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William Shakespeare
Excerpt
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AS YOU LIKE IT

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The scene: Oliver's house, Duke Frederick's court, and the Forest of Arden

CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

A banished DUKE

FREDERICK, *his brother, and usurper of his dominions*

AMIENS, JAQUES } *lords attending on the banished Duke*

LE BEAU, *a courtier attending upon Frederick*

CHARLES, *wrestler to Frederick*

OLIVER, JAQUES, ORLANDO } *sons of Sir Rowland de Boys*

ADAM, DENNIS } *servants to Oliver*

TOUCHSTONE, *a clown*

SIR OLIVER MARTEXT, *a vicar*

CORIN, SILVIUS } *shepherds*

WILLIAM, *a country fellow, in love with Audrey*

A person representing Hymen

ROSALIND, *daughter to the banished Duke*

CELIA, *daughter to Frederick*

PHEBE, *a shepherdess*

AUDREY, *a country wench*

Lords, pages, foresters, and attendants

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[1. 1.] *An orchard, near Oliver's house*

ORLANDO *and* ADAM

Orlando. As I remember, Adam, it was upon this fashion:† a' bequeathed me by will but poor thousand crowns and, as thou say'st, charged my brother on his blessing to breed me well: and there begins my sadness...My brother Jaques he keeps at school, and report speaks goldenly of his profit: for my part, he keeps me rustically at home, or, to speak more properly, stays me here at home unkept: for call you that 'keeping' for a gentleman of my birth, that differs not from the stalling of an ox? His horses are bred better—for, besides that they are fair with their feeding, they are taught their manage, and to that end riders dearly hired: but I, his brother, gain nothing under him but growth, for the which his animals on his dunghills are as much bound to him as I...Besides this nothing that he so plentifully gives me, the something that nature gave me his countenance seems to take from me: he lets me feed with his hinds, bars me the place of a brother, and, as much as in him lies, mines my gentility with my education.... This is it, Adam, that grieves me—and the spirit of my father, which I think is within me, begins to mutiny against this servitude....I will no longer endure it, though yet I know no wise remedy how to avoid it.

OLIVER *enters the orchard*

Adam. Yonder comes my master, your brother.

Orlando. Go apart, Adam, and thou shalt hear how he will shake me up. [*Adam withdraws a little*

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Oliver. Now, sir! what make you here?

Orlando. Nothing: I am not taught to make any thing.

Oliver. What mar you then, sir?

Orlando. Marry, sir, I am helping you to mar that which God made, a poor unworthy brother of yours, with idleness.

Oliver. Marry, sir, be better employed, and be naught awhile.

Orlando. Shall I keep your hogs and eat husks with them? What prodigal portion have I spent, that I should come to such penury?

Oliver. Know you where you are, sir?

Orlando. O, sir, very well: here in your orchard.

Oliver. Know you before whom, sir?

Orlando. Ay, better than him I am before knows me... I know you are my eldest brother, and in the gentle condition of blood you should so know me...The courtesy of nations allows you my better, in that you are the first-born, but the same tradition takes not away my blood, were there twenty brothers betwixt us: I have as much of my father in me as you, albeit I confess your coming before me is nearer to his reverence.

Oliver. What, boy! [*he strikes him*

Orlando. Come, come, elder brother, you are too young in this. [*he takes him by the throat*

Oliver. Wilt thou lay hands on me, villain?

Orlando. I am no villain: I am the youngest son of Sir Rowland de Boys, he was my father, and he is thrice a villain that says such a father begot villains...Wert thou not my brother, I would not take this hand from thy throat, till this other had pulled out thy tongue for saying so—thou hast railed on thyself. [*Adam comes forward*

Adam. Sweet masters, be patient. For your father's remembrance, be at accord.

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Oliver [*struggles*]. Let me go, I say.

Orlando. I will not till I please: you shall hear me... My father charged you in his will to give me good education: you have trained me like a peasant, obscuring and hiding from me all gentleman-like qualities...The spirit of my father grows strong in me, and I will no longer endure it: therefore allow me such exercises as may become a gentleman, or give me the poor allottery my father left me by testament—with that I will go buy my fortunes. [*he releases him*

Oliver. And what wilt thou do? beg when that is spent? Well, sir, get you in: I will not long be troubled with you: you shall have some part of your 'will.' I pray you, leave me.

Orlando. I will no further offend you than becomes me for my good. [*he turns to go*

Oliver. Get you with him, you old dog.

Adam. Is 'old dog' my reward? Most true, I have lost my teeth in your service...God be with my old master! he would not have spoke such a word.

[*Orlando and Adam depart*

Oliver. Is it even so? begin you to grow upon me? I will physic your rankness, and yet give no thousand crowns neither...Holla, Dennis!

Dennis comes from the house

Dennis. Calls your worship?

Oliver. Was not Charles, the duke's wrestler, here to speak with me?

Dennis. So please you, he is here at the door, and importunes access to you.

Oliver. Call him in...[*Dennis goes*] 'Twill be a good way...and to-morrow the wrestling is.

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Dennis returns, bringing Charles

Charles. Good morrow to your worship.

Oliver. Good Monsieur Charles...[*they salute*] What's the new news at the new court?

Charles. There's no news at the court, sir, but the old news: that is, the old duke is banished by his younger brother the new duke, and three or four loving lords have put themselves into voluntary exile with him, whose lands and revenues enrich the new duke, therefore he gives them good leave to wander.

Oliver. Can you tell if Rosalind, the duke's daughter, be banished with her father?

Charles. O, no; for the duke's daughter, her cousin, so loves her—being ever from their cradles bred together—that she would have followed her exile, or have died to stay behind her...She is at the court, and no less beloved of her uncle than his own daughter—and never two ladies loved as they do.

Oliver. Where will the old duke live?

Charles. They say he is already in the forest of Arden, and a many merry men with him; and there they live like the old Robin Hood of England: they say many young gentlemen flock to him every day, and fleet the time carelessly as they did in the golden world.

Oliver. What, you wrestle to-morrow before the new duke?

Charles. Marry, do I, sir: and I came to acquaint you with a matter...I am given, sir, secretly to understand that your younger brother, Orlando, hath a disposition to come in disguised against me to try a fall: to-morrow, sir, I wrestle for my credit, and he that escapes me without some broken limb shall acquit him well: your brother is but young and tender, and for your love I would be

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loath to foil him, as I must for my own honour if he come in: therefore, out of my love to you, I came hither to acquaint you withal, that either you might stay him from his intendment, or brook such disgrace well as he shall run into, in that it is a thing of his own search, and altogether against my will.

Oliver. Charles, I thank thee for thy love to me, which thou shalt find I will most kindly requite...I had myself notice of my brother's purpose herein, and have by underhand means laboured to dissuade him from it; but he is resolute....I'll tell thee, Charles—it is the stubbornest young fellow of France, full of ambition, an envious emulator of every man's good parts, a secret and villanous contriver against me his natural brother: therefore use thy discretion, I had as lief thou didst break his neck as his finger....And thou wert best look to't; for if thou dost him any slight disgrace, or if he do not mightily grace himself on thee, he will practise against thee by poison, entrap thee by some treacherous device, and never leave thee till he hath ta'en thy life by some indirect means or other: for, I assure thee (and almost with tears I speak it), there is not one so young, and so villanous this day living....I speak but brotherly of him, but should I anatomize him to thee as he is, I must blush and weep, and thou must look pale and wonder.

Charles. I am heartily glad I came hither to you...If he come to-morrow, I'll give him his payment: if ever he go alone again, I'll never wrestle for prize more: and so, God keep your worship!

Oliver. Farewell, good Charles....[*Charles takes his leave*] Now will I stir this gamester: I hope I shall see an end of him; for my soul (yet I know not why) hates nothing more than he...Yet he's gentle, never schooled and yet learned, full of noble device, of all sorts en-

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chantingly beloved, and indeed so much in the heart of the world, and especially of my own people, who best know him, that I am altogether misprized: but it shall not be so long—this wrestler shall clear all...Nothing remains but that I kindle the boy thither, which now I'll go about. [*he goes within*

[1.2.] *A lawn near the palace of Duke Frederick*

ROSALIND and CELIA, seated

Celia. I pray thee, Rosalind, sweet my coz, be merry.

Rosalind. Dear Celia, I show more mirth than I am mistress of, and would you yet I were merrier? Unless you could teach me to forget a banished father, you must not learn me how to remember any extraordinary pleasure.

Celia. Herein, I see, thou lov'st me not with the full weight that I love thee; if my uncle, thy banished father, had banished thy uncle, the duke my father, so thou hadst been still with me, I could have taught my love to take thy father for mine; so wouldst thou, if the truth of thy love to me were so righteously tempered as mine is to thee.

Rosalind. Well, I will forget the condition of my estate, to rejoice in yours.

Celia. You know my father hath no child but I, nor none is like to have; and truly when he dies, thou shalt be his heir: for what he hath taken away from thy father perforce, I will render thee again in affection...by mine honour I will, and when I break that oath, let me turn monster: therefore, my sweet Rose, my dear Rose, be merry.

Rosalind. From henceforth I will, coz, and devise sports...Let me see—what think you of falling in love?

Celia. Marry, I prithee, do, to make sport withal: but love no man in good earnest, nor no further in sport

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neither, than with safety of a pure blush thou mayst in honour come off again.

Rosalind. What shall be our sport then?

Celia. Let us sit and mock the good housewife Fortune from her wheel, that her gifts may henceforth be bestowed equally.

Rosalind. I would we could do so; for her benefits are mightily misplaced, and the bountiful blind woman doth most mistake in her gifts to women.

Celia. 'Tis true, for those that she makes fair she scarce makes honest, and those that she makes honest she makes very ill-favouredly.

Rosalind. Nay, now thou goest from Fortune's office to Nature's: Fortune reigns in gifts of the world, not in the lineaments of Nature.

TOUCHSTONE approaches

Celia. No? When Nature hath made a fair creature, may she not by Fortune fall into the fire? Though Nature hath given us wit to flout at Fortune, hath not Fortune sent in this fool to cut off the argument?

Rosalind. Indeed, there is Fortune too hard for Nature, when Fortune makes Nature's natural the cutter-off of Nature's wit.

Celia. Peradventure this is not Fortune's work neither, but Nature's, who perceiveth our natural wits too dull to reason of such goddesses and hath sent this natural for our whetstone: for always the dulness of the fool is the whetstone of the wits....How now, wit! whither wander you?

Touchstone. Mistress, you must come away to your father.

Celia. Were you made the messenger?

Touchstone. No, by mine honour, but I was bid to come for you.

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Rosalind. Where learned you that oath, fool?

Touchstone. Of a certain knight, that swore by his honour they were good pancakes, and swore by his honour the mustard was naught: now I'll stand to it, the pancakes were naught and the mustard was good, and yet was not the knight forsworn.

Celia. How prove you that, in the great heap of your knowledge?

Rosalind. Ay, marry, now unmuzzle your wisdom.

Touchstone. Stand you both forth now: stroke your chins, and swear by your beards that I am a knave.

Celia. By our beards (if we had them) thou art.

Touchstone. By my knavery (if I had it) then I were: but if you swear by that that is not, you are not forsworn: no more was this knight, swearing by his honour, for he never had any; or if he had, he had sworn it away, before ever he saw those pancakes or that mustard.

Celia. Prithee, who is't that thou mean'st?

Touchstone [*to Rosalind*]. One that old †Frederick, your father, loves.

Rosalind. My father's love is enough to honour him. Enough! speak no more of him—you'll be whipped for taxation one of these days.

Touchstone. The more pity, that fools may not speak wisely what wise men do foolishly.

Celia. By my troth, thou sayest true: for since the little wit that fools have was silenced, the little foolery that wise men have makes a great show...Here comes Monsieur Le Beau.

Le Beau is seen hurrying towards them

Rosalind. With his mouth full of news.

Celia. Which he will put on us, as pigeons feed their young.

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