Love's Labour's Lost

William Shakespeare

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LOVE’S LABOUR’S LOST

by William Shakespeare

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Dramatis Personæ

KING of Navarre, also known as Ferdinand

BEROWNE, Lord attending on the King
LONGAVILLE, Lord attending on the King
DUMAINE, Lord attending on the King

The PRINCESS of France

ROSALINE, Lady attending on the Princess
MARIA, Lady attending on the Princess
KATHARINE, Lady attending on the Princess
BOYET, Lord attending on the Princess

Don Adriano de ARMADO, a fantastical Spaniard
MOTH, Page to Armado
JAQUENETTA, a country wench
COSTARD, a Clown
DULL, a Constable
HOLOFERNES, a Schoolmaster
Sir NATHANIEL, a Curate
A FORESTER
MARCADÉ, a messenger from France

Lords, Blackamoors, Officers and Others, Attendants on the King and Princess.

SCENE: Navarre

ACT I

SCENE I. The King of Navarre’s park

Enter Ferdinand, King of Navarre, Berowne, Longaville and Dumaine.

KING.
Let fame, that all hunt after in their lives,
Live registered upon our brazen tombs,
And then grace us in the disgrace of death;

When, spite of cormorant devouring time,
Th’ endeavour 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
And the huge army of the world’s desires,
Our late edict shall strongly stand in force.
Navarre shall be the wonder of the world;
Our court shall be a little academe,
Still and contemplative in living art.
You three, Berowne, Dumaine 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 passed, and now subscribe your names,
That his own hand may strike his honour down
That violates the smallest branch herein.
If you are armed 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.
The mind shall banquet, though the body pine.
Fat paunches have lean pates, and dainty bits
Make rich the ribs, but bankrupt quite the wits.

[_He signs._]

DUMAINE.

My loving lord, Dumaine is mortified.
The grosser manner of these world's delights
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.

[_He signs._]

BEROWNE.
I can but say their protestation over.
So much, dear liege, I have already sworn,
That is, to live and study here three years.
But there are other strict observances:
As not to see a woman in that term,
Which I hope well is not enrolled there;
And one day in a week to touch no food,
And but one meal on every day beside,
The which I hope is not 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,
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.

KING. Your oath is passed to pass away from these.

BEROWNE.
Let me say no, my liege, an if you please.

I only swore to study with your Grace
And stay here in your court for three years' space.

LONGAVILLE. You swore to that, Berowne, and to the rest.

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

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

BEROWNE. Things hid and barred, you mean, from common sense?

KING. Ay, that is study's god-like recompense.

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

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

BEROWNE.

Why, all delights are vain, but that most vain
Which, with pain purchased, doth inherit pain:
As painfully to pore upon a book
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.
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,
That will not be deep-searched 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,
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 naught but fame,
And every godfather can give a name.

KING. How well he's read, to reason against reading.

DUMAINE. Proceeded well, to stop all good proceeding.

LONGAVILLE. He weeds the corn, and still lets grow the weeding.

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

DUMAINE. How follows that?

BEROWNE. Fit in his place and time.

DUMAINE. In reason nothing.

BEROWNE. Something then in rhyme.

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

BEROWNE.
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 shows,
But like of each thing that in season grows.
So you, to study now it is too late,
Climb o'er the house to unlock the little gate.

KING. Well, sit you out. Go home, Berowne. Adieu.

BEROWNE.
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 strictest decrees I'll write my name.

KING. How well this yielding rescues thee from shame.

BEROWNE.
[_Reads_.] _Item, That no woman shall come within a mile of my court._
Hath this been proclaimed?

LONGAVILLE. Four days ago.

BEROWNE.
Let’s see the penalty. [_Reads_.] _On pain of losing her tongue._ Who devised this penalty?

LONGAVILLE. Marry, that did I.

BEROWNE. Sweet lord, and why?

LONGAVILLE. To fright them hence with that dread penalty.

BEROWNE.
A dangerous law against gentility.
[_Reads_.] _Item, If any man be seen to talk with a woman within the term of three years, he shall endure such public shame as the rest of the court can possibly devise._
This article, my liege, yourself must break,
For well you know here comes in embassy
The French King’s daughter, with yourself to speak—
A mild of grace and complete majesty—
About surrender up of Aquitaine
To her decrepit, sick, and bedrid father.
Therefore this article is made in vain,
Or vainly comes th’ admired Princess hither.

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