name for a young love, and your love is more of a used horse. You had almost forgotten about your love, hadn't you?

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

I almost had.

MOTH

You careless student! You need to know everything about her by heart.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

By heart and in my heart, my boy.

MOTH

And indeed *out* of your heart, master. I will prove all three of these things to you.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

What will you prove?

MOTH

I will prove to be a man, I hope, and I will also prove these things to you. You love her "*by*" heart because your heart cannot have her; you love her "*in*" your heart, because your heart is in love with her; you love her "*out*" of your heart because you are disheartened by the fact that you can't be with her.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

I am all three of these things.

MOTH

And even if you were nine of these things, you would still have nothing to show for it.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Bring Costard here, I need him to deliver a letter for me.

MOTH

A well thought through idea, sending that mule as a messenger for an ass.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Ha, ha! What are you saying?


MOTH

I am saying sir, that you are going to send an ass to ride upon a horse, because he is as slow as an ass. But anyway, I will go and get him.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

It's not far, off you go!

MOTH

I will be as quick as a piece of lead , sir.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

The meaning, pretty ingenious?
Is not lead a metal heavy, dull, and slow?

MOTH

55 Minime, honest master; or rather, master, no.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

I say lead is slow.

MOTH

You are too swift, sir, to say so:
Is that lead slow which is fired from a gun?

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Sweet smoke of rhetoric!
60 He reputes me a cannon; and the bullet, that's he:
I shoot thee at the swain.

MOTH

Thump then and I flee.

Exit

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

A most acute juvenal; voluble and free of grace!
65 By thy favour, sweet welkin, I must sigh in thy face:
Most rude melancholy, valour gives thee place.
My herald is return'd.

Re-enter MOTH with COSTARD

MOTH

A wonder, master! here's a costard broken in a shin.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

70 Some enigma, some riddle: come, thy l'envoy; begin.

COSTARD

No egma, no riddle, no l'envoy; no salve in the
mail, sir: O, sir, plantain, a plain plantain! no
l'envoy, no l'envoy; no salve, sir, but a plantain!

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

By virtue, thou enforcest laughter; thy silly
75 thought my spleen; the heaving of my lungs provokes
me to ridiculous smiling. O, pardon me, my stars!
Doth the inconsiderate take salve for l'envoy, and
the word l'envoy for a salve?

MOTH

Do the wise think them other? is not l'envoy a salve?

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Is this some clever joke that I don't understand? Isn't lead a
metal and aren't metals heavy, dull and slow?

MOTH

No, no, my truthful master, of course not.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

I am telling you, lead is slow.

MOTH

You are too quick to say so, sir. Tell me, is lead slow when it
is fired out of a gun?

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

What a clever expression then! He thinks of me as the gun
and he is the quick bullet that is flying out of it—I send you
flying towards Costard!

MOTH

Like a bullet then, I go.

MOTH exits.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

What a clever young boy, so chatty and free with his words!
Oh sky, I have to sigh in your sweet air! But no, now I must
be brave and ignore my sadness. Look, my messenger has
returned.

MOTH re-enters, with COSTARD.

MOTH

It is a wonder master! Look here's Costard with an injured
shin.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

This is some kind of enigma, some kind of riddle, come
on then, continue with your l'envoy, begin.

COSTARD

This isn't an egma, it's not a riddle or a l'envoy, no
ointment, or salve in the mail sir. Oh sir it is plantain,
a plain plant! No l'envoy, no l'envoy, no salve sir, but a
plantain!

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

My goodness, you do make me laugh, your silly ideas hurt
my spleen; the amount my lungs have shook with
laughter has forced me into silly smiling. Oh forgive me, my
Lord! Do ignorant people use a "salve," a greeting as if it
were a farewell, and "l'envoy" the other way round?

MOTH

Do wise people think otherwise? Isn't a l'envoy a salve?

⁸ Moth plays on the word "costard", which was used in jest as a term for "head."

⁹ "Enigma" here means a mystery or a puzzle, and Costard plays upon this term in the following line.

¹⁰ "L'envoy" here is the concluding part of a poem or a piece of prose, that is used to explain what has come before or to sum up what has been said. It is essential to the word-play that follows.

¹¹ An "egma" is used to suggest some kind of medicine made from eggs.

¹² "Salve" is referring to a healing ointment or remedy.

¹³ A "plantain" was a plant or herb whose leaves were believed to be able to heal illnesses.

¹⁴ The spleen was believed to be the source of both laughter and anger.

¹⁵ Salve is the Latin word for "Hello," or "Hail," and therefore the joke is that Armado misunderstands Costard's use of "salve" to mean a medicine or ointment and believes he has got "salve," a greeting, mixed up with "l'envoy," which was used as a farewell.

¹⁶ Costard continues the joke as he believes that a l'envoy, a farewell or

an epilogue can act as a good medicine for someone, a good salve, and therefore cannot understand the confusion.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

80 No, page: it is an epilogue or discourse, to make plain
Some obscure precedence that hath tofore been said.
I will example it:
The fox, the ape, and the humble-bee,
Were still at odds, being but three.
85 There's the moral. Now the l'envoy.

MOTH

I will add the l'envoy. Say the moral again.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

The fox, the ape, and the humble-bee,
Were still at odds, being but three.

MOTH

Until the goose came out of door,
90 And stay'd the odds by adding four.
Now will I begin your moral, and do you follow with
my l'envoy.
The fox, the ape, and the humble-bee,
Were still at odds, being but three.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

95 Until the goose came out of door,
Staying the odds by adding four.

MOTH

A good l'envoy, ending in the goose: would you
desire more?

COSTARD

The boy hath sold him a bargain, a goose, that's flat.
100 Sir, your pennyworth is good, an your goose be fat.
To sell a bargain well is as cunning as fast and loose:
Let me see; a fat l'envoy; ay, that's a fat goose.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Come hither, come hither. How did this argument begin?

MOTH

By saying that a costard was broken in a shin.
105 Then call'd you for the l'envoy.

COSTARD

True, and I for a plantain: thus came your
argument in;
Then the boy's fat l'envoy, the goose that you bought;
And he ended the market.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

110 But tell me; how was there a costard broken in a shin?

MOTH

I will tell you sensibly.

COSTARD

Thou hast no feeling of it, Moth: I will speak that
l'envoy:
I Costard, running out, that was safely within,
115 Fell over the threshold and broke my shin.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

No, my boy. It is an epilogue or a speech to clear up what
has happened so far. I will give you an example:
The fox, the ape and the bumble-bee,
Are always quarreling, as there are only three of them.
That's the moral. Now the l'envoy would be:

MOTH

Let me add the l'envoy. Say the moral again.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

The fox, the ape and the bumble-bee,
Are always quarreling, as there are only three of them.

MOTH

Until the goose came out of the door,
And sorted the quarrel out by being the fourth member of
the group.
Now I will say the moral again, and you can repeat my
l'envoy at the end of it.
The fox, the ape and the bumble-bee,
Are always quarreling, as there are only three of them.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Until the goose comes out of the door,
And sorted the quarrel out by being the fourth member of
the group.

MOTH

A good conclusion, ending with [the goose](#) ¹⁷—shall we do
more?

¹⁷ Here Moth could be mocking Armado for being the goose, as it was him who had the last word.

COSTARD

The boy has made a fool out of him, he's made him a goose
that's for certain. Sir your bits were quite good and your
goose is certainly fat. To win your point that way is as
cunning as it is unfair. Let me see, a fat epilogue, yes that's a
fat goose then.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Come on now, come on now. How did this argument begin
anyway?

MOTH

Well I said that Costard had injured his shin and you asked
right away for the l'envoy.

COSTARD

True, and I asked for a plantain to heal my shin—here's
where your argument began. Then the boy made his
epilogue, you bought the goose and he ended the matter.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

But tell me again, how could a head have injured its shin?

MOTH

I will tell you sensibly now.

COSTARD

You don't feel my pain Moth, I will speak that l'envoy. I,
Costard, being forced to run out when [I was safely inside](#) ¹⁸
, fell over the doorway and injured my shin.

¹⁸ Costard's rhyming in the original adds to the playful feel of these lines and would imply that he is talking about a sexual act being interrupted and having to run away.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

We will talk no more of this matter.

COSTARD

Till there be more matter in the shin.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Sirrah Costard, I will enfranchise thee.

COSTARD

120 O, marry me to one Frances: I smell some l'envoy, some goose, in this.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

By my sweet soul, I mean setting thee at liberty, enfreedoming thy person; thou wert immured, restrained, captivated, bound.

COSTARD

125 True, true; and now you will be my purgation and let me loose.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

I give thee thy liberty, set thee from durance; and, in lieu thereof, impose on thee nothing but this: bear this significant

Giving a letter

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

130 to the country maid Jaquenetta: there is remuneration; for the best ward of mine honour is rewarding my dependents. Moth, follow.

Exit

MOTH

Like the sequel, I, Signior Costard, adieu.

COSTARD

135 My sweet ounce of man's flesh! my incony Jew!

Exit MOTH

COSTARD

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

Enter BIRON

BIRON

O, my good knave Costard! exceedingly well met.

COSTARD

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

BIRON

What is a remuneration?

COSTARD

Marry, sir, halfpenny farthing.

BIRON

Why, then, three-farthing worth of silk.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Let's talk no more about this matter.

COSTARD

Not until there is pus oozing from the shin.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Costard, sir, I am going to release you.

COSTARD

Oh let me be married to a Frances ¹⁹—I see some kind of epilogue or conclusion to my imprisonment.

¹⁹ Frances was a conventional name used for a prostitute.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

For goodness sake, I mean I am going to give you your freedom, I am going to let you go. You were imprisoned, restrained, held as my captive and you won't be anymore.

COSTARD

If this is true then I will be cleared of all of my guilt and set free?

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

I give you your freedom and put an end to your imprisonment. I ask just one small thing of you in return.

He gives COSTARD a letter.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Give this important letter to the country maid Jaquenetta. Here is remuneration ²⁰ for you, for the best way to protect myself and my honor is to treat my servants well. Come on Moth, follow me.

²⁰ Remuneration translates to payment for work, goods, or services.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO exits.

MOTH

I will follow after you. Goodbye Costard.

COSTARD

Oh you wonderful man! My fine Jew!

MOTH exits.

COSTARD

Now I will look more closely at this "remuneration." Remuneration! That must be the Latin word for three farthings ²¹, three farthings or remuneration. "What is the price of this thread?" "One penny." "I'll give you a remuneration for it!" Why, it sounds good. Remuneration! It's definitely a better name than a French crown ²². I don't think I'll do a deal again without using this word.

²¹ Costard once again exhibits his tendency to take words too literally, he can only imagine the exact amount that this "remuneration" translates to.

²² A "French crown" could mean a visible sign of the pox on one's head, and a pun on the English word for the French coin.

BIRON enters.

BIRON

Oh, you rascal Costard! Am I glad to see you!

COSTARD

Excuse me sir, how much flesh-colored ribbon can a person buy with a remuneration?

BIRON

What is a remuneration?

COSTARD

Why, sir, it is a halfpenny farthing.

BIRON

Well then you can buy three-farthings worth of silk.

COSTARD

150 I thank your worship: God be wi' you!

BIRON

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

COSTARD

When would you have it done, sir?

BIRON

155 This afternoon.

COSTARD

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

BIRON

Thou knowest not what it is.

COSTARD

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

BIRON

Why, villain, thou must know first.

COSTARD

160 I will come to your worship to-morrow morning.

BIRON

It must be done this afternoon.

Hark, slave, it is but this:

The princess comes to hunt here in the park,
And in her train there is a gentle lady;

165 When tongues speak sweetly, then they name her name,
And Rosaline they call her: ask for her;
And to her white hand see thou do commend
This seal'd-up counsel. There's thy *guerdon*; go.

Giving him a shilling

COSTARD

170 Gardon, O sweet *gardon*! better than remuneration,
a'leven-pence farthing better: most sweet *gardon*! I
will do it sir, in print. Gardon! Remuneration!

Exit

BIRON

And I, forsooth, in love! I, that have been love's
whip;

175 A very beadle to a humorous sigh;
A critic, nay, a night-watch constable;
A domineering pedant o'er the boy;
Than whom no mortal so magnificent!
This whimpled, whining, purblind, wayward boy;
180 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,
185 Sole imperator and great general
Of trotting 'paritors: --O my little heart:--
And I to be a corporal of his field,
And wear his colours like a tumbler's hoop!
What, !! I love! I sue! I seek a wife!

190 A woman, that is like a German clock,
Still a-repairing, ever out of frame,
And never going aright, being a watch,
But being watch'd that it may still go right!
Nay, to be perjured, which is worst of all;

195

COSTARD

Thank you very much sir, and god be with you!

BIRON

Stay for a minute, mister, I have a task for you. If you want
to get in my good books, you rascal, do this one little thing
for me.

COSTARD

When would you like me to do it sir?

BIRON

This afternoon.

COSTARD

Very well, I will do it sir! Goodbye.

BIRON

You don't know what it is that I want you to do.

COSTARD

I shall know what it is, sir, after I have done it.

BIRON

No, you fool, you have to know what it is first.

COSTARD

Okay then, I will come and find out from you tomorrow
morning.

BIRON

No, it must be done this afternoon. Listen, slave, I need you
to do this: the Princess is coming here to hunt in the park,
and with her will be a gentle lady that people call Rosaline.
Ask for her and put this sealed letter into her pale hand.
Here's your *guerdon*²³, now off you go.

²³ A "*guerdon*" is, similar to a remuneration, compensation for a good or service. Costard once again takes the term literally.

BIRON gives him a shilling.

COSTARD

Gardon, Oh sweet *gardon*²⁴! Way better than a
remuneration, eleven-pence farthing better actually. Most
sweet *gardon*! I will do it sir, just as you asked. Gardon!
Remuneration!

²⁴ Not only does Moth misunderstand the meaning of a "*guerdon*" but he also mispronounces it and continues to call it a "*gardon*" for the rest of the time.

COSTARD exits.

BIRON

I cannot believe it, I am in love! I have opposed love for so
long, and tried to protect myself against its telling sighs. I
have been a critic of love, or even a night-time guard
against it; I have been like a controlling teacher over this
boy, Cupid—is there a prouder mortal on this earth? That
completely blind, stubborn boy, who is both old and young²⁵
. That giant dwarf, master Cupid, ruler of love-rhymes,
the lord of crossed arms, the elected leader of sighs and
groans, the chief of all those who drag their feet or moan,
the prince of women's genitals²⁶, the king of male ones²⁷
, the absolute ruler and great general of men who judged
those in love²⁸. Oh my little heart! I have to be a soldier for
love and wear the colors of love like an acrobat's ribbons²⁹
! What, me! I now love! I want to date a woman! I am
looking for a wife! A woman that has been elaborately
made like a German clock³⁰, always needing repairs,
always out of sorts, will never tell the right time. But a small
clock³¹, as it needs to be watched all the time, always tells
the right time! Oh, to break my oath would be the worst
thing, and out of the three promises, to fall in love is the
worst. A fair-skinned, promiscuous woman with a face as
smooth as velvet, with two pitch-black balls stuck on her

²⁵ The line reads "*Signior Junior*" to convey the idea that Cupid is one of the oldest of the gods, but he is also still portrayed as a young boy.

²⁶ A "*placket*" was the name for the slits in petticoats or skirts, and is used to imply the female sexual organs.

²⁷ A "*codpiece*" was a baggy attachment at the front of a man's breeches that contained his genitals.

²⁸ A "*paritor*" was an officer who brought people before the court for sexual offenses that they had committed.

²⁹ A "*tumbler's hoop*" was an acrobat's hoop that would have been

And, among three, to love the worst of all;
 A wightly wanton with a velvet brow,
 With two pitch-balls stuck in her face for eyes;
 Ay, and by heaven, one that will do the deed
 Though Argus were her eunuch and her guard:
 200 And I to sigh for her! to watch for her!
 To pray for her! Go to; it is a plague
 That Cupid will impose for my neglect
 Of his almighty dreadful little might.
 Well, I will love, write, sigh, pray, sue and groan:
 205 Some men must love my lady and some Joan.

Exit

face as eyes. Yes, and by heaven, she is someone who will have sex with me, although I have to battle Argus ³⁰ to get to her. Well I will sigh for her! I will stay awake for her! I will pray for her! Oh me, this is a sickness that Cupid has given me because I ignored his importance for so long. Well then I guess I will love, I will write, sigh, pray, court and groan; some men get to love a lady as brilliant as mine, and some must love someone of a lower status. ³³

decorated with ribbons and worn across his body.

³⁰ German clocks were meant to be elaborately made, containing moving figures, people or animals.

³¹ The small clock is presumably Rosaline here.

³² Argus was a brutal herdsman with a hundred eyes who Juno forced to watch over her so that Jupiter couldn't get to her.

³³ Joan was a traditional name for a woman of a lower rank in society.

BIRON exits.

Act 4, Scene 1

Shakespeare

Enter the PRINCESS, and her train, a Forester, BOYET, ROSALINE, MARIA, and KATHARINE

PRINCESS

Was that the king, that spurred his horse so hard
 Against the steep uprising of the hill?

BOYET

I know not; but I think it was not he.

PRINCESS

Who'er a' was, a' show'd a mounting mind.
 5 Well, lords, to-day we shall have our dispatch:
 On Saturday we will return to France.
 Then, forester, my friend, where is the bush
 That we must stand and play the murderer in?

FORESTER

Hereby, upon the edge of yonder coppice;
 10 A stand where you may make the fairest shoot.

PRINCESS

I thank my beauty, I am fair that shoot,
 And thereupon thou speak'st the fairest shoot.

FORESTER

Pardon me, madam, for I meant not so.

PRINCESS

What, what? first praise me and again say no?
 15 O short-lived pride! Not fair? alack for woe!

FORESTER

Yes, madam, fair.

PRINCESS

Nay, never paint me now:
 Where fair is not, praise cannot mend the brow.
 Here, good my glass, take this for telling true:
 20 Fair payment for foul words is more than due.

FORESTER

Nothing but fair is that which you inherit.

Shakescleare Translation

The PRINCESS enters, followed by a Forester, BOYET, ROSALINE, MARIA and KATHARINE and her attendants.

PRINCESS

Did I just see the king, riding his horse fiercely, as they went up that hill?

BOYET

I don't know, but I don't think it was him.

PRINCESS

Well whoever it was, they seem ambitious. Anyway, lords, today we shall be given permission to leave, and we will return to France on Saturday. Tell me forester, where should a hunter stand when committing murder?

FORESTER

Right here, on the edge of this green space. Stand here and you will make a beautiful shot.

PRINCESS

I guess that compared to other hunters I am beautiful, and that's an advantage. It means that you can call me a beautiful shooter.

FORESTER

Sorry madam, I didn't mean it like that.

PRINCESS

What sir? You are going to praise me and then take it away immediately? Oh short-lived flattery! You don't think I'm beautiful?! Oh poor me!

FORESTER

Madam, you are beautiful.

PRINCESS

Don't you try to flatter me now—if I am not actually beautiful then your words alone cannot change that. *[Giving him money]* Thank you for being my mirror and telling me the truth, you deserve this money even if the words are hurtful.

FORESTER

You are only made up of beautiful things.

PRINCESS

See see, my beauty will be saved by merit!
 O heresy in fair, fit for these days!
 A giving hand, though foul, shall have fair praise.
 25 But come, the bow: now mercy goes to kill,
 And shooting well is then accounted ill.
 Thus will I save my credit in the shoot:
 Not wounding, pity would not let me do't;
 If wounding, then it was to show my skill,
 30 That more for praise than purpose meant to kill.
 And out of question so it is sometimes,
 Glory grows guilty of detested crimes,
 When, for fame's sake, for praise, an outward part,
 We bend to that the working of the heart;
 35 As I for praise alone now seek to spill
 The poor deer's blood, that my heart means no ill.

BOYET

Do not curst wives hold that self-sovereignty
 Only for praise sake, when they strive to be
 Lords o'er their lords?

PRINCESS

40 Only for praise: and praise we may afford
 To any lady that subdues a lord.

BOYET

Here comes a member of the commonwealth.

Enter COSTARD

COSTARD

God dig-you-den all! Pray you, which is the head lady?

PRINCESS

45 Thou shalt know her, fellow, by the rest that have no
 heads.

COSTARD

Which is the greatest lady, the highest?

PRINCESS

The thickest and the tallest.

COSTARD

The thickest and the tallest! it is so; truth is truth.
 50 An 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.

PRINCESS

What's your will, sir? what's your will?

COSTARD

55 I have a letter from Monsieur Biron to one Lady
 Rosaline.

PRINCESS

O, thy letter, thy letter! he's a good friend of mine:
 Stand aside, good bearer. Boyet, you can carve;
 Break up this capon.

BOYET

60 I am bound to serve.
 This letter is mistook, it importeth none here;
 It is writ to Jaquenetta.

PRINCESS

We will read it, I swear.
 Break the neck of the wax, and every one give ear.
 65

PRINCESS

Look, my beauty can be saved by money! Oh it is a
 violation of beauty but is only too suitable these days! A
 generous hand, even though it is an ugly thing, can receive
 a lot of praise. Anyway, give me the bow. Now I, in my mercy
 2 , must kill this deer, and even if I shoot well, my shot
 should be considered a bad thing. Indeed, I can save my
 reputation in this shoot as, if I don't hit the deer, then I can
 say that my pity made me miss it on purpose, or, if I do hit
 the deer, then I only did it to show my skill and to be
 praised, not because I wanted to kill it. And it is undeniable
 that sometimes, people have to do things that they hate in
 order to gain the honor that they want. It is for the fame, for
 the praise, these superficial things, that we commit our
 hearts to this activity. So I now aim to spill this poor deer's
 blood only for fame, not because I want to harm it at all.

BOYET

Don't difficult wives like to have power over their husbands,
 simply for the praise they will get when they boss them
 around?

PRINCESS

Yes, only for the praise, and indeed we give this praise to
 any lady that manages to get the better of her husband.

BOYET

Oh look, here comes one of the common men.

COSTARD enters.

COSTARD

Good day to you all! Who is the head lady?

PRINCESS

Surely you will know her, boy, by the fact that she is the
 only one with a head.

COSTARD

Okay, which of you is the greatest lady, the highest one?

PRINCESS

The fattest and the tallest one.

COSTARD

The fattest and the tallest! Of course! That must be it!
 Imagine mistress, if your waist was as small as my brain is,
 you would be able to fit into any of these maids' corsets!
 But since you are the fattest here, does that mean that you
 are the woman in charge?

PRINCESS

What do you want, sir? Why are you here?

COSTARD

I have a letter from Monsieur Biron to one Lady Rosaline.

PRINCESS

[Taking the letter] Oh a letter, a letter! Biron is a good friend
 of mine, so hand it over messenger. Boyet, you can open
 it—let's hear this love letter.

BOYET

As you wish. Hang on a minute, this letter must be a
 mistake, it has nothing to do with anyone here. This letter is
 for Jaquenetta.

PRINCESS

We will read it, I insist. Open up the letter 3 and let
 everyone hear what it has to say.

1 Here, the Princess is teasing the Forester; she jokes as if she has had to purchase the compliment from him. "Merit" in this (theological) sense is an act of charity.

2 The Princess considers herself a beacon of mercy, who does not desire to murder an animal.

3 To "break the neck of the wax" meant to break the wax seal on the letter and reveal what it said.

Reads

BOYET

'By heaven, that thou art fair, is most infallible; true, that thou art beauteous; truth itself, that thou art lovely. More fairer than fair, beautiful than beauteous, truer than truth itself, have commiseration on thy heroical vassal! The magnanimous and most illustrious king Cophetua set eye upon the pernicious and indubitate beggar Zelenophon; and he it was that might rightly say, Veni, vidi, vici; which to annotharize in the vulgar,--O 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 captive is enriched: on whose side? the beggar's. The catastrophe is a nuptial: on whose side? the king's: no, or 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, 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.

PRINCESS

What plume of feathers is he that indited this letter?
What vane? what weathercock? did you ever hear better?

BOYET

I am much deceived but I remember the style.

PRINCESS

Else your memory is bad, going o'er it erewhile.

BOYET

This Armado is a Spaniard, that keeps here in court;
A phantasime, a Monarcho, and one that makes sport
To the prince and his bookmates.

PRINCESS

Thou fellow, a word:
Who gave thee this letter?

COSTARD

I told you; my lord.

PRINCESS

To whom shouldst thou give it?

COSTARD

From my lord to my lady.

She reads the letter.

BOYET

[Reading] "By heaven, it is certain that you are beautiful; it is true that you are pretty and it is even more true that you are lovely. You are more beautiful than the word beautiful suggests, you are prettier than a pretty person, you are truer than truth itself, so have some pity on your heroic slave! Once, the great and illustrious King Cophetua set eyes upon the fatal and undoubtable beggar Zelenophon and right away he might have said "Veni, vidi, vici," which to explain in common language for the common people, means, "He came, he saw, he conquered." First he came, then he saw, and then he conquered. Who came? The King! Why did he come? To see! Why did he need to see? To conquer! Who did he come to? The beggar! What did he see? The beggar! What did he conquer? The beggar! The conclusion of this is a victory—but for who? The King. The prisoner has been improved, but who is the prisoner? The beggar. This ended in a marriage, but on whose side? The King's? No. Or were they both married, or married together. I am the King in this story, and so you must be the beggar, because of your poverty. Shall I order you to love me? I might. Shall I force you to love me? I could. Shall I ask you to love me? I will. What will you get in exchange? For your rags, you will get amazing dresses; for your pennies you will now get titles; for yourself you will get me. I am waiting for your reply. I will kiss your foot, I will stare at your picture, and will heart will constantly think of you.

Yours, with the most loving intentions. Don Adriano de Armado."

You must hear the Nemean lion as it roars at you, you are its lamb, its prey. Fall before its paws obediently, and he will turn from aggressive to playful immediately. But if you fight against him, you poor thing, what will happen to you then? You will simply be food for his anger, a meal for his family.

PRINCESS

What kind of show-off wrote this letter? What kind of inconstant and unreliable man is he? Have you ever heard something so ridiculous?

BOYET

I am convinced that I know the person who has written it.

PRINCESS

Well I should hope so, or your memory isn't very good—you only just read it!

BOYET

This "Armado" is a Spanish man that stays here in the court. He lives in his own, mad fantasy world, and is a source of amusement for the prince and his fellow students.

PRINCESS

A word, Costard. Who gave you this letter?

COSTARD

I told you—my lord.

PRINCESS

Who did he tell you to give it to?

COSTARD

He said to give it to my lady, from my lord.

⁴ This is a repeated reference, once again picking up on the ancient story about the King and the Beggar that Armado asked Moth to recount when he first professed his love for Jaquenetta.

⁵ These famous words of Julius Caesar were said by Suetonius in the "Divus Julius" and have become renowned in the English language.

⁶ The obvious euphemism here ties together conquering in a military context, and the idea of conquering meaning to have sex with.

⁷ Word play is employed in the original, with Shakespeare displaying the change from "tittles" to "titles."

⁸ This is a reference to Hercules' first task, which was to kill the Nemean lion.

⁹ The original, Shakespearean term "Monarcho" was a title given to an Italian who believed himself to be emperor of the world; hence it is applied to someone who is mocked for his delusions.

PRINCESS

From which lord to which lady?

COSTARD

115 From my lord Biron, a good master of mine,
To a lady of France that he call'd Rosaline.

PRINCESS

Thou hast mistaken his letter. Come, lords, away.

To ROSALINE

PRINCESS

Here, sweet, put up this: 'twill be thine another day.

Exeunt PRINCESS and train

BOYET

120 Who is the suitor? who is the suitor?

ROSALINE

Shall I teach you to know?

BOYET

Ay, my continent of beauty.

ROSALINE

Why, she that bears the bow.
Finely put off!

BOYET

125 My lady goes to kill horns; but, if thou marry,
Hang me by the neck, if horns that year miscarry.
Finely put on!

ROSALINE

Well, then, I am the shooter.

BOYET

And who is your deer?

ROSALINE

130 If we choose by the horns, yourself come not near.
Finely put on, indeed!

MARIA

You still wrangle with her, Boyet, and she strikes
at the brow.

BOYET

But she herself is hit lower: have I hit her now?

ROSALINE

135 Shall I come upon thee with an old saying, that was
a man when King Pepin of France was a little boy, as
touching the hit it?

BOYET

140 So I may answer thee with one as old, that was a
woman when Queen Guinover of Britain was a little
wench, as touching the hit it.

PRINCESS

From which lord to which lady?

COSTARD

It came from my lord Biron, a good master of mine, to be
given to a lady of France that he said was called Rosaline.

PRINCESS

You have got the wrong letter. Come, lords, let's go.

PRINCESS

[To ROSALINE] Here you go, my sweet friend, keep this—it
will truly be yours one day soon.

The PRINCESS and her attendants exit.

BOYET

Who is the next shooter ¹⁰? Who is the next shooter?

ROSALINE

Shall I let you in on a secret?

BOYET

Why yes, you beautiful thing.

ROSALINE

Well of course, it's the person that has the bow. Dodged
that one well!

BOYET

My lady is going to kill deer right now, but if you ever marry,
then I'll be sure, men aren't getting what they want ¹¹.
What a good come back!

ROSALINE

Okay then, I am the shooter.

BOYET

And who will be your prey?

ROSALINE

If we're looking for the things that have horns ¹², then you
should probably stay out of my way. Take that!

MARIA

You keep trying to argue with her Boyet, but she hits you
right in the head.

BOYET

But she herself has been hit lower, in the heart, hasn't she?
Have I got to her now?

ROSALINE

Shall I fight back against you with such an old saying, that
was around even when King Pepin of France ¹³ was a little
boy, in song?

BOYET

As long as I can reply with a similarly old saying, that had
been around for a while even when Queen Guinevere of
Britain ¹⁴ was a little girl herself, if that would do it?

¹⁰ Rosaline seems to be playing on the pun here that both "shooter" and "suitor" would have been pronounced the same, to aid her mockery of Boyet.

¹¹ The implication is that the horns of a cuckold (a man whose wife is sleeping with another man) won't grow, because she won't sleep with anyone.

¹² Here, the implication is that Boyet himself is a cuckold.

¹³ King Pepin was Charlemagne's father, who died in 768 AD and was often used as a symbol for the past.

¹⁴ King Arthur's queen, meant to have lived a long time before Rosaline's "King Pepin."

ROSALINE

Thou canst not hit it, hit it, hit it,
Thou canst not hit it, my good man.

BOYET

An I cannot, cannot, cannot,
An I cannot, another can.

145

Exeunt ROSALINE and KATHARINE

COSTARD

By my troth, most pleasant: how both did fit it!

MARIA

A mark marvellous well shot, for they both did hit it.

BOYET

A mark! O, mark but that mark! A mark, says my lady!
Let the mark have a prick in't, to mete at, if it may
be.

150

MARIA

Wide o' the bow hand! i' faith, your hand is out.

COSTARD

Indeed, a' must shoot nearer, or he'll ne'er hit the
clout.

BOYET

An if my hand be out, then belike your hand is in.

COSTARD

155 Then will she get the upshoot by cleaving the pin.

MARIA

Come, come, you talk greasily; your lips grow foul.

COSTARD

She's too hard for you at pricks, sir: challenge her to
bowl.

BOYET

I fear too much rubbing. Good night, my good owl.

160

Exeunt BOYET and MARIA

COSTARD

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 incony
vulgar wit!

165

ROSALINE

[Singing] You cannot hit the mark, you cannot hit the mark,
You cannot hit the right thing ¹⁵, my good man.

BOYET

If I cannot, if I cannot,
Then I'm sure another can.

ROSALINE and KATHARINE exit.

COSTARD

My goodness, what an exchange of words! ¹⁶

MARIA

A target that has been well shot, seeing as they both did hit
their mark.

BOYET

A target! Oh, remember that target! A target, says my lady!
Let that target have a bull's-eye in it ¹⁷ and I will take aim
now.

MARIA

You are aiming too wide from the target! Indeed, you are
out of practice.

COSTARD

Indeed, he should shoot from closer, or he will never hit the
cloth at all.

BOYET

Well if my hand isn't touching anything ¹⁸, then yours must
be.

COSTARD

Then she'll get the best shot ¹⁹ in the end.

MARIA

Stop that now, don't say such indecent things—your mouth
is dirty.

COSTARD

She's too good at archery ²⁰ for you, sir. Challenge her to
bowl instead.

BOYET

I fear the balls will rub too much. Good night, you wise
thing.

BOYET and MARIA exit.

COSTARD

Oh dear, what a suitor! Such a simple fellow! Lord, lord,
how the ladies and I have mocked him! Oh my word, what
hilarious jokes! What fine, common ²¹ wit! When it is done
so well, so crudely, it seems so fitting! Yet, there is also

¹⁵ The sexual connotations are rife here, with Rosaline deliberately playing between saying the right thing with words, and the innuendo of having sex.

¹⁶ "Fit it" could imply making words, meter and subjects go together well, but it also has the connotation of having sex.

¹⁷ In the original "Let the mark have a prick in't", there are clear sexual connotations with a "prick" also being used to sometimes describe a penis.

¹⁸ Boyet continues the sexual punning, using a double meaning here between Maria's hand being in, as an archer, and Maria's hand being in, when it comes to sexual matters.

¹⁹ Here Shakespeare uses another bawdy metaphor. Either Maria will get the best shot in the archery competition by splitting the pin which holds the cloth on, or, by holding his penis, she will get the "upshoot" from it, meaning his ejaculate.

²⁰ Yet another sexually suggestive double meaning: not only is she better than him at archery, she is not soft enough for his "prick," meaning his penis.

²¹ It is uncertain whether Costard means "vulgar" here, as something common or ordinary, or if this is another mistake on his part.

When it comes so smoothly off, so obscenely, as it were, so fit.
 Armado o' th' one side,--O, a most dainty man!
 To see him walk before a lady and to bear her fan!
 To see him kiss his hand! and how most sweetly a'
 170 will swear!
 And his page o' t' other side, that handful of wit!
 Ah, heavens, it is a most pathetic nit!
 Sola, sola!

Exit COSTARD, running

Armado, and what a particular kind of man he is! I love seeing him walking in front of a woman, fanning her! I love seeing him kiss his own hand and swearing his love for a woman so strongly! Then there is also his page, that small clever thing! Oh heavens, he is quite a touching little guy!
[Shouts are heard within] Hey there, hey there!

COSTARD exits, running.

Act 4, Scene 2

Shakespeare

Enter HOLOFERNES, SIR NATHANIEL, and DULL

SIR NATHANIEL

Very reverend sport, truly; and done in the testimony of a good conscience.

HOLOFERNES

The deer was, as you know, sanguis, in blood; ripe as the pomewater, who now hangeth like a jewel in the ear of caelo, the sky, the welkin, the heaven;
 5 and anon falleth like a crab on the face of terra, the soil, the land, the earth.

SIR NATHANIEL

Truly, Master Holofernes, the epithets are sweetly varied, like a scholar at the least: but, sir, I
 10 assure ye, it was a buck of the first head.

HOLOFERNES

Sir Nathaniel, *haud credo*.

DULL

'Twas not an 'auld grey doe', 'twas a pricket.

HOLOFERNES

Most barbarous intimation! yet a kind of insinuation, as it were, in via, in 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, unconfirmed fashion, to
 15
 20

Shakescleare Translation

HOLOFERNES, SIR NATHANIEL and DULL enter.

SIR NATHANIEL

A very good shot, really, and you did it with a clear conscience.

HOLOFERNES

The deer was, as you know, in prime condition ¹, as ripe as a juicy apple. At one moment it hung like an earring in the ear of the sky ², the air, the heavens ³, and then, a moment later it fell like a crab-apple onto the ground, the soil, the land, the earth.

¹ This introduction to Holofernes and Sir Nathaniel immediately reflects the language that Shakespeare has chosen for these characters. They are marked by their quick interchanges from English to Latin, as a mode of showing off their intelligence and wisdom. In this opening line, Holofernes says that the deer was "sanguis," and then translates himself to mean, "in blood" or in prime condition.

² Once more Holofernes originally quotes in the Latin "caelo," but seemingly has cited the wrong word, as it should be "caelum." This could be a compositor's error, but is more likely a reflection that Holofernes' Latin isn't as perfect as he believes it is.

³ Holofernes is notable for his continuous verbosity and overuse of words, as seen in this passage.

SIR NATHANIEL

Really, Master Holofernes, the variety of names you have used are lovely, similar to how a scholar would speak to say the least. However sir, I must correct you, it was a five-year-old male deer with its first antlers.

HOLOFERNES

Sir Nathaniel, *haud credo* ⁴.

⁴ "haud credo" translates to "I don't believe it" in Latin and has been left in its original language in our translation to make Dull's misunderstanding of the phrase clearer.

DULL

It wasn't an old grey doe ⁵, it was a two-year-old deer.

⁵ Dull misinterprets "haud credo" as Holofernes talking about an "old grey doe," or an old deer.

HOLOFERNES

What a ridiculous announcement! Yet, it is a kind of suggestion, as it were, a means of symbolizing a more detailed description. ⁶ To make, as it were, a reply, or rather, to show his opinion, in the best way he can, as a scruffy, untidy, stupid, uncontrolled, uninstructed, or rather, uneducated, or even better ignorant idiot ⁷, to swap again my *haud credo* for a deer.

⁶ Holofernes first speaks in the Latin, "in via", meaning "as a way" or "in the way." The Latin will, from this point forward, be translated into modern English without further comment.

insert again my haud credo for a deer.

DULL

I said the deer was not an 'auld grey doe', twas a pricket.

HOLOFERNES

Twice-sod simplicity, his coctus!
O thou monster Ignorance, how deformed dost thou look!

SIR NATHANIEL

- 25 Sir, he hath never fed of the dainties that are bred
in a book; he hath not eat 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:
- 30 And such barren plants are set before us, that we
thankful should be,
Which we of taste and feeling are, for those parts that
do fructify in us more than he.
For as it would ill become me to be vain, indiscreet,
35 or a fool,
So were there a patch set on learning, to see him in a
school:
But omne bene, say I; being of an old father's mind,
Many can brook the weather that love not the wind.

DULL

- 40 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?

HOLOFERNES

Dictynna, goodman Dull; Dictynna, goodman Dull.

DULL

What is Dictynna?

SIR NATHANIEL

- 45 A title to Phoebe, to Luna, to the moon.

HOLOFERNES

The moon was a month old when Adam was no more,
And raught not to five weeks when he came to
five-score.
The allusion holds in the exchange.

DULL

- 50 'Tis true indeed; the collusion holds in the exchange.

HOLOFERNES

God comfort thy capacity! I say, the allusion holds
in the exchange.

DULL

- And I say, the pollution holds in the exchange; for
the moon is never but a month old: and I say beside
55 that, 'twas a pricket that the Princess killed.

HOLOFERNES

Sir Nathaniel, will you hear an extemporal epitaph
on the death of the deer? And, to humour the
ignorant, call I the deer the princess killed a

DULL

I just said that the deer was not an old grey doe, it was a
two-year-old deer.

HOLOFERNES

Oh twice-boiled ⁸ simplicity, twice cooked! Oh, you
monster Ignorance, you look so deformed.

SIR NATHANIEL

Sir, he has never enjoyed the treats that can be found in a
book; he hasn't eaten paper, as it were; he hasn't drunk the
ink. His mind has not been filled with ideas, he is just an
animal, only able to feel things physically. Remember sir,
when boring people are put before us, we should be
thankful, that we are full of different tastes and emotions,
since those things keep developing in us, when they don't
in him. For although I know I should never be vain, careless,
or an idiot, if he went to a school it would be like teaching a
fool ⁹! Anyway, all is well, I say, if I remember what they
used to think in the past, you have to just put up with the
things that you can't change. ¹⁰

DULL

You two are book-men—are you clever enough to tell me
what was a month old when Cain ¹¹ was born, but still isn't
five weeks old yet?

HOLOFERNES

That would be Dictynna my goodman Dull, that would be
Dictynna.

DULL

What is Dictynna?

SIR NATHANIEL

A title for the sister of Apollo, for Luna, the moon ¹².

HOLOFERNES

The moon was only a month old when Adam was the same
age, and it hadn't reached five weeks old, even when Adam
was a hundred! The riddle works for Adam as well.

DULL

It's true indeed, the word play still works, even when the
riddle has been changed.

HOLOFERNES

May God help your intelligence! I said already, that the
riddle works for Adam as well.

DULL

And I say that there has been a mistake in your
conversation, for the moon can never be more than a
month old, and more than that, I am telling you that it was
a two-year-old deer that the Princess killed.

HOLOFERNES

Sir Nathaniel, would you like to hear an improvised eulogy
about the death of the deer? To please the stupid listeners, I

⁷ *Holofernes' outburst comes as an outpouring of words, as he is a man who is constantly trying to think of better words to use.*

⁸ *Twice sod means boiled twice and in this sense refers to Dull's repeated stupidity.*

⁹ *The original, "a patch set on learning," implies that it would be like putting a different piece of fabric on the cloth of learning, it would make it something different.*

¹⁰ *This becomes a proverbial phrase, meaning that you can't do anything about the weather even if you don't like it.*

¹¹ *Cain was the eldest son of Adam and Eve, so the third human to be born.*

¹² *Both Dictynna and Luna were commonly used as titles for the moon across the period.*

pricket.

SIR NATHANIEL

60 Perge, good Master Holofernes, perge; so it shall please you to abrogate scurrility.

HOLOFERNES

I will something affect the letter, for it argues facility.

65 The preylful princess pierced and prick'd a pretty pleasing pricket;
Some say a sore; but not a sore, till now made sore with shooting.

The dogs did yell: put L to sore, then sorel jumps from thicket;

70 Or pricket sore, or else sorel; the people fall a-hooting.

If sore be sore, then L to sore makes fifty sores one sorel.

Of one sore I an hundred make by adding but one more L.

SIR NATHANIEL

75 A rare talent!

DULL

[Aside] If a talent be a claw, look how he claws him with a talent.

HOLOFERNES

80 This is a gift that I have, simple, simple; a foolish extravagant spirit, 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, and delivered upon the mellowing of occasion. But the gift is good in those in whom it is acute, and I am
85 thankful for it.

SIR NATHANIEL

Sir, I praise the Lord for you; and so may my parishioners; for their sons are well tutored by you, and their daughters profit very greatly under you: you are a good member of the commonwealth.

HOLOFERNES

90 Mehercle, if their sons be ingenuous, they shall want no instruction; if their daughters be capable, I will put it to them: but vir sapit qui pauca loquitur; a soul feminine saluteth us.

Enter JAQUENETTA and COSTARD

JAQUENETTA

95 God give you good morrow, master Person.

will even call the deer the Princess killed, only two-years-old.

SIR NATHANIEL

Go on, good Master Holofernes, go on. Make sure you stay away from indecent language 13.

HOLOFERNES

I will focus on using alliteration, as it will help the flow of it.

The preying 14 Princess hit and killed a very lovely deer. Some say it was a sore 15, an older deer, but it wasn't sore until it was made to be by being shot.

The dogs yelled, to add an "l" onto sore, and then it is a sorrel 16, a three-year-old deer that jumps out of the bushes.

Whatever kind of deer it was, the people started shouting. If the deer is hurt, then adding an "l" to sore 17, makes fifty injured deer,

Or if there is one sore, one deer, I can make a hundred of them by adding one more "l."

SIR NATHANIEL

He has a rare talent!

DULL

[To himself] Only if a talent is a claw, because look at how he flatters him 18 with his talent.

HOLOFERNES

It's a gift that I have, it's as simple as that. I am a silly, over-the top person, full of words, figures of speech, shapes, objects outside of the mind, ideas, views, inner feelings, reflections. 19 These are made in the depths of memory, they grow in the outskirts of the brain 20, and are spoken when the time is just right. But a gift like this is good for a clever person, and I am thankful for it.

SIR NATHANIEL

Sir, I thank the Lord for you, and so do the people in my parish 21 as well, since their sons are taught very well by you and their daughters make progress too. You are a very good member of the community.

HOLOFERNES

By Hercules 22, if their sons are intelligent, I will teach them everything I know; if their daughters are able to understand, I will set them to work as well 23! But it is a wise man who says very little 24, a woman is coming over to talk to us.

JAQUENETTA and COSTARD enter.

JAQUENETTA

Good day to you, master Person 25.

13 Sir Nathaniel may be referring to the rude possibilities that could come with a word like "pricket."

14 Holofernes fills this speech with alliteration and word plays. Here in the modern translation, the meaning is kept as close as possible, with some of the word-play getting lost in translation.

15 A sore was a deer in its fourth year.

16 A sorrel was a deer that was three years old.

17 Holofernes is referring to the Roman numeral "L," meaning fifty, when he says that adding an l will make fifty deer. This joke is then furthered in the next line, when he says that adding another "l," another fifty, will make a hundred deer.

18 "To claw" someone was to flatter or to fawn upon them. From this derivation, we have ended up with the saying, "you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours."

19 Here Holofernes is using the subjects of philosophy, rhetoric and ideas from the period about the workings of the mind to establish himself as the most learned figure.

20 "Pia mater" is one of the outer membranes that protects the brain.

21 Sir Nathaniel is a parson, the priest of an independent parish Church.

22 "Mehercle" is an oath to Hercules that is unique to Shakespeare.

23 "I will put it to them" has also been read to have sexual connotations as well, implying not only that he will put them to work, but he will also have sex with them.

24 At this moment he is saying that he will say no more as there is a woman approaching.

25 "Person" and "parson" were variant forms for both words, but it is clear from Holofernes' response in the next line that Jaquenetta has not pronounced the word correctly.

HOLOFERNES

Master Parson, quasi pers-on. An if one should be pierced, which is the one?

COSTARD

Marry, master schoolmaster, he that is likest to a hogshead.

HOLOFERNES

100 Piercing a hogshead! a good lustre of conceit in a tuft of earth; fire enough for a flint, pearl enough for a swine: 'tis pretty; it is well.

JAQUENETTA

105 Good master Parson, be so good as read me this letter: it was given me by Costard, and sent me from Don Armado: I beseech you, read it.

HOLOFERNES

Fauste, precor gelida quando pecus omne sub umbra Ruminat,--and so forth. Ah, good old Mantuan! I may speak of thee as the traveller doth of Venice; Venetia, Venetia,

110 Chi non ti vede non ti pretia.
Old Mantuan, old Mantuan! who understandeth thee not, loves thee not. Ut, re, sol, la, mi, fa.
Under pardon, sir, what are the contents? or rather, as Horace says in his--What, my soul, verses?

SIR NATHANIEL

115 Ay, sir, and very learned.

HOLOFERNES

Let me hear a staff, a stanza, a verse; lege, domine.

SIR NATHANIEL

[Reads]

If love make me forsworn, how shall I swear to love? Ah, never faith could hold, if not to beauty vow'd!

120 Though to myself forsworn, to thee I'll faithful prove: Those thoughts to me were oaks, to thee like osiers bow'd.

Study his bias leaves and makes his book thine eyes, Where all those pleasures live that art would comprehend:

125 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 to me some praise that I thy parts admire:

130 Thy eye Jove's lightning bears, thy voice his dreadful thunder,

Which not to anger bent, is music and sweet fire. Celestial as thou art, O, pardon, love, this wrong, That sings heaven's praise with such an earthly tongue.

HOLOFERNES

She says Parson, as if the word was piers-on. If someone should be pierced, who will it be?

COSTARD

Well, master schoolmaster, it will be the person that is the most similar to a barrel of ale. ²⁶

HOLOFERNES

Breaking open an ale barrel! A good moment of wit from someone so stupid, enough of a spark to light a fire, enough of a jewel to interest a villain. It is a good line.

JAQUENETTA

Good master Parson, would you be so kind as to read this letter to me? It was given to me by Costard and has been sent to me from Don Armado. I beg you, please read it to me.

HOLOFERNES

"Faustus, while all of the cattle are chewing the fat in the cool shade, I beg you" ²⁷ and so on! Oh good old Mantua ²⁸

! I will speak about you, like a traveler speaks about Venice, "Venice, Venice, he that does not see you, will not admire you" ²⁹. Old Mantua, old Mantua, people who do not understand you, do not love you. [He sings] Do, re, mi, fa, so, la ³⁰.

Excuse me sir, what are the contents of the letter? Or rather, as Horace would say, What is my ability in? Is it verses? ³¹

²⁶ The meaning conveyed here is of breaking open a barrel of drink, so this could also be seen as a reference to the most likely person to do this, an alcoholic.

²⁷ Holofernes is quoting the opening line of Baptista Spagnoli of Mantua's eclogue, potentially in response to Jaquenetta's "I beseech thee" - "I beg you."

²⁸ A reference to Baptista Spagnoli of Mantua (1448-1516), the author of the quoted eclogue.

²⁹ This line is a common Italian proverb which Holofernes is quoting.

³⁰ Holofernes, as a schoolmaster, may also have taught music, and this is an example of him singing what looks to be a scale.

³¹ In Horace's "Ars Poetica" he says to "Choose a subject that is suited to your abilities" and this might be what Holofernes is thinking of when he asks about his own abilities.

SIR NATHANIEL

Yes sir, and you are very good at them.

HOLOFERNES

Let's hear a paragraph of it, or a stanza, or a verse. Read, master.

SIR NATHANIEL

[Reading] If loving you will break my oath, then how can I swear on my oath that I love you? Oh faith could never hold onto me, if I was not so attached to your beauty! Even though I have broken the promises I made to myself, I will prove to you that I can be faithful. The thoughts I had that I thought were as strong as oaks, under your influence they were like a bending willow tree, constantly changing. The student now must abandon his studies and make your eyes his next book, the place where all the desires that knowledge understands live. If knowledge is the target, then to know you should be enough to hit it--your tongue is so clever that you can praise me. A person who sees you and isn't amazed is stupid, which means I must be at least a bit clever, because I admire everything about you. Your eyes shine like Jupiter's lightning, your voice echoes like his dreadful thunder which, as it is not often angry, sounds like music and sweet fire. You are so heavenly, please forgive all that I have done wrong for love, a love that praises you, a thing from heaven, with just a simple voice.

HOFERNES

135 You find not the apostrophas, and so miss the accent: let me supervise the canzonet. Here are only numbers ratified; but, for the elegancy, facility, and golden cadence of poesy, caret. Ovidius Naso was the man: and why, indeed, Naso,

140 but for smelling out the odouriferous flowers of fancy, the jerks of invention? Imitari is nothing: so doth the hound his master, the ape his keeper, the tired horse his rider. But, damosella virgin, was this directed to you?

JAQUENETTA

145 Ay, sir, from one Monsieur Biron, one of the strange queen's lords.

HOFERNES

I will overglance the superscript: '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 unto: 'Your ladyship's in all desired employment, BIRON.' Sir Nathaniel, this Biron is one of the votaries with the king; and here he hath framed a letter to a sequent of the stranger queen's, which accidentally, or by the way of progression, hath miscarried. Trip and go, my sweet; deliver this paper into the royal hand of the king: it may concern much. Stay not thy compliment; I forgive thy duty; adieu.

150

155

JAQUENETTA

160 Good Costard, go with me. Sir, God save your life!

COSTARD

Have with thee, my girl.

Exeunt COSTARD and JAQUENETTA

SIR NATHANIEL

Sir, you have done this in the fear of God, very religiously; and, as a certain father saith,--

HOFERNES

165 Sir tell me not of the father; I do fear colourable colours. But to return to the verses: did they please you, Sir Nathaniel?

SIR NATHANIEL

Marvellous well for the pen.

HOFERNES

I do dine to-day at the father's of a certain pupil of mine; where, if, before 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 or pupil, undertake your benvenuto; where I will prove those verses to be very unlearned,

170

175 neither savouring of poetry, wit, nor invention: I beseech your society.

HOFERNES

You didn't notice the apostrophes and so you have put emphasis on the wrong words, let me look at this poem ³². Here are lines which have the right meter ³³ to them, but they lack elegancy, fluency, and the required flow of poetry. Ovid ³⁴ was the best man at doing this, and why was his surname Naso ³⁵, why, because he could smell out the best parts of love to write about, the best witty speeches from his imagination. Imitation is pointless, it is like comparing a dog to its master, a monkey to its keep, a tired horse to its rider. But my virgin girl, was this letter given to you?

JAQUENETTA

Yes sir, from someone called Monsieur Biron, one of the foreign queen's ³⁶ lords.

HOFERNES

I will look again at who the letter is addressed to: "To the pure, white hand of the most beautiful Lady Rosaline." I will now look again at the signature of the letter, to find the name of the person who has written it: "Yours, in any way you want me to be, BIRON." Sir Nathaniel, this Biron is one of the lords who has sworn the oath with the king, and yet here he has written a letter to one of the foreign queen's ladies, which, either accidentally, or as a result of its journey, has failed to get to the right person. Get going, my sweet girl. Deliver this letter into the King's hand, it may be very important. Don't hang around to thank me, you don't need to show your appreciation. Goodbye now.

JAQUENETTA

Good Costard, come with me! Sir, God's thanks to you!

COSTARD

I'll go with you, my girl.

COSTARD and JAQUENETTA exit.

SIR NATHANIEL

Sir, you have acted in fear of God, very religiously, and as a certain father said. ³⁷

HOFERNES

Sir don't tell me what this father said, I am scared of these displays of reason ³⁸. To return to the verses of that letter, did you enjoy them, Nathaniel?

SIR NATHANIEL

The handwriting was very nice.

HOFERNES

I am going to have dinner today at the house of one of my student's fathers, where I hope before the meal, you will be able to say grace. I will use the relationship that I have with the parents of this child, or pupil, to make sure that you are welcome ³⁹ for the meal. When we are there, I will prove that these verses are very simple, and contain no poetry, wit, or imagination. I hope you will come with me.

³² The "canzonet" was a type of Italian music. It was one of the most popular types of music of the period.

³³ This line, "only numbers ratified," technically means that the lines have the right number of feet and syllables and so the meter is correct.

³⁴ A Roman poet, who is particularly famous for his love poetry and for his work "Metamorphoses." Ovid would have been a key part of the curriculum for students in Shakespeare's day, and they would have learnt a lot of his poetry off by heart.

³⁵ Ovid's surname "Naso" meant "large-nosed."

³⁶ It is likely that Jaquenetta, in her confusion, has just misspoken here, as it is one of the King's lord, not the Queen's.

³⁷ Sir Nathaniel is likely referring here to one of the Fathers of the Church.

³⁸ "Colorable colors" are a reasonable, but deceptive show of logic. Holofernes might be referring here to one of the Fathers of the Church and their logic, which he disagrees with.

³⁹ Holofernes gives the Italian, "benvenuto"; which means to be welcomed or greeted.

SIR NATHANIEL

And thank you too; for society, saith the text, is the happiness of life.

HOLOFERNES

And, certes, the text most infallibly concludes it.

180

To DULL

HOLOFERNES

Sir, I do invite you too; you shall not say me nay: pauca verba. Away! the gentles are at their game, and we will to our recreation.

Exeunt

SIR NATHANIEL

Thank you kindly. For friendship, the text ⁴⁰ says, is the happiness of life.

⁴⁰ It is not clear which "text" Sir Nathaniel is referring to here, it may be the Bible or a different source entirely.

HOLOFERNES

And certainly, the text truly settles the matter.

HOLOFERNES

[*To DULL*] Sir, you are invited as well and you will not turn me down. Fewer words are best. Let's go! The lords are hunting, and now it's time for our entertainment.

They exit.

Act 4, Scene 3

Shakespeare

Enter BIRON, with a paper

BIRON

The king he is hunting the deer; I am cursing 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
5 the fool said, and so say I, and I the fool: well proved, 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. O, but her
10 eye,--by this light, but for her eye, I would not love her; yes, 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; and here is part of my rhyme, and here my melancholy. Well, she hath one o' my
15 sonnets already: the clown bore it, the fool sent it, and the lady hath it: sweet clown, sweeter fool, sweetest lady! By the world, I would not care a pin, if the other three were in. Here comes one
20 with a paper: God give him grace to groan!

Stands aside

Enter FERDINAND, with a paper

FERDINAND

Ay me!

BIRON

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

Shakesclare Translation

BIRON enters, with a piece of paper.

BIRON

The king is currently hunting deer, while I am cursing myself ¹; they have laid their traps for their prey while I have been captured by that black, sticky substance of love and am now infected by it--infected! That is a dirty word. Anyway, be patient sadness! For this is supposedly what the fool said and now I say it too, so I must be a fool, oh well said! My goodness, being in love is as mad as Ajax. It kills sheep ², it kills me, oh then I must be a sheep! Well said again! I will not love. If I do, kill me anyway! Truthfully I cannot love. Oh, but her eye, her eye allows me to see, I wouldn't love her if not for her two eyes. Oh the only thing I seem to do in this world is tell gross lies and I can feel them in my throat. By heaven, I do love and it has taught me how to write poetry and here is part of my poem, and here is my sadness. I've already sent her one of my sonnets. Costard that clown took it to her, I, the fool sent it and she now has it--sweet clown, sweeter fool, sweetest lady! By the world I wouldn't mind at all, if the other three were in love. Here comes one of the others with paper--oh please let him be groaning like I am!

¹ Biron says he is "cursing" himself, punning on the word, which could also mean to turn over in one's mind.

² Ajax killed a flock of sheep when he wasn't awarded the armor of Achilles after his death. To be "as mad as Ajax" has become proverbial.

BIRON stands aside.

FERDINAND enters with paper.

FERDINAND

Why me!

BIRON

[*To himself*] My goodness, he has been struck too! Carry on, sweet Cupid, you have shot him in the heart with your arrow. Let's hear what he will confess!

FERDINAND25 *[Reads]*

So sweet a kiss the golden sun gives not
 To those fresh morning drops upon the rose,
 As thy eye-beams, when their fresh rays have smote
 The night of dew that on my cheeks down flows:
 30 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;
 35 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:
 But do not love thyself; then thou wilt keep
 My tears for glasses, and still make me weep.
 40 O queen of queens! how far dost thou excel,
 No thought can think, nor tongue of mortal tell.
 How shall she know my griefs? I'll drop the paper:
 Sweet leaves, shade folly. Who is he comes here?

*Steps aside***FERDINAND**

45 What, Longaville! and reading! listen, ear.

BIRON

Now, in thy likeness, one more fool appear!

*Enter LONGAVILLE, with a paper***LONGAVILLE**

Ay me, I am forsworn!

BIRON

Why, he comes in like a perjurer, wearing papers.

FERDINAND

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

BIRON

One drunkard loves another of the name.

LONGAVILLE

Am I the first that have been perjured so?

BIRON

I could put thee in comfort. Not by two that I know:
 Thou makest the triumvir, the corner-cap of society,
 55 The shape of Love's Tyburn that hangs up simplicity.

LONGAVILLE

I fear these stubborn lines lack power to move:
 O sweet Maria, empress of my love!
 These numbers will I tear, and write in prose.

BIRON60 O, rhymes are guards on wanton Cupid's hose:
Disfigure not his slop.**LONGAVILLE**

This same shall go.

*Reads***FERDINAND**

[Reading] The golden sun doesn't shine so brightly on the
 fresh dew of a morning rose, as your eyes do, when they
 look after my cheeks, covered with last night's tears. The
 silver moon doesn't shine half as bright in the dead of
 night, as your face shines through my tears. You are
 reflected in every tear that I weep, every drop is like a coach
 to carry you away, as you ride and rejoice at my sadness.
 Just look at the tears that grow in me and know that they
 show your glory by the effect that it has on me. Yet, don't
 just love yourself, since then my tears will just be like a
 mirror for you to look at yourself in, and I will keep crying.
 Oh queen of queens! How incredible you are cannot even
 be thought of, it cannot be put into words. How will you
 know my pains? I will give you paper, and the leaves ³ will
 hide my silliness. Wait, who is coming?

*FERDINAND hides.***FERDINAND**Oh, it is Longaville, and he is reading! I will listen to what he
has to say.**BIRON**

He looks as lovesick as you do, another foolish man!

*Enter LONGAVILLE, with paper.***LONGAVILLE**

Oh poor me, I am finished!

BIRONLook at him, he comes in dressed like a liar, covered in
papers ⁴.**FERDINAND**

I hope he's in love, I could use the company!

BIRON

One lovesick man loves another woman.

LONGAVILLE

Am I the first to be untruthful in this way?

BIRON

I wish I could comfort you and tell you that I know two more
 who are like you—you make up the trio, the villains of
 society, the men trapped in love's prison ⁵, hanged for
 their stupidity.

LONGAVILLE

I fear that my poetry will not make her love me. Oh sweet
 Maria, the ruler of my heart, I will tear up these verses and
 write in prose ⁶ instead.

BIRON

Don't ruin Cupid's work.

LONGAVILLE

This is what I've got so far.

LONGAVILLE reads.

³ These "sweet leaves" hold a
 double meaning, the leaves as in the
 leaves on a tree, and the leaves of
 paper that he will give her.

⁴ The original reads "wearing
 papers", because as part of their
 punishment, perjurers or liars had to
 wear papers on their heads or backs,
 detailing their crimes.

⁵ The Tyburn was the main place of
 execution in London where prisoners
 would be taken and killed.

⁶ Prose was viewed as the more
 "common" form of writing, whereas
 verse and sonnets were perceived to
 be the language of love and the
 courtier.

LONGAVILLE

Did not the heavenly rhetoric of thine eye,
 'Gainst whom the world cannot hold argument,
 65 Persuade my heart to this false perjury?
 Vows for thee broke deserve not punishment.
 A woman I forswore; but I will prove,
 Thou being a goddess, I forswore not thee:
 My vow was earthly, thou a heavenly love;
 70 Thy grace being gain'd cures all disgrace in me.
 Vows are but breath, and breath a vapour is:
 Then thou, fair sun, which on my earth dost shine,
 Exhalest this vapour-vow; in thee it is:
 If broken then, it is no fault of mine:
 75 If by me broke, what fool is not so wise
 To lose an oath to win a paradise?

BIRON

This is the liver-vein, 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

80 By whom shall I send this?--Company! stay.

Steps aside

BIRON

All hid, all hid; an old infant play.
 Like a demigod here sit I in the sky.
 And wretched fools' secrets heedfully o'ereye.
 85 More sacks to the mill! O heavens, I have my wish!

Enter DUMAIN, with a paper

BIRON

Dumain transform'd! four woodcocks in a dish!

DUMAIN

O most divine Kate!

BIRON

90 O most profane coxcomb!

DUMAIN

By heaven, the wonder in a mortal eye!

BIRON

By earth, she is not, corporal, there you lie.

DUMAIN

Her amber hair for foul hath amber quoted.

BIRON

An amber-colour'd raven was well noted.

DUMAIN

95 As upright as the cedar.

BIRON

Stoop, I say;
 Her shoulder is with child.

DUMAIN

As fair as day.

LONGAVILLE

Didn't the heavenly words that your eye speaks, words that
 no-one in the world can debate against, convince my heart
 to be dishonest in this way? The vows that I have broken for
 you don't deserve to be punished. I promised to abandon
 all women, but if I can prove that you are the goddess I
 think you are, then I have not broken any promise. My oath
 was made on the earth, but you are a heavenly love, and if I
 can win your favor then all my disgraces will be gone. Vows
 are just breath and breath is like a vapor that melts away.
 Then it is you, fair sun, that shines on my earth, evaporating
 this vapor and my vow, it is you who has done it. If the vow
 is broken then, it isn't my fault. If it is broken by me, then
 what fool wouldn't forget any oath to win a paradise?

BIRON

This is written in the lover's style, which tries to make
 humans seem like gods, a silly young woman seem like a
 goddess. It is pure, pure glorification. God help us, God help
 us! Something has gone really wrong.

LONGAVILLE

Who shall I send this poem with? There's someone here,
 hang on.

He hides.

BIRON

Everyone's hiding, it's like an old childish game and I sit
 here like a demigod, overseeing these silly fools confess
 their secrets. There is more to come! Oh wonderful, I have
 my wish!

DUMAIN enters, with paper.

BIRON

Dumain is transformed as well! Four fools in one place!

DUMAIN

Oh most divine Kate!

BIRON

Oh another ridiculous fool ⁷!

⁷ A "coxcomb" was a vain fool, or idiot.

DUMAIN

By heaven, the wonder of her mortal eye.

BIRON

You should say "by earth" as she is human, there you have
 already lied.

DUMAIN

Her amber hair makes the color amber itself even look ugly.

BIRON

An amber-colored raven ⁸ would be a better description.

⁸ Biron mistakes "foul" in the previous line for "fowl" and so makes a joke about Katharine being compared to a raven.

DUMAIN

She is as upright as a cedar tree.

BIRON

Come down to earth ⁹! Her shoulder is humped.

⁹ To "stoop" or to bend could be used as an expression to come back down to earth.

DUMAIN

She is as beautiful as the day.

BIRON

Ay, as some days; but then no sun must shine.

DUMAIN

100 O that I had my wish!

LONGAVILLE

And I had mine!

FERDINAND

And I mine too, good Lord!

BIRON

Amen, so I had mine: is not that a good word?

DUMAIN

105 I would forget her; but a fever she
Reigns in my blood and will remember'd be.

BIRON

A fever in your blood! why, then incision
Would let her out in saucers: sweet misprision!

DUMAIN

Once more I'll read the ode that I have writ.

BIRON

Once more I'll mark how love can vary wit.

DUMAIN

110 *[Reads]*
On a day--alack the day!--
Love, whose month is ever May,
Spied a blossom passing fair
Playing in the wanton air:
115 Through the velvet leaves the wind,
All unseen, can passage find;
That the lover, sick to death,
Wish himself the heaven's breath.
Air, quoth he, thy cheeks may blow;
120 Air, would I might triumph so!
But, alack, my hand is sworn
Ne'er to pluck thee from thy thorn;
Vow, alack, for youth unmeet,
Youth so apt to pluck a sweet!
125 Do not call it sin in me,
That I am forsworn for thee;
Thou for whom Jove would swear
Juno but an Ethiopie were;
And deny himself for Jove,
130 Turning mortal for thy love.
This will I send, and something else more plain,
That shall express my true love's fasting pain.
O, would the king, Biron and Longaville,
Were lovers too! Ill, to example ill,
135 Would from my forehead wipe a perjured note;
For none offend where all alike do dote.

LONGAVILLE

[Advancing] Dumain, thy love is far from charity.
That in love's grief desirest society.
You may look pale, but I should blush, I know,
140 To be o'erheard and taken napping so.

FERDINAND

[Advancing] Come, sir, you blush; as his your case is
such;
You chide at him, offending twice as much;
You do not love Maria? Longaville
145 Did never sonnet for her sake compile,

BIRON

Yes, maybe she is as beautiful as the days when the sun
doesn't shine.

DUMAIN

Oh that I could have my love!

LONGAVILLE

And I have mine!

FERDINAND

And I have mine as well, good Lord!

BIRON

So be it, if I could have mine too—isn't that good of me?

DUMAIN

I would try to forget her, but she has made my blood hot
and so must be remembered.

BIRON

She has caused a fever in your blood—oh then we should
cut you and let the blood pour out ¹⁰. Sweet mistake!

DUMAIN

I will read the verse once more.

BIRON

And once more I will hear how a clever man's words can
change when he is in love.

DUMAIN

[Reading] On a day, oh on that day!
Love, that always comes in May,
Saw a flower that was incredibly beautiful,
Playing in the shameless air.
Through the softest leaves the wind,
Finds a hidden pathway,
So that the lover, sick to death,
Will wish that he has the breath of heaven.
He says that "Air may blow on his cheeks,
It would be an honor."
But sadly I have made a promise
To never pluck you from your stem.
Curse this vow, for it is not right for a young man,
When a young man is so ready to pluck a sweet flower!
Don't call me sinful,
Even though I have sworn against you.
You, a woman that Jupiter would swear,
Was far more beautiful ¹¹ than Juno,
And would become a mortal to be with you.

I will send this sonnet, and another plainer letter that will
be express the pain I have from not being with her. Oh I
wish that the King, Biron and Longaville were lovers as well.
If my wrongdoings could be justified by theirs, it would save
me from being considered a liar, as none of us could get in
trouble if we've all done the same.

LONGAVILLE

[Coming forwards] Dumain, your love isn't Christian love ¹²
, that looks for company in its trouble. You look pale, but it
is me who should be blushing, for having listened to you
from my hiding place.

FERDINAND

[Coming forwards] Come sir, you blush because you feel
exactly the same as he does. You tell him off, but you're
twice as bad as he is! Don't you love Maria? Longaville
didn't compose a sonnet for her, or hold his arms crossed
over his chest to keep his heart in its place. I have been

¹⁰ Cutting to let the blood pour out was seen as a cure for fever, and the blood was collected "in saucers" and taken away.

¹¹ Here Juno is compared to an Ethiop, a black woman, as a mode in which to suggest her ugliness.

¹² Charity here represents Christian love, or "caritas" as opposed to "amor", the erotic love that Longaville says Dumain has.

Nor never lay his wreathed arms athwart
His loving bosom to keep down his heart.
I have been closely shrouded in this bush
And mark'd you both and for you both did blush:
150 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:

To LONGAVILLE

FERDINAND

155 You would for paradise break faith, and troth;

To DUMAIN

FERDINAND

160 And Jove, for your love, would infringe an oath.
What will Biron say when that he shall hear
Faith so infringed, which such zeal did swear?
How will he scorn! how will he spend his wit!
How will he triumph, leap and laugh at it!
For all the wealth that ever I did see,
I would not have him know so much by me.

BIRON

Now step I forth to whip hypocrisy.

Advancing

BIRON

165 Ah, good my liege, I pray thee, pardon me!
Good heart, what grace hast thou, thus to reprove
These worms for loving, that art most in love?
Your eyes do make no coaches; in your tears
There is no certain princess that appears;
170 You'll not be perjured, 'tis a hateful thing;
Tush, 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?
You found his mote; the king your mote did see;
175 But I a beam do find in each of three.
O, what a scene of foolery have I seen,
Of sighs, of groans, of sorrow and of teen!
O me, with what strict patience have I sat,
To see a king transformed to a gnat!
180 To see great Hercules whipping a gig,
And profound Solomon to tune a jig,
And Nestor play at push-pin with the boys,
And critic Timon laugh at idle toys!
Where lies thy grief, O, tell me, good Dumain?
185 And gentle Longaville, where lies thy pain?
And where my liege's? all about the breast:
A caudle, ho!

FERDINAND

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

BIRON

190 Not you to me, but I betray'd by you:
I, that am honest; I, that hold it sin
To break the vow I am engaged in;
I am betray'd, by keeping company
With men like men of inconstancy.
195 When shall you see me write a thing in rhyme?
Or groan for love? or spend a minute's time
In pruning me? 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,
200 A leg, a limb?

hidden in this bush and have watched you both and felt
embarrassed for both of you. I heard your poems, I watched
your behavior, I heard your sighs and noted your passions.
"Oh me!" says one of you, "Oh Jupiter," the other one cries.
For one of you, you talked about her golden hair, the other
one talked about the jewels in her eyes.

FERDINAND

[To LONGAVILLE] You are prepared to break your vow for
this paradise.

FERDINAND

[To DUMAIN] And you think even Jupiter would break a
promise to have your love. What will Biron say when he
hears that your promises have been broken, when you
swore to keep them with such enthusiasm? How he will
scorn, how he will mock you! How he will hold it over you,
laughing at your ridiculousness! For all the money I have, I
would hate for him to have seem himself in the way I've
seen you.

BIRON

Now I will come forwards to stir things up even more.

BIRON

[Coming forwards] My good lord, I pray you, forgive me!
Good heart, what a privilege it is for you to be able to tell
these miserable creatures off for loving, when you are the
most in love out of all of them? Are you telling me that your
eyes aren't coaches ready to carry the Princess away, that
her face doesn't appear in your tears? You won't reveal that
you've been dishonest too, that is not very nice. My
goodness, you are all entertainers with your poetry! But
aren't you ashamed? Are you not ashamed, all three of you,
to be so wrong? You saw his hypocrisy, the King saw yours,
but I've seen the liar in all three of you. Oh what a scene of
foolery have I witnessed, a scene filled with sighs, groans,
sadness and grief! Oh it has been hard for me to have the
patience to watch, as I have seen a King transformed into
nothing! I have seen great Hercules off his head, serious
Solomon trying to sing a song ¹³, Nestor ¹⁴ playing a
game with children, and the critical Timon ¹⁵ laughing at
pointless games! Where does it hurt, oh tell me, good
Dumain? And gentle Longaville, where is your pain? And
where is the King's? Is it deep in your chest, we must get
you a drink ¹⁶!

FERDINAND

You are too mean in your jokes. Have we been betrayed by
what you have seen?

BIRON

You haven't been betrayed by me, but I have been betrayed
by you. I am an honest man and think it is a sin to break the
vow that I have promised to keep. I am betrayed by hanging
out with men who are so unfaithful. When will you see me
write something in rhyme? Or groan for love? Or spend even
a minute grooming myself? When will you hear me praising
a hand, a foot, a face, an eye, a way of walking, a posture, a
brow, a breast, a waist, a leg, a limb?

¹³ This reference links back to Act 1 Scene 2, where Armado is asking what other worthy men have been in love.

¹⁴ Nestor was a Greek commander at the Battle of Troy who was renowned for his great age and wisdom.

¹⁵ Timon was an Athenian man who was renowned for his cynical nature.

¹⁶ A "caudle" was a warm drink made of thick gruel mixed with wine or ale, which was thought to help to heal the sick.

FERDINAND

Soft! whither away so fast?
A true man or a thief that gallops so?

BIRON

I post from love: good lover, let me go.

Enter JAQUENETTA and COSTARD

JAQUENETTA

205 God bless the King!

FERDINAND

What present hast thou there?

COSTARD

Some certain treason.

FERDINAND

What makes treason here?

COSTARD

Nay, it makes nothing, sir.

FERDINAND

210 If it mar nothing neither,
The treason and you go in peace away together.

JAQUENETTA

I beseech your grace, let this letter be read:
Our parson misdoubts it; 'twas treason, he said.

FERDINAND

Biron, read it over.

215

Giving him the paper

FERDINAND

Where hadst thou it?

JAQUENETTA

Of Costard.

FERDINAND

Where hadst thou it?

COSTARD

220 Of Dun Adramadio, Dun Adramadio.

BIRON tears the letter

FERDINAND

How now! what is in you? why dost thou tear it?

BIRON

A toy, my liege, a toy: your grace needs not fear it.

LONGAVILLE

225 It did move him to passion, and therefore let's hear
it.

DUMAIN

It is Biron's writing, and here is his name.

FERDINAND

Be quiet! Why do you go away so quickly?

BIRON

I hurry away from love. Good lover, let me go.

JAQUENETTA and COSTARD enter, with a letter.

JAQUENETTA

God bless the King!

FERDINAND

What gift have you got there?

COSTARD

It's definitely treason.

FERDINAND

What does treason have to do with it?

COSTARD

Treason doesn't have to do anything sir, it's just treason.

FERDINAND

Then I don't have to let it ruin anything either. This treason
and you can go away in peace together then.

JAQUENETTA

I ask your grace, read this letter. The Parson ¹⁷ has
suspicions about it, he said it was treason.

¹⁷ Jaquenetta continues her mistake from the previous scene, confusing "parson" with "person" in its similar pronunciation.

FERDINAND

[Giving BIRON the paper] Biron, read it.

FERDINAND

Where did you get it?

JAQUENETTA

From Costard.

FERDINAND

Costard, where did you get it?

COSTARD

From Dun Adramadio ¹⁸, from Dun Adramadio.

¹⁸ Costard cannot properly pronounce the name of Don Adriano de Armado; it could potentially be a play on "dun", which means a dull brown color.

BIRON tears up the letter.

FERDINAND

Hey! What are you doing? Why did you tear it up?

BIRON

It was nothing, my lord, nothing—your grace doesn't need to worry about it.

LONGAVILLE

It made him have a tantrum, so I think we should hear it.

DUMAIN

[Gathering up the pieces] It is in Biron's writing, and look,
here's his name.

*Gathering up the pieces***BIRON**

[To COSTARD] Ah, you whoreson loggerhead! you were born to do me shame.

230 Guilty, my lord, guilty! I confess, I confess.

FERDINAND

What?

BIRON

That you three fools lack'd me fool to make up the mess:

235 He, he, and you, and you, my liege, and I,
Are pick-purses in love, and we deserve to die.
O, dismiss this audience, and I shall tell you more.

DUMAIN

Now the number is even.

BIRON

True, true; we are four.
Will these turtles be gone?

FERDINAND

240 Hence, sirs; away!

COSTARD

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

Exeunt COSTARD and JAQUENETTA

BIRON

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

245 As true we are as flesh and blood can be:
The sea will ebb and flow, heaven show his face;
Young blood doth not obey an old decree:
We cannot cross the cause why we were born;
Therefore of all hands must we be forsworn.

FERDINAND

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

BIRON

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

FERDINAND

260 What zeal, what fury hath inspired thee now?
My love, her mistress, is a gracious moon;
She an attending star, scarce seen a light.

BIRON

My eyes are then no eyes, nor I Biron:
O, but for my love, day would turn to night!
Of all complexions the cull'd sovereignty
Do meet, as at a fair, in her fair cheek,
265 Where several worthies make one dignity,
Where nothing wants that want itself doth seek.
Lend me the flourish of all gentle tongues,--

BIRON

[To COSTARD] Oh you stupid idiot! You were born to get me in trouble. Guilty, my lord, guilty! I confess, I confess.

FERDINAND

What do you confess?

BIRON

That you three idiots needed me to make our group complete ¹⁹. [Pointing at the other Lords] He, he, yes you, you, my lord, and I, are cheats for love, and we deserve to die ²⁰. Oh, get rid of these two and I will tell you more.

¹⁹ The use of "mess" here is from the proverb "Four make up a mess," to suggest a group of four people eating together at a table.

²⁰ Biron calls them "pick-purses", which means thieves and therefore he is saying that they deserve to die, as the punishment for thieves at that time was death.

DUMAIN

Now we're all square.

BIRON

True, true, there are four of us. Will these lovers ²¹ leave?

²¹ "Turtles" implies turtle-doves, so is another mode of saying that Costard and Jaquenetta are lovers, or in love.

FERDINAND

Okay you two, time to go!

COSTARD

The honest people will walk away and leave the traitors behind.

COSTARD and JAQUENETTA exit.

BIRON

My sweet lords, sweet lovers, oh let's hug it out! Our friendship is as true and real as it can be, as true as the fact that the sea will have tides, and heaven will show his face. Young men cannot obey an old oath, we cannot go against our destiny, therefore we are bound to break our promises.

FERDINAND

What, did these lines we have been given show some love of yours?

BIRON

Did they, you ask! Who has seen the heavenly Rosaline, that would not, like an ignorant and uncivilized man of India, on seeing the first light of dawn, bow his inferior head and struck blind by its light, kiss the ground with a willing heart? What unblinking, strong eye ²² would dare to look at the heaven of her face and not be blinded by her beauty?

²² "Eagle-sighted" is used as an eagle was supposedly able to look directly at the sun.

FERDINAND

What desire, what frenzy has inspired you now? My love, her mistress, is like a gracious moon whereas Rosaline is just an attending star, her light can only just be seen.

BIRON

My eyes then are not eyes, and I am not Biron if what you say is true. Oh, were it not for my love, day would turn to night! The best parts of all complexions come together in her cheek, all different kinds of value come together to make one excellent thing, and nothing that you would want is missing. Give me the words of all noble tongues, I don't need rhetoric! Oh and she doesn't need it either, as a man

Fie, painted rhetoric! O, she needs it not:
 To things of sale a seller's praise belongs,
 270 She passes praise; then praise too short doth blot.
 A wither'd hermit, five-score winters worn,
 Might shake off fifty, looking in her eye:
 Beauty doth varnish age, as if new-born,
 And gives the crutch the cradle's infancy:
 275 O, 'tis the sun that maketh all things shine.

FERDINAND

By heaven, thy love is black as ebony.

BIRON

Is ebony like her? O wood divine!
 A wife of such wood were felicity.
 O, who can give an oath? where is a book?
 280 That I may swear beauty doth beauty lack,
 If that she learn not of her eye to look:
 No face is fair that is not full so black.

FERDINAND

O paradox! Black is the badge of hell,
 The hue of dungeons and the school of night;
 285 And beauty's crest becomes the heavens well.

BIRON

Devils soonest tempt, resembling spirits of light.
 O, if in black my lady's brows be deck'd,
 It mourns that painting and usurping hair
 Should ravish doters with a false aspect;
 290 And therefore is she born to make black fair.
 Her favour turns the fashion of the days,
 For native blood is counted painting now;
 And therefore red, that would avoid dispraise,
 Paints itself black, to imitate her brow.

DUMAIN

295 To look like her are chimney-sweepers black.

LONGAVILLE

And since her time are colliers counted bright.

FERDINAND

And Ethiopes of their sweet complexion crack.

DUMAIN

Dark needs no candles now, for dark is light.

BIRON

Your mistresses dare never come in rain,
 300 For fear their colours should be wash'd away.

FERDINAND

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

BIRON

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

FERDINAND

No devil will fright thee then so much as she.

praises the thing that he wants to sell and she surpasses all praise; any praise is not good enough to describe her! An old hermit, worn down by fifty winters, could shake off these fifty years just by looking in her eye—her beauty improves age, making people feel newly-born and gives old age the energy of youth. Oh it is her, the sun, that makes all things shine!

FERDINAND

By heaven, your love is as black as ebony ²³!

²³ Rosaline is believed to have dark features - dark hair and pale skin.

BIRON

Is she like ebony? Oh then this wood is divine! A wife of this wood would be a happy thing. Oh who should swear to an oath?! Find me a bible. I want to swear on it that beauty is missing out if it doesn't learn from Rosaline's eye how to appear—there is no face so beautiful, as one that is dark.

FERDINAND

That's a contradiction! Black is a sign of hell, it is the color of dungeons and the teacher of night's darkness. It is the sun which makes the heavens more beautiful.

BIRON

The Devil can transform itself into an angel of light. Oh, if my lady's eyebrows were painted black like the fashion ²⁴, it would show how cosmetics and false hair can tempt lovers with misleading appearances. Therefore she is born to make darkness beautiful again. Her face completely changes, and turns around what is considered fashionable nowadays. For a complexion that is naturally reddish in its color is now only used for paintings, and so women who have this complexion paint themselves black in order to be praised and to look like her.

²⁴ Black eyebrows that are painted on could be seen to suggest an unsophisticated or fake kind of beauty.

DUMAIN

Chimney-sweepers ²⁵ now try to look like her.

²⁵ In the following interchange the other Lords continue to mock Rosaline's dark features as something to be scorned at.

LONGAVILLE

And since her, even coal miners are thought to be beautiful.

FERDINAND

And even Ethiops boast about their sweet complexions.

DUMAIN

We don't even need candles now when it is dark, because darkness has become light.

BIRON

Your mistresses should make sure that they never go outside in the rain, because their make-up would all be washed away.

FERDINAND

Well then, it would be good if your mistress did go outside in the rain, because sir, her face could do with being washed.

BIRON

I will prove her to be beautiful, or I will talk until the end of the world.

FERDINAND

Then on the last day of the world, she will be more frightening than any devil.

DUMAIN

305 I never knew man hold vile stuff so dear.

LONGAVILLE

Look, here's thy love: my foot and her face see.

BIRON

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

DUMAIN

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

FERDINAND

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

BIRON

Nothing so sure; and thereby all forsworn.

FERDINAND

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

DUMAIN

315 Ay, marry, there; some flattery for this evil.

LONGAVILLE

O, some authority how to proceed;
Some tricks, some quillets, how to cheat the devil.

DUMAIN

Some salve for perjury.

BIRON

'Tis more than need.
320 Have at you, then, affection's men at arms.
Consider what you first did swear unto,
To fast, to study, and to see no woman;
Flat treason 'gainst the kingly state of youth.
Say, can you fast? your stomachs are too young;
325 And abstinence engenders maladies.
O, we have made a vow to study, lords,
And in that vow we have forsworn our books.
For when would you, my liege, or you, or you,
In leaden contemplation have found out
330 Such fiery numbers as the prompting eyes
Of beauty's tutors have enrich'd you with?
Other slow arts entirely keep the brain;
And therefore, finding barren practisers,
Scarce show a harvest of their heavy toil:
335 But love, first learned in a lady's eyes,
Lives not alone immured in the brain;
But, with the motion of all elements,
Courses as swift as thought in every power,
And gives to every power a double power,
340 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 suspicious head of theft is stopp'd:
345 Love's feeling is more soft and sensible
Than are the tender horns of cockl'd snails;
Love's tongue proves dainty Bacchus gross in taste:
For valour, is not Love a Hercules,
Still climbing trees in the Hesperides?
350 Subtle as Sphinx; as sweet and musical
As bright Apollo's lute, strung with his hair:
And when Love speaks, the voice of all the gods

DUMAIN

I never knew a man to care so much about something so cheap.

LONGAVILLE

Look, here's your love—you can look at my black shoe and see her face.

BIRON

Oh, even if the streets were covered with your eyes, her feet would be too elegant to walk on them!

DUMAIN

Oh, that's disgusting! As she walks, these eyes would have to see up her dress as she walks on them.

FERDINAND

But what does this mean? Are we all in love?

BIRON

Oh that is certain, and so we have all broken our oath!

FERDINAND

Then let's stop this conversation and good Biron, use your logic to demonstrate to us that our loving is okay and our faith is not broken.

DUMAIN

Yes indeed, do that—make this evil seem a bit better.

LONGAVILLE

Oh, give us some ideas about what we should do next—some tricks, some subtle verbal distinctions to avoid being seen as liars.

DUMAIN

Some medicine for our illness.

BIRON

Oh it is more than necessary. Here it goes then, love's warriors. Think about what you first promised, to fast, to study and to see no women—promising to do these things is treason against the best time of your life. Think about it, should we fast? Our stomachs are too young and not eating could give us diseases. Also think about your promise to study, lords, and the fact that this vow has made us reject our books, for we wouldn't know how to write poetry without seeing a woman's beautiful face. Other dull or more serious kinds of learning clog up the arteries, and are done for so long and take such effort that you don't end up learning much anyway. Love is first learned in a lady's eyes, it cannot be confined simply to the mind, it lives with the winds and the storms. It moves as quickly as thoughts through every part of you, and gives a double force to each part it visits, above and beyond their ordinary functions. It even gives a person precious eyesight, with eyes so bright they can blind an eagle ²⁶, with an ear so sharp it can hear even the quietest sound, when a thief that is listening out for the slightest noise hears nothing. Love's touch is softer and more sensitive than the soft horns of a snail ²⁷; Love's tongue shows itself to have better taste than even Bacchus ²⁸. For its bravery, isn't Love like Hercules, still climbing trees in the Hesperides ²⁹? It is subtle as a Sphinx ³⁰, as sweet and musical as the sound of Apollo's lute, the strings made with Love's hair. When Love speaks, the voices of all other gods make heaven sleepy with the sound of their harmony. A poet never touches their pen unless their ink is full of Love's sighs and the lines they write have the power to please common ears and even make tyrants more humble. I get all of this information from women's eyes as they throw out sparks like the very fire which Prometheus ³¹ stole from heaven. Their eyes are the books, the arts, the schools, that reflect, embody and feed the whole world,

²⁶ As mentioned earlier in the scene, the belief was that an eagle could stare at the sun without being blinded. Biron is saying here that the eye of a lover is so powerful that it can blind an eagle, even when the sun cannot.

²⁷ The soft horns of a snail is an idea which Shakespeare replicates in his poem *Venus and Adonis* at line 1033.

²⁸ Bacchus, among other things, was the Roman god of wine.

²⁹ Hercules' eleventh of twelve labors was to pick the golden apples from a tree growing in the garden of the Hesperides, even though the tree was guarded by a dragon.

³⁰ A Sphinx was a monster made up on parts of a woman, a dog, a serpent, a bird and a lion and therefore the implication here is something which

Makes heaven drowsy with the harmony.
 Never durst poet touch a pen to write
 355 Until his ink were temper'd with Love's sighs;
 O, then his lines would ravish savage ears
 And plant in tyrants mild humility.
 From women's eyes this doctrine I derive:
 They sparkle still the right Promethean fire;
 360 They are the books, the arts, the academes,
 That show, contain and nourish all the world:
 Else none at all in ought proves excellent.
 Then fools you were these women to forswear,
 Or keeping what is sworn, you will prove fools.
 365 For wisdom's sake, a word that all men love,
 Or for love's sake, a word that loves all men,
 Or for men's sake, the authors of these women,
 Or women's sake, by whom we men are men,
 Let us once lose our oaths to find ourselves,
 370 Or else we lose ourselves to keep our oaths.
 It is religion to be thus forsworn,
 For charity itself fulfills the law,
 And who can sever love from charity?

FERDINAND

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

BIRON

375 Advance your standards, and upon them, lords;
 Pell-mell, down with them! but be first advised,
 In conflict that you get the sun of them.

LONGAVILLE

Now to plain-dealing; lay these glozes by:
 Shall we resolve to woo these girls of France?

FERDINAND

380 And win them too: therefore let us devise
 Some entertainment for them in their tents.

BIRON

First, from the park let us conduct them thither;
 Then homeward every man attach the hand
 Of his fair mistress: in the afternoon
 385 We will with some strange pastime solace them,
 Such as the shortness of the time can shape;
 For revels, dances, masks and merry hours
 Forerun fair Love, strewing her way with flowers.

FERDINAND

390 Away, away! no time shall be omitted
 That will betime, and may by us be fitted.

BIRON

Allons! allons! Sow'd cockle reap'd no corn;
 And justice always whirls in equal measure:
 Light wenches may prove plagues to men forsworn;
 If so, our copper buys no better treasure.

Exeunt

or without them nothing in the world seems good. You were fools to give up these women, and if you keep your oaths, you will still be fools. Do it for wisdom's sake, a word that all men love, do it for love's sake, a word that loves all men. Do it for men's sake, so they can write about these women, do it for women's sake, who put us on this earth. We must give up our oaths to find ourselves, or if we keep them we will lose ourselves completely. It is within the beliefs of our religion to change our mind, for charity ³² is a part of the law, and isn't Love just loving another?

was not subtle at all; when you are in love, you know it.

³¹ Prometheus stole fire from the gods to give to man, allowing them to become civilized.

³² A link back to the earlier reference to "caritas," and its contrast to "amor."

FERDINAND

For Saint Cupid then! Like soldiers, let's go to our battlefield!

BIRON

Hold up your flags and march with them lords. Attack them at close quarters! Be advised though, make sure that they have the sun in their eyes so that you can get the better of them.

LONGAVILLE

Now let's talk simply, lay these metaphors aside. Are we determined to woo these girls of France?

FERDINAND

And we will win them too! Let's think up some entertainment for them in their tents.

BIRON

First, let's lead them from the park to their tents. Then, after that, each man can grab hold of the hand of his own, beautiful mistress. In the afternoon we will amuse them with some kind of new entertainment, whatever we can come up with this quickly. For it is said that things like celebrations, dances, masks, and happy times prepare a pathway for Love ³³ to enter.

³³ The reference implies that these things run in front of Love and announce that Venus is on her way.

FERDINAND

Let's go! There is no time to be lost in our preparations.

BIRON

Let's go! Let's go! We will get nothing but falsehoods and achieve nothing if we do not take the necessary measures to win these ladies.

They exit.

Act 5, Scene 1

Shakespeare

Enter HOLOFERNES, SIR NATHANIEL, and DULL

HOLOFERNES

Satis quod sufficit.

Shakescleare Translation

HOLOFERNES, SIR NATHANIEL, and DULL enter.

HOLOFERNES

Enough is enough.

SIR NATHANIEL

I praise God for you, sir: your reasons at dinner have been sharp and sententious; pleasant without scurrility, witty without affection, audacious without impudency, learned without opinion, and strange without heresy. I did converse this quondam day with a companion of the King's, who is intituled, nominated, or called, Don Adriano de Armado.

HOLOFERNES

Novi hominem tanquam te: his humour is lofty, his discourse peremptory, his tongue filed, his eye ambitious, his gait majestic, and his general behavior vain, ridiculous, and thrasonical. He is too picked, too spruce, too affected, too odd, as it were, too peregrinate, as I may call it.

SIR NATHANIEL

A most singular and choice epithet.

Draws out his table-book

HOLOFERNES

He draweth out the thread of his verbosity finer than the staple of his argument. I abhor such fanatical phantasies, such insociable and point-devise companions; such rackers of orthography, as to speak dout, sine b, when he should say doubt; det, when he should pronounce debt,--d, e, b, t, not d, e, t: he clepeth a calf, cauf; half, hauf; neighbour vocatur nebor; neigh abbreviated ne. This is abhominable,--which he would call abbominable: it insinuateth me of insanie: ne intelligis, domine? to make frantic, lunatic.

SIR NATHANIEL

Laus Deo, bone intelligo.

HOLOFERNES

Bon, bon, for bene! Priscian a little scratch'd, 'twill serve.

SIR NATHANIEL

Videsne quis venit?

HOLOFERNES

Video, et gaudeo.

Enter DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO, MOTH, and COSTARD

SIR NATHANIEL

I thank God for you sir, your remarks at dinner were clever and wise, humorous without needing vile language, witty without being snobby, confident without being immodest, learned without showing your opinion, and you mentioned unusual things without being offensive. I was talking about this the other day with one of the King's companions, who is entitled, nominated, or simply called, Don Adriano de Armado.

HOLOFERNES

I know the man like I know you. His humor is proud, his speech is arrogant, his tongue is too smooth, his eye too ambitious, his walk is too grand and his general behavior is vain, ridiculous and boastful. He is too fussy, too fashionable, too emotional, too peculiar, or I could even say too foreign.

SIR NATHANIEL

A remarkable and appropriate description.

HOLOFERNES

[Drawing out his table-book] He prolongs his argument for so long that the topic itself is forgotten. I hate such extravagant people who live in a fantasy world, companions who are unsociable and too precise. He cares far too much about spelling, he insists on pronouncing *dout*, without the "b" when he should say doubt; *det* when he should pronounce debt. It is *d, e, b, t*, not *d, e, t*. He calls a calf, a *cauf*, a half, *hauf*. He calls a neighbor, a *nebor*, and even neigh he shortens to *ne*. This is all abhominable, or as he would say *abbominable*. It makes me mad - do you understand, sir? In short, he's a lunatic.

SIR NATHANIEL

God be praised, I understand good.

HOLOFERNES

Good, good, when you should have said well! Your language is slightly wrong, but it will do.

SIR NATHANIEL

Do you see who is coming?

HOLOFERNES

I see, and I am glad.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO, MOTH and COSTARD enter.

Shakespeare uses the word "thrasonical" here to mean bragging or boastful. It is a classical reference from the Roman playwright Terence's comedy "Eunuchus."

The word "peregrinate" refers to someone who has the air of having traveled abroad and was coined by Shakespeare.

A book made out of tablets, used for note-taking.

Holofernes is chopping and alternating between English and Latin, as a further representation of the ridiculousness of his haughty use of language, which is even more ridiculed by the fact that he is mocking Armado's use of it.

"Clepeth" is an archaic form of "calls" that is unique to Shakespeare.

"Vocatur" is Latin verb meaning "is called."

This is difficult to translate, as Holofernes utilizes the archaic spelling of "abhominable," claiming that Armado would mispronounce the word as "abbominable," once again playing on his poor handle of the English language.

The irony of Holofernes asking "Do you understand?" here is that he has just spent his entire speech chopping and changing between languages and archaic words to criticize Armado's language and is now having to ask Nathaniel if he understands him.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

35 Chirrah!

HOLOFERNES

Quare chirrah, not sirrah?

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Men of peace, well encountered.

HOLOFERNES

Most military sir, salutation.

MOTH

40 [Aside to *COSTARD*] They have been at a great feast of languages, and stolen the scraps.

COSTARD

O, they have lived long on the alms-basket of words. I marvel thy master hath not eaten thee for a word; for thou art not so long by the head as
45 honorificabilitudinitatibus: thou art easier swallowed than a flap-dragon.

MOTH

Peace! the peal begins.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

[To *HOLOFERNES*] Monsieur, are you not lettered?

MOTH

50 Yes, yes; he teaches boys the hornbook. What is a, b, spelt backward, with the horn on his head?

HOLOFERNES

Ba, pueritia, with a horn added.

MOTH

Ba, most silly sheep with a horn. You hear his learning.

HOLOFERNES

Quis, quis, thou consonant?

MOTH

55 The third of the five vowels, if you repeat them; or the fifth, if I.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Greetings sir ¹⁰!

HOLOFERNES

[To *MOTH*] Why does he say chirrah and not sir?

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Men of peace, it is lovely to meet you.

HOLOFERNES

What a soldierly greeting, hello to you too.

MOTH

[Aside to *COSTARD*] These men have been at a feast with people who speak many different languages, and they only remember little snippets of things that they have heard.

COSTARD

Oh I know, these men have lived for ages, speaking only the words which other people have rejected ¹¹. I am amazed that your master hasn't tried to steal even your name, Moth, since it is a lot easier to say than "honorificabilitudinitatibus" ¹²—your name can be digested a lot better than a raisin floating in burning brandy! ¹³

MOTH

Hang on, their conversation is starting.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

[To *HOLOFERNES*] Sir, are you very clever?

MOTH

Yes he is! He teaches young boys their alphabet, their numbers, their prayers, you name it! Sir, what is A, B, spelt backwards, with a horn on its head? ¹⁴

HOLOFERNES

It's Ba, my child, with an added horn.

MOTH

Baaaaa, you silly sheep with a horn. Did you hear his clever line?

HOLOFERNES

Who, who are you talking to, you insignificant ¹⁵ boy?

MOTH

To the third of the five vowels, if you say them. Or to the fifth vowel, if I say them.

¹⁰ The word "chirrah" in the original text has an unclear origin, but is believed to be a word for an introductory greeting, like "sir."

¹¹ The word alms-basket in the original text implies the idea of public charity, that they have lived speaking the words that others have given to them.

¹² This word is thought to be the longest word in the English language, the dative or ablative case of a medieval Latin noun meaning "the state of being honored." Costard is mocking the ridiculousness of Holofernes and Nathaniel's conversations.

¹³ A raisin or a plum floating in burning brandy had to be snapped up into the mouth in a game called "snapdragon." This reference implies the challenges that arise in the pronunciation of the difficult Latin and obscure words.

¹⁴ The original refers to a "hornbook" which was a piece of paper on which the alphabet, the numbers, the prayers, and so on, were written, protected by a thin sheet of horn and mounted on a wooden block with a handle.

¹⁵ The word "consonant" is used to indicate a sound which, unlike a vowel, isn't able to form a syllable by itself and is, therefore, insignificant or pointless.

HOLOFERNES

I will repeat them,—a, e, i,—

MOTH

The sheep: the other two concludes it,—o, u.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

60 Now, by the salt wave of the Mediterranean, a sweet touch, a quick venue of wit! snip, snap, quick and home! it rejoiceth my intellect: true wit!

MOTH

Offered by a child to an old man; which is wit-old.

HOLOFERNES

What is the figure? what is the figure?

MOTH

Horns.

HOLOFERNES

65 Thou disputest like an infant: go, whip thy gig.

MOTH

Lend me your horn to make one, and I will whip about your infamy manu cita.—a gig of a cuckold's horn.

COSTARD

70 An I had but one penny in the world, thou shouldst have it to buy gingerbread: hold, there is the very remuneration I had of thy master, thou halfpenny purse of wit, thou pigeon-egg of discretion. O, an 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.

HOLOFERNES

O, I smell false Latin; dunghill for unguem.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Arts-man, preambulate, we will be singled from the barbarous. Do you not educate youth at the charge-house on the top of the mountain?

HOLOFERNES

80 Or mons, the hill.

HOLOFERNES

Okay I will repeat them— a, e, i—

MOTH

Oh there's the sheep! And the other two vowels prove my point, -o, u, or "Oh, ewe ¹⁶!"

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Oh wow, like a wave of the Mediterranean as it hits the coast, a lovely blow, a quick hit of wit! A quick snip snap ¹⁷ that hit its target! It pleases my mind, what true wit!

MOTH

The wit of a child to an old man, which is wit-old ¹⁸!

HOLOFERNES

What is this figure of speech? What is this figure of speech?

MOTH

One which has horns.

HOLOFERNES

You argue like a child, go and spin your head around somewhere ¹⁹.

MOTH

Lend me your horn then to put on the top of my head, and I will spin around with the shame of your horn eagerly, doing the jig ²⁰ of a cuckold!

COSTARD

If I had even one penny in this world, I would give it to you to buy gingerbread! Hang on, I could give you that remuneration that I got from your master, you small bundle ²¹ of wit, you little person ²² of good judgement. Oh, if God would even let you be my bastard son, I would be a very happy father! Carry on, you have him at the dunghill ²³, at the fingers' ends, as people say.

HOLOFERNES

Oh, I smell false Latin; he uses dunghill instead of "unguem!"

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

You clever man, walk with me. Let's set ourselves apart from the uncultured people. Is it true that you teach young people at the school on the top of the mountain?

HOLOFERNES

Or on the top of the hill.

¹⁶ Moth has tricked Holofernes into calling himself a silly sheep, and has now confirmed it with the pun of o,u or "Oh, ewe" to really emphasize his point.

¹⁷ To "snip-snap" was to engage in a clever back-and-forth conversation, a rapid exchange of words.

¹⁸ A pun is made here between "wit-old" and "Wittold," which means a man who knows that he is a cuckold and simply ignores it.

¹⁹ An obscure reference, "go, whip thy gig" literally means to "go, spin your top," an unusual command to go and act like a child.

²⁰ It would appear that a pun is intended here, between "gig" as a top, and "jig" as a dance. The meaning conveyed is that Moth would enjoy embarrassing Holofernes even further.

²¹ A "halfpenny" purse was a small purse used to hold silver halfpennies, and here is used to convey something very small and also connects with Costard's obsession over different amounts of money (i.e. the remuneration).

²² A "pigeon-egg" is probably used here to further emphasize the idea of something small.

²³ Costard misspeaks here and uses "dunghill" instead of "unguem," the Latin word for the fingernail. This is quickly picked up on by Holofernes in the next line.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

At your sweet pleasure, for the mountain.

HOLOFERNES

I do, sans question.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

85 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

90 The posterior of the day, most generous sir, is liable, congruent and measurable for the afternoon: the word is well culled, chose, sweet and apt, I do assure you, sir, I do assure.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

95 Sir, the king is a noble gentleman, and my familiar, I do assure ye, very good friend: for what is inward between us, let it pass. I do beseech thee, remember thy courtesy; I beseech thee, apparel thy head: and among other important and most serious designs, and of great import indeed, too, but let that pass: for I must tell thee, it will please his grace, by the world, sometime to lean upon my poor shoulder, and with his royal finger, thus, dally with my excrement, with my mustachio; but, sweet heart, let that pass. 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.
100 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 antique, or firework. Now, understanding that the curate and your sweet self are good at such eruptions and sudden breaking out of mirth, as it were, I have acquainted you withal, to the end to crave your assistance.

HOLOFERNES

115 Sir, you shall present before her the Nine Worthies. Sir Nathaniel, as concerning some entertainment of time, some show in the posterior of this day, to be rendered by our assistants, at the king's command, and this most gallant, illustrate, and learned gentleman, before
120 the princess; I say none so fit as to present the Nine Worthies.

SIR NATHANIEL

Where will you find men worthy enough to present them?

HOLOFERNES

125 Joshua, yourself; this gallant gentleman, Judas Maccabaeus; this swain, because of his great limb or joint, shall pass Pompey the Great; the page, Hercules,—

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Pardon, sir; error: he is not quantity enough for that Worthy's thumb: he is not so big as the end of his club.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Use it when you want, to mean a mountain ²⁴.

HOLOFERNES

I do, without question.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Sir, the King greatly desires and hopes to be able to greet the Princess in her tent later today ²⁵, a time which the uneducated people call the "afternoon."

HOLOFERNES

The later part of the day, my noble friend, is a suitable and fitting phrase to call the afternoon. The word has been well chosen, it is pleasant and appropriate, you can be sure of that sir.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Sir, the king is a noble gentleman, and my close friend, indeed he is a very good friend of mine; the secrets that we share will stay as secrets. I ask you to remember your place, and I ask you to put your hat back on for this. There are several urgent and serious things we could discuss, and they are important as well, but let's leave them for now. For I must tell you the truth. The King sometimes likes to lean on my shoulder and play with the hair of my mustache with his finger, but let's say no more about that. I promise you, this is no lie. The King has trusted me with important and special honors, as he knows that I am a soldier and a man who has traveled and seen the world. But let's say no more about me. Most importantly, this must be kept a secret! The King wants me to present the Princess, that sweet girl ²⁶, with some kind of entertaining show, or spectacle, or crazy performance, or a firework display. Now, as I know that you and Sir Nathaniel are very good at organizing sudden moments of entertainment, I have told you this, because I would like your help with it.

HOLOFERNES

Sir, you shall present her with the story of the "Nine Worthies." ²⁷ Sir Nathaniel, when it comes to thinking up entertainment for this time, for a show that will be performed in the afternoon, with our help, on the King's orders, and with this worthy, renowned and clever gentleman, to be performed before the Princess, I tell you, there is no story more suitable than that of the Nine Worthies.

SIR NATHANIEL

Where are you going to find men *worthy* enough to play these men?

HOLOFERNES

You will play Joshua; [*Gesturing at DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO*] This brave gentleman will play Judas Maccabaeus ²⁸; Costard, because he is a large boy, will pass for Pompey the Great; Moth will play Hercules.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Excuse me sir, that's a mistake. Moth is not big enough to play Hercules, he wouldn't even be able to hold his club.

²⁴ "Mons" could translate to either "hill" or "mountain," hence the pun.

²⁵ Understood as the Latin "posterior" meaning the afternoon, or the later part of the day. Obvious punning can be deduced from references to posteriors as the buttocks.

²⁶ "Chuck" was used as a term of endearment.

²⁷ The Nine Worthies were nine legendary figures who personify the ideals of chivalry. Three came from the Bible (Joshua, David and Judas Maccabaeus), three came from classical literature (Hector of Troy, Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar) and three came from romance (Arthur, Charlemagne and Godfrey of Bouillon).

²⁸ Judas Maccabaeus was a Jewish priest who led the Maccabean Revolt.

HOLOFERNES

130 Shall I have audience? he shall present Hercules in minority: his enter and exit shall be strangling a snake; and I will have an apology for that purpose.

MOTH

An excellent device! so, if any of the audience hiss, you may cry "Well done, Hercules! now thou crushest the snake!" that is the way to make an offence gracious, though few have the grace to do it.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

For the rest of the Worthies?--

HOLOFERNES

I will play three myself.

MOTH

Thrice-worthy gentleman!

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

140 Shall I tell you a thing?

HOLOFERNES

We attend.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

We will have, if this fadge not, an antic. I beseech you, follow.

HOLOFERNES

145 Via, goodman Dull! thou hast spoken no word all this while.

DULL

Nor understood none neither, sir.

HOLOFERNES

Allons! we will employ thee.

DULL

I'll make one in a dance, or so; or I will play On the tabour to the Worthies, and let them dance the hay.

HOLOFERNES

150 Most dull, honest Dull! To our sport, away!

Exeunt

HOLOFERNES

Can I be heard? He will play Hercules as a child. He will simply come on, strangle a snake ²⁹ and exit and I will explain to the audience why.

²⁹ Hercules is said to have strangled two snakes sent by Juno to kill him in his cradle.

MOTH

That's an excellent plan! It also means that if anyone in the audience hisses at me, you can simply shout "Well done, Hercules! Now you have killed the snake!" That is how we can make such an offense acceptable, even though few people would have been able to think up such a clever idea!

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

What about the rest of the Worthies?

HOLOFERNES

I will play three of them myself.

MOTH

That makes you three times as worthy!

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Can I tell you something?

HOLOFERNES

We are listening.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

If this does not succeed, we will be a laughing stock. I beg you, follow me now.

HOLOFERNES

Come on, my good Dull! You haven't said anything this whole time.

DULL

I haven't understood anything that's been said either.

HOLOFERNES

Let's go! You will be involved as well.

DULL

I'll take part in one dance or something, or I could play the drum for the Worthies, while they do a country dance.

HOLOFERNES

Come boring ³⁰ and honest Dull! Let's go and prepare!

³⁰ A joke is made here between Dull as the character name and dull as a feature of the character. In the original text, the word "dull" is repeated for both to convey this further.

All exit.

Act 5, Scene 2

Shakespeare

Enter the PRINCESS, KATHARINE, ROSALINE, and MARIA

PRINCESS

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

Shakescleare Translation

The PRINCESS, KATHARINE, ROSALINE, and MARIA enter.

PRINCESS

My sweet friends, we are going to be rich before we leave here, if gifts keep arriving so often. I will be a lady surrounded by jewels! Look what the loving king has sent me this time!

ROSALINE

5 Madame, came nothing else along with that?

PRINCESS

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

ROSALINE

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

KATHARINE

Ay, and a shrewd unhappy gallows too.

ROSALINE

You'll ne'er be friends with him; a' kill'd your
sister.

KATHARINE

15 He made her melancholy, sad, and heavy;
And so she died: 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

20 What's your dark meaning, mouse, of this light word?

KATHARINE

A light condition in a beauty dark.

ROSALINE

We need more light to find your meaning out.

KATHARINE

You'll mar the light by taking it in snuff;
Therefore I'll darkly end the argument.

ROSALINE

25 Look what you do, you do it still i' the dark.

KATHARINE

So do not you, for you are a light wench.

ROSALINE

Indeed I weigh not you, and therefore light.

KATHARINE

You weigh me not? O, that's you care not for me.

ROSALINE

Great reason; for 'past cure is still past care.'

ROSALINE

Madam, was anything else sent with that?

PRINCESS

Just this. *[Showing a piece of paper]* Yes, he has sent as
many loving verses as he could fit onto one piece of paper.
He has written on both sides, he has even written in the
margins, so much so that he was forced to write his name
on top of Cupid's.

ROSALINE

That was his way of making his name bigger, since he was
and always will be a boy.

KATHARINE

Yes, and he has been a naughty, trouble-making boy who
deserves to be hanged.

ROSALINE

You'll never be friends with him, if [he kills your sister](#) 1.

1 This is a reference to a story in which a sister dies for love but this idea is not developed any further. The meaning conveyed is that they are all so in love that it is almost dangerous.

KATHARINE

He made her so sad and so depressed that she died. If she
had been cheerful, and had a merry, lively and energetic
spirit like you do, then she might have lived to be a
grandmother. I hope you will too, for a light heart lives a
long time.

ROSALINE

What's your hidden meaning, dear, in using the
word "light?"

KATHARINE

That your promiscuity could be hidden by your [dark beauty](#) 2.

2 This echoes further what Biron and the other Lords were saying in the previous scene about Rosaline's dark beauty.

ROSALINE

Shed more light on the subject and we'll work out what you
mean.

KATHARINE

You'll ruin the light by getting offended; therefore I'll end
this argument and leave you in the dark.

ROSALINE

Whatever you do, just make sure you [do it](#) 3 in the dark.

3 There is an implied euphemism here about having sex in the dark.

KATHARINE

You wouldn't need to bother, since you don't care about
being indecent.

ROSALINE

Indeed, I guess I don't weigh as much as you do, and so in
that way I'm [light](#) 4.

4 Rosaline takes Katharine calling her a "light wench" to mean that she is light in terms of her weight.

KATHARINE

You don't [value me](#) 5? Oh, you mean that you don't care
about me.

5 Katharine takes Rosaline saying that she "weigh not you" to mean that she doesn't value her.

ROSALINE

For good reason, for it's not worth worrying about
something which isn't going to improve.

PRINCESS

30 Well bandied both; a set of wit well play'd.
But Rosaline, you have a favour too:
Who sent it? and what is it?

ROSALINE

I would you knew:
An if my face were but as fair as yours,
35 My favour were as great; be witness this.
Nay, I have verses too, I thank Biron:
The numbers true; and, were the numbering too,
I were the fairest goddess on the ground:
I am compared to twenty thousand fairs.
40 O, he hath drawn my picture in his letter!

PRINCESS

Any thing like?

ROSALINE

Much in the letters; nothing in the praise.

PRINCESS

Beauteous as ink; a good conclusion.

KATHARINE

Fair as a text B in a copy-book.

ROSALINE

45 'Ware pencils, ho! let me not die your debtor,
My red dominical, my golden letter:
O, that your face were not so full of O's!

KATHARINE

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

PRINCESS

But, Katharine, what was sent to you from fair Dumain?

KATHARINE

50 Madam, this glove.

PRINCESS

Did he not send you twain?

KATHARINE

Yes, madam, and moreover
Some thousand verses of a faithful lover,
A huge translation of hypocrisy,
55 Vilely compiled, profound simplicity.

MARIA

This and these pearls to me sent Longaville:
The letter is too long by half a mile.

PRINCESS

I think no less. Dost thou not wish in heart
The chain were longer and the letter short?

PRINCESS

Well played both of you, well played ⁷! Rosaline, you have
a love token as well. Who sent it to you and what is it?

⁷ "Bandied" implies that their game of wit was almost like a game of tennis or bandy (a Renaissance sport that is similar to modern day ice hockey.)

ROSALINE

Just you wait. If my face was as beautiful as yours, my gifts would be beautiful too. Look at this! [*Holds up her gift*] Oh and I have verses of poetry too! I thank Biron, the meter is correct and by his judgement, I am the most gorgeous goddess on this earth, he has compared me to twenty thousand other fair women. Oh and he has also drawn a picture of me in his letter!

PRINCESS

Does it seem accurate to you?

ROSALINE

The color of the black ink on the white paper ⁸ does, but the contents of the letter itself is nonsense.

⁸ The black ink on the white paper could symbolize Rosaline's dark hair and light skin.

PRINCESS

You are as pretty as ink, that's a good conclusion.

KATHARINE

You are as beautiful as the large letter B ⁹ written in a writing manual.

⁹ Katharine is continuing the little war of wit between her and Rosaline, by saying that the letter B would be large, and use a lot of ink, therefore implying that she is not beautiful at all.

ROSALINE

Take care paintbrushes! Make sure that I don't repay your insult. I could paint yours in a red color ⁹, for Dumain's golden character. Oh, if only your face wasn't so full of little scars ¹⁰!

⁹ The "red dominical" indicates something which has been painted or printed in red, and could be a sign of Katharine's red complexion.

¹⁰ O's here are taken to probably mean little scars on the face, but this reference is not clear.

KATHARINE

Curse that joke! I wish a plague on all chatty women like you.

PRINCESS

Katharine, what did the lovely Dumain send you?

KATHARINE

Madam, this glove.

PRINCESS

Did he not send you two?

KATHARINE

Yes he did, madam, and with it he sent a thousand verses of the poetry of a "faithful lover," which were a huge pack of lies, badly put together and incredibly silly.

MARIA

Longaville sent me these pearls and this letter, which is far too long.

PRINCESS

I think you're right. Would it be better if the necklace was longer and the letter shorter?

MARIA

60 Ay, or I would these hands might never part.

PRINCESS

We are wise girls to mock our lovers so.

ROSALINE

They are worse fools to purchase mocking so.
That same Biron I'll torture ere I go:
O that I knew he were but in by the week!
65 How I would make him fawn and beg and seek
And wait the season and observe the times
And spend his prodigal wits in bootless rhymes
And shape his service wholly to my hests
And make him proud to make me proud that jests!
70 So pair-taunt-like would I o'ersway his state
That he should be my fool and I his fate.

PRINCESS

None are so surely caught, when they are catch'd,
As wit turn'd fool: folly, in wisdom hatch'd,
75 Hath wisdom's warrant and the help of school
And wit's own grace to grace a learned fool.

ROSALINE

The blood of youth burns not with such excess
As gravity's revolt to wantonness.

MARIA

Folly in fools bears not so strong a note
As foolery in the wise, when wit doth dote;
80 Since all the power thereof it doth apply
To prove, by wit, worth in simplicity.

PRINCESS

Here comes Boyet, and mirth is in his face.

Enter BOYET

BOYET

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

PRINCESS

85 Thy news Boyet?

BOYET

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

PRINCESS

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

MARIA

Yes, and then these hands would never have to part ¹¹.

¹¹ The sense is that Maria might have used the chain to tie together her hands.

PRINCESS

We are clever girls to mock our lovers like this.

ROSALINE

Or they are huge fools for earning this level of mockery. I'll make Biron suffer before I go, if only I'd have known how deeply he was in love sooner! How I would make him flatter me, look for me and beg to have me, and wait until the moment that I want and do what seems right to me. I would force his incredible wit to make-up pointless rhymes for me, and would shape him to be just like I want him to be ¹² and make him proud to be the object of my jokes! So I would rule over him with my better hand ¹³, so that he would be my fool and I would control his fate.

¹² "Hests" is the archaic form of "behest" suggesting something according to your order or command.

¹³ The reference to "pair-taunt-like" is confusing but seems to be in relation to a person's hand in a game of cards. A pair-taunt was four cards of the same value and so Rosaline seems to be saying that she will always have a better hand than Biron.

PRINCESS

No men can be caught so easily, as when they are charmed and their wit turns into stupidity. Stupidity comes out of wisdom, it has wisdom's approval and the help of study and the charm of wit to add to the charm of a clever fool.

ROSALINE

A young man's blood isn't even as uncontrollable as when serious matters become indecent.

MARIA

Stupidity in fools isn't so offensive, as when a wise person acts stupid, and when it is noticed. Since a wise fool has thrown away his intelligence, they are forced to prove the wisdom of simple thoughts.

PRINCESS

Here comes Boyet, and he is full of cheer.

BOYET enters.

BOYET

Oh, I hurt from laughing so much! Where is her grace?

PRINCESS

What's happened Boyet?

BOYET

Get ready, madam, get ready! There are men here to disrupt your peaceful chat. Your lovers are about to come here in disguise, armed with words for you, you will be so surprised! Gather up your wits ladies, prepare to defend yourselves, or hide like cowards, and run away quickly.

PRINCESS

Saint Denis ¹⁴ now stands against Saint Cupid ¹⁵! Who are the men that come to speak with us? Tell us, spy, tell us.

¹⁴ Saint Denis was the patron saint of France.

¹⁵ The meaning conveyed here is that the ladies are now going to face love in all its force.

BOYET

Under the cool shade of a sycamore
 95 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 by,
 100 And overheard what you shall overhear,
 That, by and by, disguised they will be here.
 Their herald is a pretty knavish page,
 That well by heart hath conn'd his embassy:
 Action and accent did they teach him there;
 105 'Thus must thou speak,' and 'thus thy body bear:'
 And ever and anon they made a doubt
 Presence majestic would put him out,
 'For,' quoth the king, 'an angel shalt thou see;
 Yet fear not thou, but speak audaciously.'
 110 The boy replied, 'An angel is not evil;
 I should have fear'd her had she been a devil.'
 With that, all laugh'd and clapp'd him on the shoulder,
 Making the bold wag by their praises bolder:
 One rubb'd his elbow thus, and fleer'd and swore
 115 A better speech was never spoke before;
 Another, with his finger and his thumb,
 Cried, 'Via! we will do't, come what will come;
 The third he caper'd, and cried, 'All goes well!'
 The fourth turn'd on the toe, and down he fell.
 120 With that, they all did tumble on the ground,
 With such a zealous laughter, so profound,
 That in this spleen ridiculous appears,
 To cheque their folly, passion's solemn tears.

PRINCESS

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

BOYET

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

PRINCESS

And will they so? the gallants shall be task'd;
 For, ladies, we shall every one be mask'd;
 And not a man of them shall have the grace,
 Despite of suit, to see a lady's face.
 135 Hold, Rosaline, this favour thou shalt wear,
 And then the king will court thee for his dear;
 Hold, take thou this, my sweet, and give me thine,
 So shall Biron take me for Rosaline.
 And change your favours too; so shall your loves
 140 Woo contrary, deceived by these removes.

ROSALINE

Come on, then; wear the favours most in sight.

KATHARINE

But in this changing what is your intent?

PRINCESS

The effect of my intent is to cross theirs:
 They do it but in mocking merriment;
 145 And mock for mock is only my intent.
 Their several counsels they unbosom shall
 To loves mistook, and so be mock'd withal
 Upon the next occasion that we meet,
 With visages displayed, to talk and greet.

ROSALINE

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

BOYET

I was having a nap in the shade of a sycamore tree for half an hour, when suddenly, my nap was interrupted. I heard the King and his companions talking nearby and I carefully hid in a bush nearby, and heard them discussing what you will hear them tell you again in a minute; that they will be here soon, in disguise. Their messenger is a pretty dishonest attendant, who has learned his message off by heart, using the gestures and the vocal technique that they have taught him. They said to him, "You must speak like this," and "You must stand like this," and they kept worrying that the presence of you, your majesty might confuse him. The King said to him, "For even though you are going to see an angel standing before you, don't be scared, but speak with courage!" The boy replied, "An angel isn't evil so why would I fear her? I would only fear her if she was a devil." At that remark they all laughed and patted him on the shoulder, becoming more brave by the minute and adding more and more of this bravery into their praises of you. One of them rubbed his elbow ¹⁶ like this, and grinned and stated that he didn't think there had ever been a speech as good as theirs before. Another one of them snapped his fingers and cried, "Come on! let's do it, no matter what happens." The third Lord did a little dance and cried, "I hope everything goes well." The fourth tripped over himself and fell on the ground. At that moment, they all fell to the ground with him, cackling with such a strong laughter, so loud, that their merriment became ridiculous and the serious emotion of passion was forced to stop their silliness.

PRINCESS

But what, but what, they have come to visit us?

BOYET

They have, they are coming now and are dressed in this way. They are dressed like Muscovites or Russians it looks like. Their aim is to speak with you, to flirt and to dance, and each of them has an act of love that they will perform for their own mistress, identifying her by the presents which they gave you.

PRINCESS

Will they now? These men will be tested then. For ladies, we shall all wear masks, so that none of them will have the honor, even when they ask, to see our faces. Hang on Rosaline, you will wear this gift and then the King will flirt with you, thinking that you are me. Here, take this, my sweet, and give me yours, and Biron will also think that I am Rosaline. You two swap your presents too, so that your lovers will woo the wrong women, deceived by these exchanges.

ROSALINE

Come on then, let's make sure we wear these gifts in an obvious place.

KATHARINE

What is the point of these exchanges?

PRINCESS

The point of these exchanges is to trick them before they can trick us. They do it as a light bit of mockery, and mocking this mockery is my only purpose. They will reveal secrets to mistaken lovers, and will be mocked in front of everyone when we next meet them, at which time we will be ourselves again, ready to greet them and talk to them.

ROSALINE

But do we dance with them, if they want us to?

¹⁶ To rub your elbow was a sign of pleasure and satisfaction.

PRINCESS

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

BOYET

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

PRINCESS

160 Therefore I do it; and I make no doubt
The rest will ne'er come in, if he be out
There's no such sport as sport by sport o'erthrown,
To make theirs ours and ours none but our own:
So shall we stay, mocking intended game,
And they, well mock'd, depart away with shame.

Trumpets sound within

BOYET

The trumpet sounds: be mask'd; the maskers come.

The Ladies mask

*Enter Blackamoors with music; MOTH; FERDINAND, BIRON,
LONGAVILLE, and DUMAIN, in Russian habits, and masked*

MOTH

All hail, the richest beauties on the earth!--

BOYET

165 Beauties no richer than rich taffeta.

MOTH

A holy parcel of the fairest dames.

The Ladies turn their backs to him

MOTH

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

BIRON

170 *[Aside to MOTH]* Their eyes, villain, their eyes!

MOTH

That ever turn'd their eyes to mortal views!--Out--

BOYET

True; out indeed.

MOTH

Out of your favours, heavenly spirits, vouchsafe
Not to behold--

BIRON

175 *[Aside to MOTH]* Once to behold, rogue.

MOTH

Once to behold with your sun-beamed eyes,
--with your sun-beamed eyes--

BOYET

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

PRINCESS

No, we would rather die than move a foot. We will also pay
no attention to the speech they have written for us, but we
will turn our faces away from them instead.

BOYET

Oh wow, that disgust will upset the speaker and he will
completely forget what he was going to say.

PRINCESS

And so I will do it, and I am certain that the rest of them will
not try again, if the speaker is puzzled. There's no game
that's better than a game which outdoes another game,
making their sport our sport and letting us have our own
fun as well. So we will stay, mocking their actions and they
will run away in shame when we have done this.

The sound of trumpets is heard inside.

BOYET

That's the trumpets! Put your masks on ladies, the masked
men are coming.

The Ladies put on their masks.

*Enter dark-skinned musicians. MOTH, FERDINAND, BIRON,
LONGAVILLE, and DUMAIN enter. The Lords are dressed in
Russian clothing and are masked.*

MOTH

All hail the richest beauties on the earth!

BOYET

Their beauties are no better than a good piece of silk.

MOTH

A divine collection of the most beautiful women.

The Ladies turn away from him.

MOTH

That ever turned away from mortal opinions.

BIRON

[So only MOTH can hear] Their eyes, you idiot, their eyes!

MOTH

That ever turned their eyes away from mortal opinions.
Out!

BOYET

Yes, get out.

MOTH

Although we are not liked by you, you heavenly goddesses,
promise not to look--

BIRON


[So only MOTH can hear] Promise to look at us, you rascal.

MOTH

Promise to look at us with your sun-beamed eyes--with
your shining, glistening eyes--

BOYET

They will not answer to a name like that, it would be better
if you called them "daughter-beamed" eyes instead.

 Boyet is punning on the sound of "sun-beamed" being similar to "son-beamed" and is therefore saying that calling them "daughter-beamed" would give them more luck.

MOTH

180 They do not mark me, and that brings me out.

BIRON

Is this your perfectness? be gone, you rogue!

Exit MOTH

ROSALINE

What would these strangers? know their minds, Boyet:
If they do speak our language, 'tis our will:

185 That some plain man recount their purposes
Know what they would.

BOYET

What would you with the Princess?

BIRON

Nothing but peace and gentle visitation.

ROSALINE

What would they, say they?

BOYET

190 Nothing but peace and gentle visitation.

ROSALINE

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

BOYET

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

FERDINAND

Say to her, we have measured many miles
To tread a measure with her on this grass.

BOYET

195 They say, that they have measured many a mile
To tread a measure with you on this grass.

ROSALINE

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

BOYET

200 If to come hither you have measured miles,
And many miles, the princess bids you tell
How many inches doth fill up one mile.

BIRON

Tell her, we measure them by weary steps.

BOYET

She hears herself.

ROSALINE

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

BIRON

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

MOTH

They aren't paying attention to me, and that annoys me.

BIRON

Is that the best that you have to say? Get out of here, you scoundrel!

MOTH exits.

ROSALINE

What do these foreign men want? Find out from them
Boyet. If they speak English then we would appreciate it if
one of them would tell us what they're doing here in simple
language. Go, find out from them.

BOYET

What do you want with the Princess?

BIRON

Simply a peaceful and a friendly visit.

ROSALINE

What did they say they wanted?

BOYET

Simply a peaceful and a friendly visit.

ROSALINE

Well, they have had that now, so tell them they can leave.

BOYET

[To FERDINAND] She says you have had a peaceful and
friendly visit and now you may leave.

FERDINAND

Tell her that we have traveled for many miles to dance with
her on this grass.

BOYET

[To ROSALINE] They say that they have traveled for many
miles to dance with you on this grass.

ROSALINE

That's not true. Ask them how many inches there are in a
mile. If they have traveled many miles, then they should at
least have counted how many is in one.

BOYET

If you have traveled many miles to get there, the Princess
would like to know how many inches are in one mile.

BIRON

Tell her that we measured our journey by the weary steps
that we took.

BOYET

She heard you herself.

ROSALINE

Okay then, out of the many weary miles that you have
traveled, how many *weary steps* did you take in one mile?

BIRON

We don't count anything that we do for you. Our sense of
duty is so strong, so limitless that we will always do it
without counting. Promise to show us the sunshine of your
face so that we can adore it, like beasts.

ROSALINE

My face is but a moon, and clouded too.

FERDINAND

215 Blessed are clouds, to do as such clouds do!
Vouchsafe, bright moon, and these thy stars, to shine,
Those clouds removed, upon our watery eyne.

ROSALINE

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

FERDINAND

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

ROSALINE

Play, music, then! Nay, you must do it soon.

Music plays

ROSALINE

Not yet! no dance! Thus change I like the moon.

FERDINAND

225 Will you not dance? How come you thus estranged?

ROSALINE

You took the moon at full, but now she's changed.

FERDINAND

Yet still she is the moon, and I the man.
The music plays; vouchsafe some motion to it.

ROSALINE

Our ears vouchsafe it.

FERDINAND

230 But your legs should do it.

ROSALINE

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

FERDINAND

Why take we hands, then?

ROSALINE

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

FERDINAND

More measure of this measure; be not nice.

ROSALINE

We can afford no more at such a price.

FERDINAND

Prize you yourselves: what buys your company?

ROSALINE

My face is just a reflection, and it is masked as well.

FERDINAND

How lucky are the masks, which cover the ladies faces, as clouds cover the sky! Be safe bright moon, and your stars will shine on our weeping eyes, once your masks have been removed.

ROSALINE

Oh what a pointless wish! Ask for something more important. All you have now requested is to see the reflection of the moon in the water.

FERDINAND

Then, while we are here, just let us have one dance. You asked me to beg, and we're used to doing that.

ROSALINE

Let the music play then! We must dance soon.

Music plays.

ROSALINE

Not yet! No dancing yet! I change as quickly as the moon does.¹⁸

¹⁸ Women were believed to be inconstant and changeable, and were thus often compared to the moon, which is always changing shape.

FERDINAND

Why won't you dance? Why do you stay so far away from me?

ROSALINE

You thought that it was a full moon, but now it's already changed to something else.

FERDINAND

Yet if you are still the moon, then I can be the man in the moon. The music is starting, lets organize some dancing to it.

ROSALINE

Our ears can listen to it.

FERDINAND

But your legs should dance to it.

ROSALINE

As you are foreigners and happened to come here, we don't have to do what you want. Take my hand now, we will not dance with you.

FERDINAND

Well, why are we holding hands then?

ROSALINE

Only to say goodbye as friends. Curtsy to your men, my dears, here is where the music stops.

FERDINAND

Let us have more of this¹⁹, please.

¹⁹ The sense conveyed is that the lords want more time to dance with the ladies so that they can flirt with them more, talk with them more and maybe even kiss them.

ROSALINE

We can't let you have more just because you ask.

FERDINAND

Then value yourselves, what will buy us your company?

ROSALINE

Your absence only.

FERDINAND

240 That can never be.

ROSALINE

Then cannot we be bought: and so, adieu;
Twice to your visor, and half once to you.

FERDINAND

If you deny to dance, let's hold more chat.

ROSALINE

In private, then.

FERDINAND

245 I am best pleased with that.

They converse apart

BIRON

White-handed mistress, one sweet word with thee.

PRINCESS

Honey, and milk, and sugar; there is three.

BIRON

250 Nay then, two treys, and if you grow so nice,
Metheglin, wort, and malmsey: well run, dice!
There's half-a-dozen sweets.

PRINCESS

Seventh sweet, adieu:
Since you can cog, I'll play no more with you.

BIRON

One word in secret.

PRINCESS

255 Let it not be sweet.

BIRON

Thou grievest my gall.

PRINCESS

Gall! bitter.

BIRON

Therefore meet.

They converse apart

DUMAIN

260 Will you vouchsafe with me to change a word?

MARIA

Name it.

DUMAIN

Fair lady,--

MARIA

Say you so? Fair lord,--
Take that for your fair lady.

ROSALINE

Only your absence.

FERDINAND

That will never happen.

ROSALINE

Well we can't be bought, so goodbye.

FERDINAND

If you won't dance with me, then let's at least chat more.

ROSALINE

Okay, but in private.

FERDINAND

I am happy with that.

They speak away from the others.

BIRON

My pale-handed mistress, let me have one word with you.

PRINCESS

Honey, milk, sugar—there, that's three words.

BIRON

No then, let me have two lots of three, or if you are feeling nice, I'll have three more ²⁰. Well played dice! That's six more words for me.

PRINCESS

Then here's your seventh, goodbye. Since you're a cheat, I don't want to play with you anymore.

BIRON

One word in secret.

PRINCESS

As long as it's not sweet.

BIRON

You hurt my wound ²¹.

PRINCESS

Your wound! How bitter ²²!

BIRON

Let's talk.

They speak away from the others.

DUMAIN

Will you give me the chance to call you by another name?

MARIA

Name it.

DUMAIN

Fair lady—

MARIA

Do you think so? Fair lord, take that in exchange for your "fair lady."

²⁰ Metheglin, wort and malmsey were three strong sweet drinks that were common at the time.

²¹ A "gall" was a sore or a wound produced by rubbing, the Princess' wit is rubbing at his wound, annoying him.

²² The aforementioned wound was meant to be bitter, according to proverbs.

DUMAIN

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

They converse apart

KATHARINE

What, was your vizard made without a tongue?

LONGAVILLE

I know the reason, lady, why you ask.

KATHARINE

270 O for your reason! quickly, sir; I long.

LONGAVILLE

You have a double tongue within your mask,
And would afford my speechless vizard half.

KATHARINE

Veal, quoth the Dutchman. Is not "veal" a calf?

LONGAVILLE

A calf, fair lady!

KATHARINE

275 No, a fair lord calf.

LONGAVILLE

Let's part the word.

KATHARINE

No, I'll not be your half
Take all, and wean it; it may prove an ox.

LONGAVILLE

280 Look, how you butt yourself in these sharp mocks!
Will you give horns, chaste lady? do not so.

KATHARINE

Then die a calf, before your horns do grow.

LONGAVILLE

One word in private with you, ere I die.

KATHARINE

Bleat softly then; the butcher hears you cry.

They converse apart

BOYET

285 The tongues of mocking wenches are as keen
As is the razor's edge invisible,
Cutting a smaller hair than may be seen,
Above the sense of sense; so sensible
Seemeth their conference; their conceits have wings
290 Fleeter than arrows, bullets, wind, thought, swifter
things.

DUMAIN

If you want to, let's talk more in private and then I'll bid you
goodbye.

They speak away from the others.

KATHARINE

Sorry, does your mask not allow you to speak?

LONGAVILLE

I know why you ask me that, lady.

KATHARINE

Oh okay then, tell me the reason! Quickly, I can't wait to
hear it.

LONGAVILLE

You have two mouths ²³ beneath that mask, so you could
give me one of them and then I would speak.

KATHARINE

The Dutchman says "Veal." ²⁴ Isn't veal a calf?

LONGAVILLE

A calf, fair lady!

KATHARINE

No, a fair lord calf ²⁵!

LONGAVILLE

Can't we share the word?

KATHARINE

No I don't want to be your partner. Have it and wean it and
it might end up as an ox ²⁶.

LONGAVILLE

Look how you strike me with your hurtful mockery! Will you
give your husband horns ²⁷, chaste lady? Don't do that.

KATHARINE

Then you should die while you're young, before your horns
can grow.

LONGAVILLE

One word in private with you then, before I die.

KATHARINE

Talk softly then, you wouldn't want the butcher to hear
you.

They speak away from the others.

BOYET

The tongues of mocking women are as sharp as a razor,
able to cut hairs that can't even be seen. Their
conversations are so clever that they are more than even
the senses can understand, their clever ideas come quicker
than arrows, bullets, wind, thought, or even quicker things.

²³ This is referring to her actual tongue and the tongue which is built into the mask.

²⁴ It is likely that he is trying to say "Well" in a Russian accent.

²⁵ There is double meaning here, between calf as in a young cow, and calf meaning a stupid person. Katharine is calling Longaville a stupid lord.

²⁶ The meaning intended here is following on from the joke about a "calf," a young cow. Katharine is telling Longaville to stop suckling the calf and it might end up being an ox. An ox is a castrated male animal and so the sense is of an idiot or a fool.

²⁷ She will make her husband a cuckold, an embarrassment.

ROSALINE

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

BIRON

By heaven, all dry-beaten with pure scoff!

FERDINAND

Farewell, mad wenches; you have simple wits.

PRINCESS

295 Twenty adieus, my frozen Muscovits.

Exeunt FERDINAND, Lords, and Blackamoors

PRINCESS

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

BOYET

Tapers they are, with your sweet breaths puff'd out.

ROSALINE

300 Well-liking wits they have; gross, gross; fat, fat.

PRINCESS

O poverty in wit, kingly-poor flout!
Will they not, think you, hang themselves tonight?
Or ever, but in vizards, show their faces?
This pert Biron was out of countenance quite.

ROSALINE

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

PRINCESS

Biron did swear himself out of all suit.

MARIA

Dumain was at my service, and his sword:
Non point, quoth I; my servant straight was mute.

KATHARINE

310 Lord Longaville said, I came o'er his heart;
And trow you what he called me?

PRINCESS

Qualm, perhaps.

KATHARINE

Yes, in good faith.

PRINCESS

Go, sickness as thou art!

ROSALINE

315 Well, better wits have worn plain statute-caps.
But will you hear? the king is my love sworn.

PRINCESS

And quick Biron hath plighted faith to me.

KATHARINE

And Longaville was for my service born.

MARIA

Dumain is mine, as sure as bark on tree.

ROSALINE

No more words, my maids. Stop talking to them now.

BIRON

My goodness, we've all been severely beaten by their mockery.

FERDINAND

Goodbye, you mad women, your wits are quite plain.

PRINCESS

Twenty goodbyes to you, you cold Muscovites.

FERDINAND, Lords and the Musicians exit.

PRINCESS

Are these the kind of wits that you saw earlier?

BOYET

They were like candles, blown out by your words.

ROSALINE

They have large minds, that are wide and fat.

PRINCESS

Oh what a lack of wit, what feeble mockery for a King! Don't you think they might hang themselves tonight in shame? Or only show their faces when hidden behind masks? The lively Biron seemed very upset.

ROSALINE

Oh they were all in sorry states! The King was ready to cry in trying to find something to say to you.

PRINCESS

Biron swore that he had nothing left to say.

MARIA

Dumain was under my control, and so was his sword. "No point," I said, when he didn't even say anything.

KATHARINE

Lord Longaville said that I had taken possession of his heart, and do you know what he called me?

PRINCESS

A qualm²⁸ perhaps?

²⁸ A "qualm" was a sudden feeling of faintness which could come over someone.

KATHARINE

Yes he did.

PRINCESS

Go, you must be a sickness!

ROSALINE

Well I've talked to cleverer people who have worn plain woolen caps²⁹. But did you hear? The King swore that he loved me.

²⁹ These caps were meant to have been worn by people of a lower social rank on Sundays and holy days to distinguish them.

PRINCESS

And the impatient Biron committed to loving me.

KATHARINE

And Longaville to being my love.

MARIA

Dumain is mine, as certain as the fact that there is bark on a tree.

BOYET

320 Madam, and pretty mistresses, give ear:
Immediately they will again be here
In their own shapes; for it can never be
They will digest this harsh indignity.

PRINCESS

Will they return?

BOYET

325 They will, they will, God knows,
And leap for joy, though they are lame with blows:
Therefore change favours; and, when they repair,
Blow like sweet roses in this summer air.

PRINCESS

How blow? how blow? speak to be understood.

BOYET

330 Fair ladies mask'd are roses in their bud;
Dismask'd, their damask sweet commixture shown,
Are angels vailing clouds, or roses blown.

PRINCESS

Avaunt, perplexity! What shall we do,
If they return in their own shapes to woo?

ROSALINE

335 Good madam, if by me you'll be advised,
Let's, mock them still, as well known as disguised:
Let us complain to them what fools were here,
Disguised like Muscovites, in shapeless gear;
And wonder what they were and to what end
340 Their shallow shows and prologue vilely penn'd
And their rough carriage so ridiculous,
Should be presented at our tent to us.

BOYET

Ladies, withdraw: the gallants are at hand.

PRINCESS

Whip to our tents, as roes run o'er land.

345

Exeunt PRINCESS, ROSALINE, KATHARINE, and MARIA

Re-enter FERDINAND, BIRON, LONGAVILLE, and DUMAIN, in their proper habits

FERDINAND

Fair sir, God save you! Where's the princess?

BOYET

Gone to her tent. Please it your majesty
Command me any service to her thither?

FERDINAND

That she vouchsafe me audience for one word.

BOYET

350 I will; and so will she, I know, my lord.

Exit

BIRON

This fellow pecks up wit as pigeons pease,
And utters it again when God doth please:
He is wit's pedler, and retails his wares

355 At wakes and wassails, meetings, markets, fairs;
And we that sell by gross, the Lord doth know,
Have not the grace to grace it with such show.

BOYET

Madam, and pretty mistresses, listen to me. They will be back in a minute dressed as themselves again, for I know they won't be able to put up with this shame.

PRINCESS

They will come back?

BOYET

They will, they will, that's for sure, and they will be happy and excited even though they are crushed inside. Therefore, exchange your gifts back again and when they come back, blossom like sweet roses in this summer air. ³⁰

³⁰ This line is a further reference to their ever-growing wit.

PRINCESS

What do you mean blossom? How can we blossom? Speak simply.

BOYET

When fair ladies are masked they are like new roses, when they are unmasked and their beautiful red and white complexion is revealed, they are like angels removing clouds from the sky, or roses blossoming.

PRINCESS

Get rid of such puzzling lines! What shall we do if they come back to woo us dressed as themselves?

ROSALINE

Good madam, if you'll let me offer some advice, I think that we should carry on mocking them, like we did when they were disguised. Let's complain to them about the idiots who have just been here, dressed as Muscovites, in shapeless clothes. Let's tell them we were amazed by them and wondered why their superficial performance, their poorly written verses and their ridiculous behavior were presented to us in our tent.

BOYET

Ladies, withdraw, the men will be here soon.

PRINCESS

Let's dash to our tents, like deer when they run across land.

The PRINCESS, ROSALINE, KATHARINE and MARIA exit.

FERDINAND, BIRON, LONGAVILLE, and DUMAIN re-enter, dressed as themselves.

FERDINAND

Hello sir, God bless you! Where is the Princess?

BOYET

She's gone to her tent, would your majesty like me to ask her something?

FERDINAND

I would like to ask her to speak with me for just a minute.

BOYET

I will ask her, and she will come, I know it my lord.

BOYET exits.

BIRON

This man eats up our wit, like a pigeon pea ³¹, and speaks the same line again when the time is right. He is a seller of wit, and makes his money at festivals and parties, meetings, markets and fairs. People like him, who sell wit in large quantities, the Lord knows they don't have the ability to put on a performance like we can. He has complete

³¹ A pigeon pea is a type of small legume.

This gallant pins the wenches on his sleeve;
 Had he been Adam, he had tempted Eve;
 360 A' can carve too, and lisp: why, this is he
 That kiss'd his hand away in courtesy;
 This is the ape of form, monsieur the nice,
 That, when he plays at tables, chides the dice
 In honourable terms: nay, he can sing
 365 A mean most meanly; and in ushering
 Mend him who can: the ladies call him sweet;
 The stairs, as he treads on them, kiss his feet:
 This is the flower that smiles on every one,
 To show his teeth as white as whale's bone;
 370 And consciences, that will not die in debt,
 Pay him the due of honey-tongued Boyet.

FERDINAND

A blister on his sweet tongue, with my heart,
 That put Armado's page out of his part!

BIRON

See where it comes! Behavior, what wert thou
 375 Till this madman show'd thee? and what art thou now?

*Re-enter the PRINCESS, ushered by BOYET, ROSALINE, MARIA, and
 KATHARINE*

FERDINAND

All hail, sweet madam, and fair time of day!

PRINCESS

"Fair" in "all hail" is foul, as I conceive.

FERDINAND

Construe my speeches better, if you may.

PRINCESS

380 Then wish me better; I will give you leave.

FERDINAND

We came to visit you, and purpose now
 To lead you to our court; vouchsafe it then.

PRINCESS

This field shall hold me; and so hold your vow:
 Nor God, nor I, delights in perjured men.

FERDINAND

385 Rebuke me not for that which you provoke:
 The virtue of your eye must break my oath.

PRINCESS

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
 390 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 hate a breaking cause to be
 Of heavenly oaths, vow'd with integrity.

FERDINAND

395 O, you have lived in desolation here,
 Unseen, unvisited, much to our shame.

PRINCESS

Not so, my lord; it is not so, I swear;
 We have had pastimes here and pleasant game:
 A mess of Russians left us but of late.

power over women; if he had been Adam it would have been him who would have tempted Eve, not the other way around. He can also fail to deliver and stutter on his words. The same person who wore his hand out by kissing it so much is also a very polite man, he's Mr Nice Guy. He's so nice that when he plays backgammon, he even tells the dice off politely. He can sing a [tenor](#) ³² role fairly well, and when acting as an usher he lets anyone who he thinks can do better try it instead. The ladies call him sweet, and he has climbed up the [social ladder](#) ³³ easily. He smiles at everyone he sees, to prove that his teeth are as white as ivory; people with consciences, so as not to die in debt, pay him the honor of calling him "Sweet speaking Boyet."

FERDINAND

Let a blister grow on the tongue of the man that made Moth forget his lines!

BIRON

Look, he is coming! What were good manners until Boyet showed us what they could be? And where are they now?

*The PRINCESS re-enters, led on by BOYET, ROSALINE,
 MARIA and KATHARINE.*

FERDINAND

Hail, my sweet madam, and a good day to you!

PRINCESS

To call a [hailstorm](#) ³⁴ fair is an offense, I think.

FERDINAND

Interpret my speeches better, if you can.

PRINCESS

If you want me to be better than I am, then I'll just leave.

FERDINAND

We came to visit you and now would like to take you to our court. Accept this offer.

PRINCESS

I will stay in this field, so that you can stay true to your vow. Neither God nor I are a fan of liars.

FERDINAND

Don't judge me for something which you have made me do. The virtuous power of your eye must make me break my oath.

PRINCESS

You call this power I have virtuous when you should have called it evil, since something that is virtuous will never make a man break his oath. Now, by my maiden honor, which is still as pure as the whitest lily, I am determined that I should endure horrible things before I agree to be a guest in your house. This is how much I hate men who break the oaths that they agreed to with such integrity.

FERDINAND

Oh but you have had to stay here and be lonely, unnoticed and unvisited, which is shameful to us.

PRINCESS

No it isn't my lord, I swear it isn't. We have had amusements here and pleasant games, only just now a group of four Russians left us.

³² To sing "meanly" was to sing a middle part, so likely an alto or a tenor part.

³³ The "stairs" mentioned are used figuratively to suggest a person climbing up the social hierarchy.

³⁴ The Princess purposely misinterprets Ferdinand's "Hail" as a reference to a hailstorm.

FERDINAND

400 How, madam! Russians!

PRINCESS

Ay, in truth, my lord;
Trim gallants, full of courtship and of state.

ROSALINE

Madam, speak true. It is not so, my lord:
My lady, to the manner of the days,
405 In courtesy gives undeserving praise.
We four indeed confronted were with four
In Russian habit: here they stay'd an hour,
And talk'd apace; and in that hour, my lord,
They did not bless us with one happy word.
410 I dare not call them fools; but this I think,
When they are thirsty, fools would fain have drink.

BIRON

This jest is dry to me. Fair gentle sweet,
Your wit makes wise things foolish: when we greet,
With eyes best seeing, heaven's fiery eye,
415 By light we lose light: your capacity
Is of that nature that to your huge store
Wise things seem foolish and rich things but poor.

ROSALINE

This proves you wise and rich, for in my eye,--

BIRON

I am a fool, and full of poverty.

ROSALINE

420 But that you take what doth to you belong,
It were a fault to snatch words from my tongue.

BIRON

O, I am yours, and all that I possess!

ROSALINE

All the fool mine?

BIRON

I cannot give you less.

ROSALINE

425 Which of the vizards was it that you wore?

BIRON

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

ROSALINE

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

FERDINAND

We are descried; they'll mock us now downright.

DUMAIN

430 Let us confess and turn it to a jest.

PRINCESS

Amazed, my lord? why looks your highness sad?

ROSALINE

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

BIRON

Thus pour the stars down plagues for perjury.
435 Can any face of brass hold longer out? Here stand I,


FERDINAND


Really, madam! Russians?!

PRINCESS

Yes, truthfully my lord. They were stylish suitors, full of
manners and dignity.

ROSALINE

Madam, tell the truth, that was not the case, my lord. My
lady is giving them praise that they don't deserve because it
is polite. The four of us were confronted with four men in
Russian clothing. They stayed here for an hour and
chattered away and in that whole hour, they didn't say
anything interesting. I don't want to call them fools, but I
think that when they are thirsty, it would be fools that were
drinking .

 Rosaline implies that they are indeed fools without outright saying so.

BIRON

This joke is not amusing to me. My gentle lady, you make
even wise things seem silly. When we look directly at the
sun with our eyes, we are blinded and can no longer see.
Your knowledge is similar to that, in the sense that when you
talk wise things seem foolish and rich things seem poor.

ROSALINE

Then you must be wise and rich, for in my mind--

BIRON

I am a fool, and a poor one at that.

ROSALINE

But there you take the words that I was about to say about
you, it is not nice to take words from my tongue.

BIRON

Oh I am all yours, and so is everything I own!

ROSALINE

So the whole fool is mine?

BIRON

I can't give you any less.

ROSALINE

Which mask did you wear?

BIRON

Where? When? What mask? Why do you ask me this?

ROSALINE

There, then, that mask, that ridiculous covering, that hid
the worst of you and showed a better face.

FERDINAND

We are found out! They'll mock us completely.

DUMAIN

Let's confess and turn it into a joke.

PRINCESS

You look bewildered my lord? Or are you sad?

ROSALINE

Help, hold his brows! He might faint! Why do you look so
pale? Perhaps you're sea-sick, having travelled all the way
from Muscovy...?

BIRON

Therefore do whatever you want to us for our lies. Can a
shameless face like mine last much longer? I stand here, my

lady, dart thy skill at me; Bruise me
with scorn, confound me with a flout;
Thrust thy sharp wit quite through my ignorance;
Cut me to pieces with thy keen conceit;
440 And I will wish thee never more to dance,
Nor never more in Russian habit wait.
O, never will I trust to speeches penn'd,
Nor to the motion of a schoolboy's tongue,
Nor never come in vizard to my friend,
445 Nor woo in rhyme, like a blind harper's song!
Taffeta phrases, silken terms precise,
Three-piled hyperboles, spruce affectation,
Figures pedantical; these summer-flies
Have blown me full of maggot ostentation:
450 I do forswear them; and I here protest,
By this white glove;--how white the hand, God knows!--
Henceforth my wooing mind shall be express'd
In russet yeas and honest kersey noes:
And, to begin, wench,--so God help me, la!--
455 My love to thee is sound, sans crack or flaw.

ROSALINE

Sans sans, I pray you.

BIRON

Yet I have a trick
Of the old rage: bear with me, I am sick;
I'll leave it by degrees. Soft, let us see:
460 Write, 'Lord have mercy on us' on those three;
They are infected; in their hearts it lies;
They have the plague, and caught it of your eyes;
These lords are visited; you are not free,
For the Lord's tokens on you do I see.

PRINCESS

465 No, they are free that gave these tokens to us.

BIRON

Our states are forfeit: seek not to undo us.

ROSALINE

It is not so; for how can this be true,
That you stand forfeit, being those that sue?

BIRON

Peace! for I will not have to do with you.

ROSALINE

470 Nor shall not, if I do as I intend.

BIRON

Speak for yourselves; my wit is at an end.

FERDINAND

Teach us, sweet madam, for our rude transgression
Some fair excuse.

PRINCESS

The fairest is confession.
475 Were not you here but even now disguised?

FERDINAND

Madam, I was.

PRINCESS

And were you well advised?

FERDINAND

I was, fair madam.

lady, give me everything you've got. Hurt me with your
scorn, destroy me with a joke, make your sharp wit go right
through my stupidity. Cut me into pieces with your keen
tongue and I will never again invite you to dance and never
come to you in Russian clothing again. Oh I will never rely
on speeches that we have written, or trust a boy to deliver
them. I will never come to my lover wearing a mask, nor
woo her with rhymes like the song of a blind harper. I will
never use rich phrases, flattering and over-precise words,
excessive exaggeration, smart affection, pedantic rhetorical
devices. The flies that come out in summer have laid their
eggs on me and made me a pretentious show-off. I give
these things up and I promise by your white glove, how
white your hand is who knows! From here on I shall only
woo you in simple ways with honest, plain words. So to
begin, wench, may God help me, aha! My love for you is
strong, without a crack or a flaw.

ROSALINE

Speak without, *without*, I beg of you.

BIRON

Yet I still have a touch of my old madness. Bear with me, I
am sick, I will gradually get rid of this illness. So let's see,
let's write "Lord have mercy on us" on these three men.
They are truly sick, it is deep in their hearts. They have the
plague of love and caught it by looking in your eyes. These
lords are attacked by this illness, and you are not safe
yourself, since I see you are wearing the Lord's presents.

PRINCESS

No, the men who gave us these presents are generous.

BIRON

We have stopped being honorable men already, please
don't try to ruin us.

ROSALINE

That's not true. How can that be true that you risk being
ruined, when you're the ones that started this all in the first
place?

BIRON

Quiet! I'll have nothing more to do with you.

ROSALINE

Neither will I, if I get what I want.

BIRON

I'm done with speaking to you, my wits are done for.

FERDINAND

Tell us, sweet madam, what we can do to make up for our
bad behavior.

PRINCESS

The fairest way is by confessing. Was it you that come here
before in disguise?

FERDINAND

Madam, it was.

PRINCESS

And were you in your right mind?

FERDINAND

I was, fair madam.

PRINCESS

When you then were here,
480 What did you whisper in your lady's ear?

FERDINAND

That more than all the world I did respect her.

PRINCESS

When she shall challenge this, you will reject her.

FERDINAND

Upon mine honour, no.

PRINCESS

Peace, peace! forbear:
485 Your oath once broke, you force not to forswear.

FERDINAND

Despise me, when I break this oath of mine.

PRINCESS

I will: and therefore keep it. Rosaline,
What did the Russian whisper in your ear?

ROSALINE

Madam, he swore that he did hold me dear
490 As precious eyesight, and did value me
Above this world; adding thereto moreover
That he would wed me, or else die my lover.

PRINCESS

God give thee joy of him! the noble lord
Most honourably doth unhold his word.

FERDINAND

495 What mean you, madam? by my life, my troth,
I never swore this lady such an oath.

ROSALINE

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

FERDINAND

My faith and this the princess I did give:
500 I knew her by this jewel on her sleeve.

PRINCESS

Pardon me, sir, this jewel did she wear;
And Lord Biron, I thank him, is my dear.
What, will you have me, or your pearl again?

BIRON

Neither of either; I remit both twain.
505 I see the trick on't: here was a consent,
Knowing aforehand of our merriment,
To dash it like a Christmas comedy:
Some carry-tale, some please-man, some slight zany,
Some mumble-news, some trencher-knight, some Dick,
510 That smiles his cheek in years and knows the trick
To make my lady laugh when she's disposed,
Told our intents before; which once disclosed,
The ladies did change favours: and then we,
Following the signs, woo'd but the sign of she.
515 Now, to our perjury to add more terror,
We are again forsworn, in will and error.
Much upon this it is: and might not you.

To BOYET

BIRON

Forestall our sport, to make us thus untrue?
Do not you know my lady's foot by the squier,
520

PRINCESS

When you were here before, what did you whisper in your
lady's ear?

FERDINAND

That more than anything else, I valued her.

PRINCESS

When she will lay claim to this, you will reject her.

FERDINAND

Upon my honor, I won't.

PRINCESS

Peace, peace! Don't say anymore, having broken your oath
once already, you won't care if you break it again.

FERDINAND

Hate me, if I break another oath.

PRINCESS

I will and therefore make sure you keep it. Rosaline, what
did the Russian whisper in your ear?

ROSALINE

Madam, he swore that I was as important to him as
precious eyesight and that he valued me more than the
world, adding also that he would marry me, or die my lover.

PRINCESS

God may you have him! This noble lord most honorably has
forgotten what he promised.

FERDINAND

What do you mean madam? By my life, my dear, I never
swore this lady such an oath.

ROSALINE

By heaven, you did and to prove it even more, you gave me
this! *[She presents the gift]* Take it back again sir.

FERDINAND

I did give *the Princess* my love and this gift. I knew her by
the jewel she had on her sleeve.

PRINCESS

Excuse me sir, she was wearing my jewel. Lord Biron, thanks
to you, for being my dear. What, do you want your pearl
back, or will you have me instead?

BIRON

I'll have neither of them, I give up both of them. I see the
trick you have played on us, knowing that we were coming
here, you made a pact to ruin it like a [Christmas comedy](#).³⁶
It was some kind of tell-tale, a creep, a humble assistant, a
gossip, a hanger-on, a fellow who looked old with wrinkles
and knows how to make my lady laugh when she wants to
be merry that told you of our plan. Once they knew the
ladies swapped their gifts and then we, following these
gifts, woo'ed the lady that wore them. Now, we have
betrayed ourselves even more, and have again broken
another oath, by doing this wrong. This is pretty much what
has happened.

BIRON

[To BOYET] Couldn't you have prevented this from
happening, stopped us from breaking our oath? Don't you

³⁶ Shakespeare may be referring to a real life event, when his play "Comedy of Errors" was performed at court in 1594 and descended into confusion over who it was actually being performed for.

And laugh upon the apple of her eye?
 And stand between her back, sir, and the fire,
 Holding a trencher, jesting merrily?
 You put our page out: go, you are allow'd;
 Die when you will, a smock shall be your shroud.
 525 You leer upon me, do you? there's an eye
 Wounds like a leaden sword.

BOYET

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

BIRON

530 Lo, he is tilting straight! Peace! I have done.

Enter COSTARD

BIRON

Welcome, pure wit! thou partest a fair fray.

COSTARD

O Lord, sir, they would know
 Whether the three Worthies shall come in or no.

BIRON

535 What, are there but three?

COSTARD

No, sir; but it is vara fine,
 For every one pursents three.

BIRON

And three times thrice is nine.

COSTARD

540 Not so, sir; under correction, sir; I hope it is not
 so.
 You cannot beg us, sir, I can assure you, sir we know
 what we know:
 I hope, sir, three times thrice, sir,--

BIRON

Is not nine.

COSTARD

545 Under correction, sir, we know whereuntil it doth
 amount.

BIRON

By Jove, I always took three threes for nine.

COSTARD

O Lord, sir, it were pity you should get your living
 by reckoning, sir.

BIRON

550 How much is it?

COSTARD

O Lord, sir, the parties themselves, the actors,
 sir, will show whereuntil it doth amount: for mine
 own part, I am, as they say, but to perfect one man
 in one poor man, Pompion the Great, sir.

BIRON

555 Art thou one of the Worthies?

know the exact size of my lady's foot, and look pleasantly at
 her pupil? Don't you act almost as a fire screen, standing
 between her and the fire, ready to serve her, making jokes?
 You made Moth upset, go, you are allowed. Whenever you
 die, we can bury you like the woman you are. You stare at
 me like that, do you? Your eye wounds about as much as a
 wooden sword.

BOYET

Well done, your argument has moved at full speed, good
 job.

BIRON

Oh, he is going back immediately to his witty lines. Peace, I
 am done with this.

COSTARD enters.

BIRON

Welcome, you witty thing! You're breaking up a good fight.

COSTARD

Oh Lord sir, I was just sent to find out whether the three
 Worthies can come in yet or not.

BIRON

What? Are there only three of them?

COSTARD

No sir, it is perfectly all right, it's just that each person is
 playing three parts.

BIRON

And three times three is nine.

COSTARD

That is not so sir, I hope it is not so. You can't take us for
 fools sir—I can assure you, we know what we know. I hope
 sir, three times three is—

BIRON

Is not nine.

COSTARD

To correct you sir, we know what it amounts to.

BIRON

My goodness, I always thought that three threes were nine.

COSTARD

Oh Lord sir, it would be difficult for you if you had to make
 your living by doing calculations.

BIRON

How much is it then?

COSTARD

Oh Lord sir, the men themselves, the *actors*, will show you
 what it amounts to. For my own *part*, as they say, I will be a
 poor man playing the part of a great man, Pompion ³⁷ the
 Great, sir.

BIRON

Are you one of the Worthies?!

³⁷ Costard misspeaks here and has used the word "pompion," meaning pumpkin, instead of Pompey.

COSTARD

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.

BIRON

Go, bid them prepare.

COSTARD

560 We will turn it finely off, sir; we will take some care.

Exit

FERDINAND

Biron, they will shame us: let them not approach.

BIRON

565 We are shame-proof, my lord: and tis some policy To have one show worse than the king's and his company.

FERDINAND

I say they shall not come.

PRINCESS

Nay, my good lord, let me o'errule you now: That sport best pleases that doth least know how: Where zeal strives to content, and the contents
570 Dies in the zeal of that which it presents: Their form confounded makes most form in mirth, When great things labouring perish in their birth.

BIRON

A right description of our sport, my lord.

Enter DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

575 Anointed, I implore so much expense of thy royal sweet breath as will utter a brace of words.

Converses apart with FERDINAND, and delivers him a paper

PRINCESS

Doth this man serve God?

BIRON

Why ask you?

PRINCESS

580 He speaks not like a man of God's making.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

That is all one, my fair, sweet, honey monarch; 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.
585 I wish you the peace of mind, most royal complement!

Exit

FERDINAND

Here is like to be a good presence of Worthies. He presents Hector of Troy; the swain, Pompey the Great; the parish curate, Alexander; Armado's page, Hercules; the pedant, Judas Maccabaeus: And if
590 these four Worthies in their first show thrive,

COSTARD

They thought that I was worthy enough to play Pompion the Great and although I don't know the rank of this Worthy, I am happy to play him.

BIRON

Go, tell them to get ready.

COSTARD

We will pull it off sir, we will take care we do.

COSTARD exits.

FERDINAND

Biron, let's not let them perform, they will shame us!

BIRON

We are shame-proof my lord and anyway, it is a clever device to have a show that is worse than the King's and his company.

FERDINAND

I am telling you, they aren't coming.

PRINCESS

No, my good lord, I'm going to overrule you now, as it is often the thing that we least expect that pleases us the most. It is only an issue when enthusiasm tries to please, and the contents of the show get lost in the enthusiasm. This ruins what the play is actually about, but has its own reward in the fact that it makes people laugh—great things can sometimes be ruined before they even get started.

BIRON

A good description of what we just did as *Russians*, my lord.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO enters

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

King, I was wondering if you would use up some of your royal, sweet breath to say a few words before the show begins.

ARMADO speaks with FERDINAND away from the others and gives him a piece of paper.

PRINCESS

Is this man religious?

BIRON

Why do you ask?

PRINCESS

He doesn't speak like a man of God.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

It's all the same to me my fair, sweet, lovely monarch. Yet I have to say the schoolmaster Holofernes is incredibly imaginative, and certainly far, far too in love with himself. But I guess we will have to leave it up to the chance of war. I wish you peace of mind, my royal pair!

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO exits.

FERDINAND

You are about to see a good company of Worthies. He presents Hector of Troy, Costard is Pompey the Great, the parson is Alexander the Great, Armado's attendant is Hercules and the pedantic teacher is Judas Maccabaeus. If

These four will change habits, and present the other five.

BIRON

There is five in the first show.

FERDINAND

You are deceived; 'tis not so.

BIRON

595 The pedant, the braggart, the hedge-priest, the fool
and the boy:--
Abate throw at novum, and the whole world again
Cannot pick out five such, take each one in his vein.

FERDINAND

600 The ship is under sail, and here she comes amain.

Enter COSTARD, for Pompey

COSTARD

I Pompey am,--

BOYET

You lie, you are not he.

COSTARD

I Pompey am,--

BOYET

With leopard's head on knee.

BIRON

605 Well said, old mocker: I must needs be friends
with thee.

COSTARD

I Pompey am, Pompey surnamed the Big--

DUMAIN

The Great.

COSTARD

610 It is, 'Great,' sir:--
Pompey surnamed the Great;
That oft in field, with targe and shield, did make
my foe to sweat:
And travelling along this coast, I here am come by
chance,
615 And lay my arms before the legs of this sweet lass of
France,
If your ladyship would say, 'Thanks, Pompey,' I had
done.

PRINCESS

Great thanks, great Pompey.

COSTARD

620 'Tis not so much worth; but I hope I was perfect: I
made a little fault in 'Great.'

BIRON

My hat to a halfpenny, Pompey proves the best Worthy.

Enter SIR NATHANIEL, for Alexander

these four Worthies do well in the first show, they will
change their costumes and show us the other five Worthies.

BIRON

There are five in the first show.

FERDINAND

You are wrong, that's not true.

BIRON

The pedantic teacher, the show-off, the priest, the fool and
the boy. Forget your [luck](#) ³⁸, no-one in the world could pick
out five men like this, given what they're each like.

³⁸ To "throw at novum" is a lucky
throw at novum, a dice game where
five and nine were believed to be
winning throws.

FERDINAND

The ship has set off, and here she comes with all speed.

COSTARD enters, as Pompey.

COSTARD

I Pompey am--

BOYET

That's a lie, you are not Pompey.

COSTARD

I Pompey am--

BOYET

With a [leopard's head](#) ³⁹ on his knee!

³⁹ Pompey's coat of arms was
thought to be a leopard or a lion
holding a sword - if Costard had these
painted onto a shield and was holding
it upside down, it would look like
there was a leopard on his knee.

BIRON

Well said, my good man, I should be friends with you.

COSTARD

I Pompey am, with the surname of "the Big."

DUMAIN

You mean "The Great."

COSTARD

Oh yes, it is "Great" sir. Pompey's surname is "The Great," a
man that was always in battle, with a shield, making his
enemies scared. When I was traveling along the coast, I
arrived at Navarre by chance, and lay my weapons before
the legs of this Princess of France. If your ladyship will just
say "Thanks, Pompey," then my work here is done.

PRINCESS

Great thanks to you, *great* Pompey.

COSTARD

It wasn't very good, but I hope I was at least word perfect. I
made that small error when I forgot to say "Great."

BIRON

I'll bet anything that Pompey ends up being the best
Worthy.

SIR NATHANIEL enters, as Alexander the Great.

SIR NATHANIEL

625 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 Alisander,--

BOYET

630 Your nose says, no, you are not for it stands too
right.

BIRON

Your nose smells 'no' in this, most tender-smelling
knight.

PRINCESS

The conqueror is dismay'd. Proceed, good Alexander.

SIR NATHANIEL

635 When in the world I lived, I was the world's
commander,--

BOYET

Most true, 'tis right; you were so, Alisander.

BIRON

Pompey the Great,--

COSTARD

Your servant, and Costard.

BIRON

Take away the conqueror, take away Alisander.

COSTARD

640 [To SIR NATHANIEL] O, sir, you have overthrown
Alisander the conqueror! You will be scraped out of
the painted cloth for this: your lion, that holds
his poll-axe sitting on a close-stool, will be given
to Ajax: he will be the ninth Worthy. A conqueror,
645 and afeard to speak! run away for shame, Alisander.

SIR NATHANIEL retires

COSTARD

650 There, an't shall please you; a foolish mild man; an
honest man, look you, and soon dashed. He is a
marvellous good neighbour, faith, and a very good
bowler: but, for Alisander,--alas, you see how
'tis,--a little o'erparted. But there are Worthies
a-coming will speak their mind in some other sort.

Enter HOLOFERNES, for Judas; and MOTH, for Hercules

HOLOFERNES

655 Great Hercules is presented by this imp,
Whose club kill'd 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.
Keep some state in thy exit, and vanish.

MOTH retires

HOLOFERNES

660 Judas I am,--

SIR NATHANIEL

When I was alive, I was the world's commander, I
conquered in every direction, east, west, north and south.
My coat of arms clearly shows that I am Alexander--

BOYET

Your nose would suggest that you aren't, because it is too
straight for you to be Alexander the Great.

BIRON

Maybe it's your nose ⁴⁰ that says he isn't Alexander, my
soft-smelling knight.

PRINCESS

The conqueror is upset. Carry on, good Alexander.

SIR NATHANIEL

When I was alive, I was the world's commander--

BOYET

That's true, that's right, you were Alexander.

BIRON

Pompey the Great?!

COSTARD

Your servant sir, and also Costard.

BIRON

Take away the conqueror, take away Alexander.

COSTARD

[To SIR NATHANIEL] Oh sir, you have ruined Alexander the
Great! You will be taken out of the painting ⁴¹ for this! Your
lion, that holds your battle axe and sits by you, will be given
to Ajax ⁴² instead--he will be the ninth Worthy! A
conqueror and yet too afraid to talk. Run away for shame,
Alexander!

SIR NATHANIEL leaves.

COSTARD

I am sorry about that. He is a silly man, an honest man
mind you, but soon put to shame. He is a very good
neighbor though, and a very good bowler! But when he
plays Alexander, well, you saw what happened, it was a bit
too difficult for him. But there are other Worthies coming
who will speak their minds in other ways.

Enter HOLOFERNES as Judas and MOTH as Hercules.

HOLOFERNES

665 Great Hercules will be played by this young boy, whose club
killed Cerberus ⁴³, the three-headed dog. When he was a
baby, a child, a young thing, he strangled snakes with his
bare hands. Since he looks like a child, I therefore come to
apologize. Behave in a dignified manner when you exit, and
now leave.

MOTH leaves.

HOLOFERNES

I am Judas--

⁴⁰ Plutarch wrote that Alexander's skin was supposed to smell sweet and so Biron is telling Boyet that he knows Nathaniel isn't Alexander because he doesn't smell sweet.

⁴¹ The Nine Worthies were often painted on or woven onto wall hangings in Shakespeare's time.

⁴² In Greek mythology, Ajax was a hero of the Trojan War.

⁴³ Cerberus, in Greek mythology, was the three-headed dog that guarded the gates of the Underworld, or Hades.

DUMAIN

A Judas!

HOLOFERNES

Not Iscariot, sir.
Judas I am, ycliped Maccabaeus.

DUMAIN

Judas Maccabaeus clipt is plain Judas.

BIRON

665 A kissing traitor. How art thou proved Judas?

HOLOFERNES

Judas I am,—

DUMAIN

The more shame for you, Judas.

HOLOFERNES

What mean you, sir?

BOYET

To make Judas hang himself.

HOLOFERNES

670 Begin, sir; you are my elder.

BIRON

Well followed: Judas was hanged on an elder.

HOLOFERNES

I will not be put out of countenance.

BIRON

Because thou hast no face.

HOLOFERNES

What is this?

BOYET

675 A cittern-head.

DUMAIN

The head of a bodkin.

BIRON

A Death's face in a ring.

LONGAVILLE

The face of an old Roman coin, scarce seen.

BOYET

The pommel of Caesar's falchion.

DUMAIN

680 The carved-bone face on a flask.

BIRON

Saint George's half-cheek in a brooch.

DUMAIN

Ay, and in a brooch of lead.

DUMAIN

A traitor!

HOLOFERNES

Not Judas Iscariot sir, I am called Judas Maccabaeus.

DUMAIN

Judas Maccabaeus shortened is just Judas.

BIRON

A kissing ⁴⁴ traitor. What do you say, does that prove you're Judas?

⁴⁴ Judas betrayed Christ with a kiss.

HOLOFERNES

I am Judas—

DUMAIN

Shame on you Judas.

HOLOFERNES

What do you mean sir?

BOYET

To make Judas hang himself.

HOLOFERNES

You should hang yourself first sir, as you are my elder.

BIRON

A nice line, as Judas was hanged on an elder tree.

HOLOFERNES

I will not allow my face to show I am upset.

BIRON

Because you have no face.

HOLOFERNES

What is this?

BOYET

A grotesque ⁴⁵ head.

⁴⁵ A "cittern" was a kind of guitar which was meant to have a grotesquely carved head.

DUMAIN

Or the head of a hairpin ⁴⁶, elaborately decorated.

⁴⁶ A bodkin was a long hairpin.

BIRON

The face of death on a ring ⁴⁷.

⁴⁷ A skull may have been worn on a ring as a remembrance and reminder of death.

LONGAVILLE

The face of an old Roman coin, that can barely be seen because it has worn away.

BOYET

The knob at the end of Caesar's sword.

DUMAIN

The carved-bone ⁴⁸ face on a flask.

⁴⁸ A "flask" was a soldier's container for gunpowder, made of horn or bone.

BIRON

The face of Saint George in profile on a brooch.

DUMAIN

Yes, and a brooch made of lead at that.

BIRON

Ay, and worn in the cap of a tooth-drawer.
And now forward; for we have put thee in countenance.

HOLOFERNES

685 You have put me out of countenance.

BIRON

False; we have given thee faces.

HOLOFERNES

But you have out-faced them all.

BIRON

An thou wert a lion, we would do so.

BOYET

Therefore, as he is an ass, let him go.
690 And so adieu, sweet Jude! nay, why dost thou stay?

DUMAIN

For the latter end of his name.

BIRON

For the ass to the Jude; give it him:--Jud-as, away!

HOLOFERNES

This is not generous, not gentle, not humble.

BOYET

695 A light for Monsieur Judas! it grows dark, he may
stumble.

HOLOFERNES retires

PRINCESS

Alas, poor Maccabaeus, how hath he been baited!

Enter DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO, for Hector

BIRON

Hide thy head, Achilles: here comes Hector in arms.

DUMAIN

700 Though my mocks come home by me, I will now be merry.

FERDINAND

Hector was but a Trojan in respect of this.

BOYET

But is this Hector?

FERDINAND

I think Hector was not so clean-timbered.

LONGAVILLE

His leg is too big for Hector's.

DUMAIN

705 More calf, certain.

BIRON

Yes, and one that is worn in the cap of a dentist⁴⁹. Now
let's carry on, for we have stopped you from feeling
embarrassed.

HOLOFERNES

Actually you have made me feel quite embarrassed and my
face is blushing.

BIRON

Lies! Since we've given you loads of faces to choose from!

HOLOFERNES

But you have made them all shameful things.

BIRON

Even if you were a lion, we would do the same.

BOYET

Yet, he's an ass⁵⁰, so let him go. And so goodbye, sweet
Jude! Why are you staying here?

DUMAIN

To hear the rest of his name.

BIRON

Give the ass to the Jude, give it to him—Jude-ass away!

HOLOFERNES

That is not kind, not nice, not worthy.

BOYET

Get Monsieur Judas a light⁵¹! It is getting dark, he might
stumble⁵².

HOLOFERNES leaves.

PRINCESS

Oh, poor Maccabaeus, how he's been mocked!

Enter DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO, as Hector.

BIRON

Achilles you'd better hide, here comes Hector with
weapons.

DUMAIN

Although I'll pay for my mockery later, I'll keep having fun
for now.

FERDINAND

Hector was a Trojan who did the same.

BOYET

But is this Hector?

FERDINAND

I don't think Hector was that well-built.

LONGAVILLE

His leg is too big to be Hector's.

DUMAIN

He has more calf, that's for certain.

⁴⁹ Brooches worn in caps could indicate the wearer's profession. The dentist's low status could be shown by the lead brooch.

⁵⁰ In Aesop's fable the ass passed himself off as a lion by wearing his skin; this is being used to represent Holofernes playing Judas.

⁵¹ A possible reference to the Judas candlestick that was used in religion ceremonies at Easter.

⁵² Pun on physically stumbling over, and stumbling over his lines.

BOYET

No; he is best endued in the small.

BIRON

This cannot be Hector.

DUMAIN

He's a god or a painter; for he makes faces.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

710 The armipotent Mars, of lances the almighty,
Gave Hector a gift,--

DUMAIN

A gilt nutmeg.

BIRON

A lemon.

LONGAVILLE

Stuck with cloves.

DUMAIN

No, cloven.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

715 Peace!--
The armipotent Mars, of lances the almighty
Gave Hector a gift, the heir of Ilion;
A man so breathed, that certain he would fight; yea
From morn till night, out of his pavilion.
720 I am that flower,--

DUMAIN

That mint.

LONGAVILLE

That columbine.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Sweet Lord Longaville, rein thy tongue.

LONGAVILLE

725 I must rather give it the rein, for it runs against
Hector.

DUMAIN

Ay, and Hector's a greyhound.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

730 The sweet war-man is dead and rotten; sweet chucks,
beat not the bones of the buried: when he breathed,
he was a man. But I will forward with my device.

To the PRINCESS

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Sweet royalty, bestow on me the sense of hearing.

PRINCESS

Speak, brave Hector: we are much delighted.

BOYET

No actually, he's best endowed just below the calf ⁵³.

⁵³ The "small" was the small or thin part of the leg below the calf.

BIRON

This cannot be Hector.

DUMAIN

He must be either a god or a painter, because he creates some interesting faces.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Mars, mighty in arms, with his powerful spears, gave Hector a gift.

DUMAIN

Was it a nutmeg covered in the yolk of an egg? ⁵⁴

⁵⁴ This was a common gift for lovers to give to each other, here mocking the relationship between Mars and Hector.

BIRON

Was it a lemon?

LONGAVILLE

Filled with garlic?

DUMAIN

No, split down the middle.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Quiet! Mars, mighty in arms, with his powerful spears, gave Hector, the heir of Troy, a gift. He was so strong that he could fight you from morning until evening in front of his tent. I am that flower--

DUMAIN

A mint maybe.

LONGAVILLE

A columbine ⁵⁵.

⁵⁵ A common flower, here mocking Armado's nomination of himself as Hector and thus a flower.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Sweet Lord Longaville, please watch your tongue.

LONGAVILLE

I'm afraid I'm going to have to let it run free, since it runs after Hector.

DUMAIN

Yes, and Hector was very fast.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

The sweet warrior is long dead and gone but sweet people, do not speak badly about the dead. When he breathed he was a man. I will continue with my performance.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

[To the PRINCESS] Sweet royalty, please listen to what I have to say.

PRINCESS

Speak, brave Hector, we are delighted to hear what you have to say.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

I do adore thy sweet grace's slipper.

BOYET

735 *[Aside to DUMAIN]* Loves her by the foot,--

DUMAIN

[Aside to BOYET] He may not by the yard.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

This Hector far surmounted Hannibal,--

COSTARD

The party is gone, fellow Hector, she is gone; she is two months on her way.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

740 What meanest thou?

COSTARD

Faith, unless you play the honest Trojan, the poor wench is cast away: she's quick; the child brags in her belly already: tis yours.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

745 Dost thou infamozize me among potentates? thou shalt die.

COSTARD

Then shall Hector be whipped for Jaquenetta that is quick by him and hanged for Pompey that is dead by him.

DUMAIN

Most rare Pompey!

BOYET

750 Renowned Pompey!

BIRON

Greater than great, great, great, great Pompey!
Pompey the Huge!

DUMAIN

Hector trembles.

BIRON

755 Pompey is moved. More Ates, more Ates! stir them on! stir them on!

DUMAIN

Hector will challenge him.

BIRON

Ay, if a' have no man's blood in's belly than will sup a flea.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

By the north pole, I do challenge thee.

COSTARD

760 I will not fight with a pole, like a northern man: I'll slash; I'll do it by the sword. I bepray you, let me borrow my arms again.

DUMAIN

Room for the incensed Worthies!

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

I love your sweet grace's shoe.

BOYET

[So only DUMAIN can hear] He loves her foot.

DUMAIN

[So only BOYET can hear] He isn't allowed to love three feet ⁵⁶ ⁵⁶ A yard is the equivalent of three feet. The impression is also that this could be seen to represent a penis as well.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

This Hector was even greater than Hannibal.

COSTARD

Fellow Hector she is pregnant, she is pregnant! She is two months along!

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

What do you mean?

COSTARD

Faith, unless you are actually Hector, the poor girl is ruined, she is pregnant and the child is already strutting around in her belly. It's yours.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Are you trying to ruin me in front of these powerful people? You shall die for it.

COSTARD

Hector will have to be whipped as well because Jaquenetta is pregnant by him and then he will have to be hanged for killing me, Pompey.

DUMAIN

Well said Pompey!

BOYET

Renowned Pompey!

BIRON

You are even greater than great, great, great, great Pompey!
You are now Pompey the Huge!

DUMAIN

Hector trembles.

BIRON

Pompey is moved. More conflict ⁵⁷, more conflict, encourage them! Encourage them!

⁵⁷ Ates was the goddess of strife and discord, of arguments.

DUMAIN

Hector will challenge him.

BIRON

Yes, but he won't be able to hurt Pompey enough to even draw enough blood to feed a flea.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

I challenge you by the north pole.

COSTARD

I'm not going to fight you with a spear, like a northern man ⁵⁸ ⁵⁸ Costard uses the rhetorical device antanacsis, using two contrasting meanings of the same word to form a pun; in this case, the "north pole" becomes a pole used by a Northerner.

DUMAIN

Make room for the angry Worthies!

COSTARD

I'll do it in my shirt.

DUMAIN

765 Most resolute Pompey!

MOTH

Master, let me take you a buttonhole lower. Do you not see Pompey is uncasing for the combat? What mean you? You will lose your reputation.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

770 Gentlemen and soldiers, pardon me; I will not combat in my shirt.

DUMAIN

You may not deny it: Pompey hath made the challenge.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Sweet bloods, I both may and will.

BIRON

What reason have you for't?

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

775 The naked truth of it is, I have no shirt; I go woolward for penance.

BOYET

True, and it was enjoined him in Rome for want of linen: since when, I'll be sworn, he wore none but a dishclout of Jaquenetta's, and that a' wears next his heart for a favour.

780

Enter MERCADE

MERCADE

God save you, madam!

PRINCESS

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

MERCADE

785 I am sorry, madam; for the news I bring
Is heavy in my tongue. The king your father--

PRINCESS

Dead, for my life!

MERCADE

Even so; my tale is told.

BIRON

Worthies, away! the scene begins to cloud.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

790 For mine own part, I breathe free breath. I have
seen the day of wrong through the little hole of
discretion, and I will right myself like a soldier.

Exeunt Worthies

FERDINAND

How fares your majesty?

PRINCESS

Boyet, prepare; I will away tonight.

FERDINAND

795 Madam, not so; I do beseech you, stay.

COSTARD

I'll fight just in my shirt.

DUMAIN

Pompey is so determined!

MOTH

Master, I'll help you to take off your clothes. Do you not see that Pompey is undressing ready to fight you? What are you doing? You will ruin your reputation if you don't.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Gentlemen and soldiers, excuse me. I will not fight him now in my shirt.

DUMAIN

You can't refuse, Pompey has challenged you.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Fiery men, I both can and I will.

BIRON

What reason do you have for doing that?

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

The real truth of it is, I'm not wearing a shirt. I wear wool against my bare skin as punishment for my behavior.

BOYET

True, and it was imposed on him in Rome because there was a lack of linen. Since then he hasn't worn anything except a dishcloth of Jaquenetta's which he wears next to his heart as a gift.

Enter MERCADE.

MERCADE

God save you, madam!

PRINCESS

Welcome Mercade, but you have interrupted our entertainment.

MERCADE

I am sorry madam, but the news I bring is hard to report. The king your father--

PRINCESS

Is dead, I know it!

MERCADE

It is true, that's what I came here to say.

BIRON

Worthies, leave! The scene has become darker.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

For my own part I am relieved that I can breathe the air freely. I have seen how you can be humiliated for doing bad things, and I am going to punish myself like a soldier.

The Worthies exit.

FERDINAND

How are you, your majesty?

PRINCESS

Boyet, prepare our things, we will leave tonight.

FERDINAND

Madam, don't leave, I ask you to stay.

PRINCESS

Prepare, I say. I thank you, gracious lords,
For all your fair endeavors; and entreat,
Out of a new-sad soul, that you vouchsafe

800 The liberal opposition of our spirits,
If over-boldly we have borne ourselves
In the converse of breath: your gentleness
Was guilty of it. Farewell worthy lord!
A heavy heart bears not a nimble tongue:
805 Excuse me so, coming too short of thanks
For my great suit so easily obtain'd.

FERDINAND

The extreme parts of time extremely forms
All causes to the purpose of his speed,
And often at his very loose decides

810 That which long process could not arbitrate:
And though the mourning brow of progeny
Forbid the smiling courtesy of love
The holy suit which fain it would convince,
Yet, since love's argument was first on foot,
815 Let not the cloud of sorrow justle it
From what it purposed; since, to wail friends lost
Is not by much so wholesome-profitable
As to rejoice at friends but newly found.

PRINCESS

I understand you not: my griefs are double.

BIRON

820 Honest plain words best pierce the ear of grief;
And by these badges understand the king.
For your fair sakes have we neglected time,
Play'd foul play with our oaths: your beauty, ladies,
Hath much deform'd us, fashioning our humours
825 Even to the opposed end of our intents:
And what in us hath seem'd ridiculous,--
As love is full of unbefitting strains,
All wanton as a child, skipping and vain,
Form'd by the eye and therefore, like the eye,
830 Full of strange shapes, of habits and of forms,
Varying in subjects as the eye doth roll
To every varied object in his glance:
Which parti-coated presence of loose love
Put on by us, if, in your heavenly eyes,
835 Have misbecomed our oaths and gravities,
Those heavenly eyes, that look into these faults,
Suggested us to make. Therefore, ladies,
Our love being yours, the error that love makes
Is likewise yours: we to ourselves prove false,
840 By being once false for ever 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.

PRINCESS

We have received your letters full of love;
845 Your favours, the ambassadors of love;
And, in our maiden council, rated them
At courtship, pleasant jest and courtesy,
As bombast and as lining to the time:
But more devout than this in our respects
850 Have we not been; and therefore met your loves
In their own fashion, like a merriment.

DUMAIN

Our letters, madam, show'd much more than jest.

LONGAVILLE

So did our looks.

ROSALINE

We did not quote them so.

PRINCESS

Prepare our things, I said. Thank you, kind lords, for
everything that you have done. I hope, now that I am sad,
that you clever men promise to excuse and overlook the
great jokes we have played on you. If we have acted too
boldly when speaking to you, then your kindness was
responsible for it. Goodbye my worthy lord! A heavy heart
does not lead to a witty tongue, I apologize for not being
able to thank you enough due to a lack of time.

FERDINAND

Having so little time left makes a person have to act quickly,
and often in these final moments he decides the things that
he has debated over for a long time. Even though the sad
face of a child that has lost her father doesn't allow you to
love, and marriage hardly seems like the first thing on your
mind. Yet, since love was just getting started, don't let your
sadness push it aside and ignore it, since it is just as
important to cry for people we have lost, as it is to rejoice at
people we have found.

PRINCESS

I don't understand you, I am grieving too much.

BIRON

Honest, simple words are a better choice when someone is
grieving, so I will try to explain to you what the King means.
For you, my beautiful ladies, we didn't pay attention to time
and we broke our oaths without thinking. Your beauty,
ladies, has changed us, making us act in ways that we never
expected. The things we have done seem ridiculous,
because love makes people act in ridiculous ways, like a
foolish child skipping around. Love is made by the eye, and
so, like an eye, it is full of strange shapes, strange behavior
and strange appearances, changing from one person to
another, just like an eye looks from one thing to another. It
was your heavenly eyes that led us to forget our oaths and
promises in the first place, and for which we behaved in
such a silly way, because we needed to love you. Therefore
ladies, because our love belongs to you, you are partly to
blame for the mistakes we have made. We too are liars, for
going against one vow to try to make another vow for love,
for you, our beautiful ladies. Even though we broke our
vows, and that was a sin, we have redeemed ourselves and
found our virtue again in you.

PRINCESS

We have received your love letter, your presents, your
messengers of love. As a group of young women, we
thought that they were no more than flirting, an enjoyable
game and a way to be polite, an extra touch to our visit.
But we haven't taken this whole business any more
seriously than this, and therefore played along with your
jokes like you did with ours, like it was a game.

DUMAIN


Our letters madam, were much more than just jokes.

LONGAVILLE

Our looks were too.

ROSALINE

We didn't fully notice them.

 A "bombast" was a type of loose texture used to bulk up dresses; the Princess here indicates that she viewed their courtship and something to fill up their time at court.

FERDINAND

855 Now, at the latest minute of the hour,
Grant us your loves.

PRINCESS

A time, methinks, too short
To make a world-without-end bargain in.
No, no, my lord, your grace is perjured much,
860 Full of dear guiltiness; and therefore this:
If for my love, as there is no such cause,
You will do aught, this shall you do for me:
Your oath I will not trust; but go with speed
To some forlorn and naked hermitage,
865 Remote from all the pleasures of the world;
There stay until the twelve celestial signs
Have brought about the annual reckoning.
If this austere insociable life
Change not your offer made in heat of blood;
870 If frosts and fasts, hard lodging and thin weeds
Nip not the gaudy blossoms of your love,
But that it bear this trial and last love;
Then, at the expiration of the year,
Come challenge me, challenge me by these deserts,
875 And, by this virgin palm now kissing thine
I will be thine; and till that instant shut
My woeful self up in a mourning house,
Raining the tears of lamentation
For the remembrance of my father's death.
880 If this thou do deny, let our hands part,
Neither entitled in the other's heart.

FERDINAND

If this, or more than this, I would deny,
To flatter up these powers of mine with rest,
The sudden hand of death close up mine eye!
885 Hence ever then my heart is in thy breast.

DUMAIN

But what to me, my love? but what to me? A wife?

KATHARINE

A beard, fair health, and honesty;
With three-fold love I wish you all these three.

DUMAIN

O, shall I say, I thank you, gentle wife?

KATHARINE

890 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, I'll give you some.

DUMAIN

I'll serve thee true and faithfully till then.

KATHARINE

895 Yet swear not, lest ye be forsworn again.

LONGAVILLE

What says Maria?

MARIA

At the twelvemonth's end
I'll change my black gown for a faithful friend.

LONGAVILLE

I'll stay with patience; but the time is long.

FERDINAND

Now in this final moment, give us your loves.

PRINCESS

This time is too short to make a decision which is going to last forever. No, no my lord, you have broken your oath and are now full of guilt. I will say this though, if you will do anything for my love, though I don't see why you would, then do this for me. I won't trust your oath, but go quickly to some abandoned and unfurnished place, far away from all the pleasures of this world and stay there until a year has gone by and you have made up for what you have done. If this difficult and lonely lifestyle doesn't change the loving offer you have just made me; if the cold and the lack of food, difficult conditions and bad clothes doesn't stop your love from growing, then come and find me at the end of this year, and show me that your love has stayed strong. Come and find me to get what you deserve to have, and by the hand I now kiss, I will be yours. Until then I am going to hide myself away in mourning and weep and cry about the death of my father. If you can't agree to this, let's leave it now, and agree to never be together.

FERDINAND

If I would not agree to this, just because it will be difficult, then I don't even deserve to live! Therefore, I will love you faithfully until then.

DUMAIN

But what's there for me, my love? What's there for me? A wife?

KATHARINE

A beard ⁶⁰, good health and honesty. With three lots of my love, I wish you all three of these things.

⁶⁰ "A beard" implies that Dumain needs to grow up and become a man (grow a beard.)

DUMAIN

Then, can I say, I thank you, my sweet wife?

KATHARINE

Not now my lord. For just over a year I will not listen to anything that men say to me in love. When the King comes to see my lady, come with him—if I have love in my heart, you can have some of it.

DUMAIN

I'll be faithful to you and wait until then.

KATHARINE

Don't swear to that, I would hate for you to break another oath.

LONGAVILLE

What does Maria say?

MARIA

After twelve months I will change out of my black gown, for a faithful lover.

LONGAVILLE

I'll wait with patience, but it's a long time.

MARIA

900 The liker you; few taller are so young.

BIRON

Studies my lady? mistress, look on me;
Behold the window of my heart, mine eye,
What humble suit attends thy answer there:
Impose some service on me for thy love.

ROSALINE

905 Oft have I heard of you, my Lord Biron,
Before I saw you; and the world's large tongue
Proclaims you for a man replete with flocks,
Full of comparisons and wounding flouts,
Which you on all estates will execute
910 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
915 Visit the speechless sick and still converse
With groaning wretches; and your task shall be,
With all the fierce endeavor of your wit
To enforce the pained impotent to smile.

BIRON

920 To move wild laughter in the throat of death?
It cannot be; it is impossible:
Mirth cannot move a soul in agony.

ROSALINE

Why, that's the way to choke a gibing spirit,
Whose influence is begot of that loose grace
Which shallow laughing hearers give to fools:
925 A jest's prosperity lies in the ear
Of him that hears it, never in the tongue
Of him that makes it: then, if sickly ears,
Deaf'd with the clamours of their own dear groans,
Will hear your idle scorns, continue then,
930 And I will have you and that fault withal;
But if they will not, throw away that spirit,
And I shall find you empty of that fault,
Right joyful of your reformation.

BIRON

935 A twelvemonth! well; befall what will befall,
I'll jest a twelvemonth in an hospital.

PRINCESS

[To FERDINAND] Ay, sweet my lord; and so I take my
leave.

FERDINAND

No, madam; we will bring you on your way.

BIRON

940 Our wooing doth not end like an old play;
Jack hath not Jill: these ladies' courtesy
Might well have made our sport a comedy.

FERDINAND

Come, sir, it wants a twelvemonth and a day,
And then 'twill end.

BIRON

945 That's too long for a play.

Re-enter DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Sweet majesty, vouchsafe me,--

MARIA

That's more like you, you may be tall but you're also young.

BIRON

Are you deep in thought my lady? Mistress, look at me and
see the love that I have for you in my eyes. What do I have
to do to get an answer, tell me to do something so that you
can love me.

ROSALINE

I have heard a lot about you, my Lord Biron, and before I
met you, all I knew is what I had heard from rumors and
stories. People say that you are a man who always mocks
people, you are full of satire and hurtful jokes which you
use on everyone you meet to destroy them with your wit. To
get rid of this bitterness from your clever mind, and in doing
so to win me, if that's what you want, as there is no other
way we will be together, you must spend the next year
visiting mutes and sick people and speak with ill women.
Your task is to use all of the power of your wit to try to make
helpless and weak people laugh.

BIRON

To make people laugh when they are about to die? That's
impossible I tell you, hilarity cannot affect a person who is
in pain.

ROSALINE

Why, that's how to get rid of your sarcastic nature, which
seems to have the same charm as people imagine fools to
have. The success of a joke comes with how people hear it,
not in how the person says it. So, if sick ears, so fed up of
the sounds of their own awful groans, will listen to your
pointless jokes, carry on and you will win my love, jokes
and all. But if they won't listen to you, then get rid of your
sarcasm, and I will think you have been cured and be
pleased about how you have changed.

BIRON

Twelve months! Okay well maybe if I get injured, I could
spend the year in a hospital waiting for you.

PRINCESS

[To FERDINAND] Yes my lord, and so I will go.

FERDINAND

No madam, we will accompany you when you leave.

BIRON

Our wooing hasn't ended like you'd expect a play to
end—Jack doesn't have Jill ⁶¹. The politeness of these
ladies could have easily led to a happy ending for us.

⁶¹ Shakespeare is likely referencing the traditional English nursery rhyme, "Jack and Jill", to indicate a romantically-inclined couple.

FERDINAND

Come sir, it is only for just over a year, and then it will be
over.

BIRON

That's too long for a play.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO re-enters.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Your majesty, hear what I have to say.

PRINCESS

Was not that Hector?

DUMAIN

The worthy knight of Troy.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

950 I will kiss thy royal finger, and take leave. I am
a votary; I have vowed to Jaquenetta to hold the
plough for her sweet love three years. But, most
esteemed greatness, will you hear the dialogue that
the two learned men have compiled in praise of the
owl and the cuckoo? It should have followed in the
955 end of our show.

FERDINAND

Call them forth quickly; we will do so.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Holla! approach.

Re-enter HOLOFERNES, SIR NATHANIEL, MOTH, COSTARD, and others

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

960 This side is Hiems, Winter, this Ver, the Spring;
the one maintained by the owl, the other by the
cuckoo. Ver, begin.

*THE SONG***DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO**

SPRING.

965 When daisies pied and violets blue
And lady-smocks all silver-white
And cuckoo-buds of yellow hue
Do paint the meadows with delight,
The cuckoo then, on every tree,
Mocks married men; for thus sings he, Cuckoo;
970 Cuckoo, cuckoo: O word of fear,
Unpleasing to a married ear!
When shepherds pipe on oaten straws
And merry larks are ploughmen's clocks,
When turtles tread, and rooks, and daws,
975 And maidens bleach their summer smocks
The cuckoo then, on every tree,
Mocks married men; for thus sings he, Cuckoo;
Cuckoo, cuckoo: O word of fear,
Unpleasing to a married ear!

WINTER.

When icicles hang by the wall
And Dick the shepherd blows his nail
And Tom bears logs into the hall
And milk comes frozen home in pail,
When blood is nipp'd 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 crabs hiss in the bowl,
Then nightly sings the staring owl, Tu-whit;
Tu-who, a merry note,
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

PRINCESS

Wasn't he Hector?

DUMAIN

The worthy knight of Troy.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

I will kiss your royal finger and leave. I will stick to my vows.
I have promised Jaquenetta that I will be a farmer for three
years in order to win her love. But, your highness, would
you like to hear the dialogue that the two clever men
created about the owl and the cuckoo? It should have come
at the end of the show.

FERDINAND

Call them here quickly, we will hear it.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Hey! Come here.

*HOLOFERNES, SIR NATHANIEL, MOTH, COSTARD and others
re-enter.*

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

This side is Winter, this side is Spring. The first half will be
performed by the owl, the other by the cuckoo. Spring,
begin.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Spring.

When there are colorful daisies and blue violets
And silver-white cuckoo flowers
And yellow cuckoo-buds
Covering the meadows so wonderfully,
The cuckoo then, on every tree,
Mocks married men, for he sings "Cuckoo!"⁶²
"Cuckoo, cuckoo!" Oh what a terrifying word,
That scares the ears of married people!

When shepherds play songs on straws made out of oat,
And cheerful birds wake ploughmen up in the morning.
When turtle-doves mate, along with rooks and jackdaws,
And young girls dye their dresses ready for the summer.
The cuckoo then, on every tree,
Mocks married men, for her sings "Cuckoo"⁶³!
"Cuckoo, cuckoo!" Oh what a terrifying word,
That scares the ears of married people!

Winter.

When icicles hang from the ceiling,
Dick the shepherd blows on his hands to warm them up,
Tom carries logs into the hall,
And the milk arrives already frozen.
When blood is painfully affected by the cold, and
everywhere is muddy,
Then every night the staring owl sings, "Tu-whit,
Tu-who," a merry note,
While sweaty Joan keeps stirring the pot.

When the wind blows incredibly loudly,
When there is so much coughing in church that you
can't hear the sermon,
When birds sit on the snow, like hens on their eggs,
And Marian's nose is red raw.
When roasted crab-apples hiss in a bowl of ale,
Then every night the staring owl sings, "Tu-whit,
Tu-who," a merry note,
While sweaty Joan keeps stirring the pot.

⁶² This joke is playing into the similarity between the words "cuckoo" and "cuckold," a married man whose wife is being unfaithful.

⁶³ This joke is playing into the similarity between the word 'cuckoo' and 'cuckold', a married man whose wife is being unfaithful.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

980 The words of Mercury are harsh after the songs of Apollo. You that way: we this way.

Exeunt

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO

It is jarring to speak any words ⁶⁴ after a song like that. You go this way, we will go this way ⁶⁵.

⁶⁴ Mercury, the messenger god, was associated with eloquence.

⁶⁵ These final lines could be a reference to the audience itself, or the ladies, or the actors.

They exit.

How to Cite

To cite this Shakescleare translation:

MLA

Strange, Lani. "Love's Labor's Lost: A Shakescleare Translation." LitCharts. LitCharts LLC, 19 May 2017. Web. 14 Sep 2017.

Chicago Manual

Strange, Lani. "Love's Labor's Lost: A Shakescleare Translation." LitCharts LLC, May 19, 2017. Retrieved September 14, 2017. <http://www.litcharts.com/lit/loves-labors-lost>.