

The Two Noble Kinsmen by William Shakespeare

M/M BS, S&S

III.vi

THE TWO NOBLE KINSMEN

If it but hold, I kill him with; 'tis justice. 15
So, love and fortune for me!

Enter Arcite with armors and swords.

O, good morrow.

ARCITE.

Good morrow, noble kinsman.

PALAMON.

I have put you

To too much pains, sir.

ARCITE.

That too much, fair cousin,

Is but a debt to honor, and my duty.

PALAMON.

Would you were so in all, sir: I could wish ye 20
As kind a kinsman, as you force me find
A beneficial foe, that my embraces
Might thank ye, not my blows.

ARCITE.

I shall think either,

Well done, a noble recompense.

PALAMON.

Then I shall quit you.

ARCITE.

Defy me in these fair terms, and you show 25
More than a mistress to me: no more anger,
As you love anything that's honorable.
We were not bred to talk, man; when we are arm'd
And both upon our guards, then let our fury,
Like meeting of two tides, fly strongly from us; 30
And then to whom the birthright of this beauty
Truly pertains—without upbraidings, scorns,
Despisings of our persons and such poutings,
Fitter for girls and schoolboys—will be seen,
And quickly, yours or mine. Will't please you arm, sir? 35
Or, if you feel yourself not fitting yet
And furnish'd with your old strength, I'll stay, cousin,
And every day discourse you into health,
As I am spar'd. Your person I am friends with,
And I could wish I had not said I lov'd her, 40

16.S.D.] *Q prints after morrow.*

24. *quit*] repay.

37. *stay*] wait.

38. *discourse*] talk.

THE TWO NOBLE KINSMEN

III.vi

Though I had died; but loving such a lady,
And justifying my love, I must not fly from't.

PALAMON.

Arcite, thou art so brave an enemy

That no man but thy cousin's fit to kill thee.

I am well and lusty: choose your arms.

ARCITE.

Choose you, sir. 45

PALAMON.

Wilt thou exceed in all, or dost thou do it

To make me spare thee?

ARCITE.

If you think so, cousin,

You are deceived, for as I am a soldier,

I will not spare you.

PALAMON.

That's well said.

ARCITE.

You'll find it.

PALAMON.

Then, as I am an honest man, and love

With all the justice of affection,

I'll pay thee soundly. This I'll take. [*Chooses armor.*]

ARCITE.

That's mine, then.

I'll arm you first.

PALAMON.

Do. Pray thee tell me, cousin,

Where got'st thou this good armor?

ARCITE.

'Tis the duke's,

And to say true, I stole it. Do I pinch you?

PALAMON.

No. 55

ARCITE.

Is't not too heavy?

PALAMON.

I have worn a lighter,

But I shall make it serve.

ARCITE.

I'll buckle't close.

PALAMON.

By any means.

ARCITE.

You care not for a grand-guard?

PALAMON.

No, no, we'll use no horses. I perceive

58. *grand-guard*] an extra plate of armor to protect the left shoulder and side in jousting.

You would fain be at that fight.
 ARCITE. I am indifferent. 60
 PALAMON.
 Faith, so am I. Good cousin, thrust the buckle
 Through far enough.
 ARCITE. I warrant you.
 PALAMON. My casque now.
 ARCITE.
 Will you fight bare-arm'd?
 PALAMON. We shall be the nimbler.
 ARCITE.
 But use your gauntlets, though; those are o'th' least.
 Prithee take mine, good cousin.
 PALAMON. Thank you, Arcite. 65
 How do I look? Am I fall'n much away?
 ARCITE.
 Faith, very little; love has us'd you kindly.
 PALAMON.
 I'll warrant thee, I'll strike home.
 ARCITE. Do, and spare not:
 I'll give you cause, sweet cousin.
 PALAMON. Now to you, sir.
 Methinks this armor's very like that, Arcite, 70
 Thou wor'st that day the three kings fell, but lighter.
 ARCITE.
 That was a very good one; and that day,
 I well remember, you outdid me, cousin;
 I never saw such valor. When you charg'd
 Upon the left wing of the enemy, 75
 I spurr'd hard to come up, and under me
 I had a right good horse.
 PALAMON. You had indeed;
 A bright bay, I remember.
 ARCITE. Yes. But all
 Was vainly labor'd in me; you outwent me,
 Nor could my wishes reach you; yet a little 80

60. *that fight*] i.e., on horseback.62. *warrant*] promise.62. *casque*] helmet.

I did by imitation.
 PALAMON. More by virtue;
 You are modest, cousin.
 ARCITE. When I saw you charge first,
 Methought I heard a dreadful clap of thunder
 Break from the troop.
 PALAMON. But still before that flew
 The lightning of your valor. Stay a little, 85
 Is not this piece too strait?
 ARCITE. No, no, 'tis well.
 PALAMON.
 I would have nothing hurt thee but my sword,
 A bruise would be dishonor.
 ARCITE. Now I am perfect.
 PALAMON.
 Stand off, then.
 ARCITE. Take my sword; I hold it better.
 PALAMON.
 I thank ye. No, keep it; your life lies on it. 90
 Here's one, if it but hold, I ask no more
 For all my hopes. My cause and honor guard me!
 ARCITE.
 And me my love!
They bow several ways, then advance and stand.
 Is there aught else to say?
 PALAMON.
 This only, and no more. Thou art mine aunt's son,
 And that blood we desire to shed is mutual; 95
 In me, thine, and in thee, mine: my sword
 Is in my hand, and if thou kill'st me,
 The gods and I forgive thee. If there be
 A place prepar'd for those that sleep in honor,
 I wish his weary soul that falls may win it. 100
 Fight bravely, cousin: give me thy noble hand.

93.S.D.] *Q prints in margin.*86. *strait*] tight.89. *hold it*] think it is.93.S.D. *several*] different.

ARCITE.

Here, Palamon. This hand shall never more
Come near thee with such friendship.

PALAMON.

I commend thee.

ARCITE.

If I fall, curse me, and say I was a coward;
For none but such dare die in these just trials. 105
Once more farewell, my cousin.

PALAMON.

Farewell, Arcite.

Fight. Horns within; they stand.

ARCITE.

Lo, cousin, lo, our folly has undone us.

PALAMON.

Why?

ARCITE.

This is the duke a-hunting, as I told you:
If we be found, we are wretched. O, retire,
For honor's sake and safety, presently 110
Into your bush again. Sir, we shall find
Too many hours to die in; gentle cousin,
If you be seen, you perish instantly
For breaking prison, and I, if you reveal me,
For my contempt: then all the world will scorn us, 115
And say we had a noble difference,
But base disposers of it.

PALAMON.

No, no, cousin,

I will no more be hidden, nor put off
This great adventure to a second trial.
I know your cunning and I know your cause: 120
He that faints now, shame take him! Put thyself
Upon thy present guard—

ARCITE.

You are not mad?

PALAMON.

Or I will make th'advantage of this hour

110. safety] 1750; safely Q.

112. in; gentle cousin,] Colman; in,
gentle Cosen: Q.

106.1. stand] stop.

110. presently] immediately.

116. difference] quarrel.

117. disposers] managers.

Mine own, and what to come shall threaten me
I fear less than my fortune. Know, weak cousin, 125
I love Emilia, and in that I'll bury
Thee and all crosses else.

ARCITE.

Then come what can come,

Thou shalt know, Palamon, I dare as well
Die as discourse or sleep: only this fears me,
The law will have the honor of our ends. 130
Have at thy life!

PALAMON.

Look to thine own well, Arcite!

Fight again. Horns. Enter Theseus, Hippolyta, Emilia, Pirithous, and train.

THESEUS.

What ignorant and mad malicious traitors
Are you, that 'gainst the tenor of my laws
Are making battle, thus like knights appointed,
Without my leave and officers of arms? 135
By Castor, both shall die.

PALAMON.

Hold thy word, Thescus:

We are certainly both traitors, both despisers
Of thee and of thy goodness. I am Palamon,
That cannot love thee, he that broke thy prison—
Think well what that deserves—and this is Arcite. 140
A bolder traitor never trod thy ground,
A falser ne'er seem'd friend; this is the man
Was begg'd and banish'd; this is he contemns thee
And what thou dar'st do, and in this disguise,
Against thy own edict, follows thy sister, 145
That fortunate bright star, the fair Emilia;
Whose servant—if there be a right in seeing
And first bequeathing of the soul to—justly
I am; and, which is more, dares think her his.
This treachery, like a most trusty lover, 150

140. Arcite.] Colman; no punct. in Q. 145. thy own] Dyce; this owne Q.

127. crosses] obstacles.

127. come . . . come] cf. II.iii.17.

134. appointed] armed.

136. By Castor] "In old writings Roman women do not swear by Hercules, nor men by Castor" (Aulus Gellius, cited in C. H. Herford and P. Simpson, *Ben Jonson* [Oxford, 1932], iv.336-337.)