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William Shakespeare
Excerpt
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LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST.

PERSONS REPRESENTED.

FERDINAND, *King of Navarre.*

BIRON,
 LONGAVILLE, } *Lords, attending on the King.*
 DUMAIN, }

BOYET, } *Lords, attending on the Princess of France.*
 MERCADE, }

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO, *a fantastical Spaniard.*

SIR NATHANIEL, *a Curate.*

HOLOFERNES, *a Schoolmaster.*

DULL, *a Constable.*

COSTARD, *a Clown.*

MOTH, *Page to Armado.*

A FORESTER.

PRINCESS OF FRANCE.

ROSALINE,
 MARIA, } *Ladies, attending on the Princess.*
 KATHARINE, }

JAQUENETTA, *a Country Girl.*

Officers and others, attendants on the King and Princess.

SCENE—Navarre.

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ACT I.

SCENE I.—NAVARRE. *A Park, with a Palace in it.*

Enter the KING, BIRON, LONGAVILLE, and DUMAIN.

King. 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,
The 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, Birón, 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 past, and now subscribe your names;
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 oath, and keep it too.

Longaville. I am resolv'd: '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 bank'rout quite the wits.

Dumain. My loving lord, Dumain is mortified;
 The grosser manner of these world's baser slaves:
 He throws upon the gross world's delights
 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,
 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 pass'd to pass away from these.

Biron. 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.—
 What is the end of study? let me know.

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

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

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

Biron. Come on then, I will swear to study so,
 To know the thing I am forbid to know:

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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.

Biron. Why, all delights are vain; but that most vain,
 Which, with pain purchas'd, 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 was it blinded by.
 Study is like the heaven's glorious sun,
 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,
 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.

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

Dumain. Proceeded well, to stop all good proceeding!

Longaville. He weeds the corn, and still let's 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. In reason nothing.

Biron. Something then in rhyme.

Longaville. Biron is like an envious sneaping¹ frost,
 That bites the first-born infants of the spring.

Biron. Well, say I am; why should proud summer
 boast,

Before the birds have any cause to sing?
 Why should I joy in an 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 t' unlock the little gate.

King. Well, sit you out: go home, Biron; adieu!

Biron. 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.

King. How well this yielding rescues thee from shame!

Biron. [*Reads.*] Item, *That no woman shall come within
 a mile of my court.*—

And hath this been proclaim'd?

Longaville. Four days ago.

Biron. Let's see the penalty.

[*Reads.*]—*On pain of losing her tongue.*—

Who devis'd this?

Longaville. Marry, that did I.

Biron. Sweet lord, and why?

Longaville. To fright them hence with that dread
 penalty.

Biron. A dangerous law against gentility.

[*Reads.*] Item, *If any man be seen to talk with a woman*

¹ Nipping.

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within the term of three years, he shall endure such publick 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 maid of grace, and cômplete majesty,—
 About surrender-up of Aquitain

To her decrepit, sick, and bed-rid father :
 Therefore this article is made in vain,

Or vainly comes the admired princess hither.

King. What say you, lords? why, this was quite forgot.

Biron. So study evermore is overshoot ;
 While it doth study to have what it would,
 It doth forget to do the thing it should :
 And when it hath the thing it hunteth most,
 'Tis won, as towns with fire ; so won, so lost.

King. We must, of force, dispense with this decree ;
 She must be here on mere necessity.

Biron. If I break faith, this word shall speak for me,
 I am forsworn on mere necessity.—
 So to the laws at large I write my name : [*Subscribes.*

And he, that breaks them in the least degree,
 Stands in attainder of perpetual shame

Suggestions² are to others, as to me ;
 But, I believe, although I seem so loth,
 I am the last that will last keep his oath.
 But is there no quick recreation granted?

King. 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,
 That hath a mint of phrases in his brain :
 One, whom the musick of his own vain tongue
 Doth ravish, like enchanting harmony ;
 A man of compliments, whom right and wrong
 Have chose as umpire of their mutiny :
 This child of fancy, that Armado hight,³

² Temptations.

³ Called.

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;
 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. Costard the swain, and he, shall be our
 sport;

And, so to study, three years is but short.

King. Then go we, lords, to put in practice that
 Which each to other hath so strongly sworn.—

[*Exeunt* KING, LONGAVILLE, and DUMAIN.]

Biron. I'll lay my head to any good man's hat,
 These oaths and laws will prove an idle scorn. [*Exit.*]

SCENE II.—ARMADO'S *House.*

Enter ARMADO and MOTH.

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

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

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

Moth. No, no, sir, no.

Armado. How canst thou part sadness and melan-
 choly, my tender juvenal?⁴

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

Armado. Why tough senior? why tough senior?

Moth. Why tender juvenal? why tender juvenal?

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

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

⁴ Young man.

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Armado. Pretty and apt.

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

Armado. Thou pretty, because little.

Moth. Little pretty, because little: Wherefore apt?

Armado. And therefore apt, because quick.

Moth. Speak you this in my praise, master?

Armado. In thy condign praise.

Moth. I will praise an eel with the same praise.

Armado. What? that an eel is ingenious?

Moth. That an eel is quick.

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

Moth. I am answered, sir.

Armado. I love not to be crossed.

Moth. He speaks the mere contrary, crosses⁵ love not him. [*Aside.*

Armado. I have promised to study three years with the duke.

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

Armado. Impossible.

Moth. How many is one thrice told?

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

Moth. You are a gentleman, and a gamester, sir.

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.

Armado. It doth amount to one more than two.

Moth. Which the base vulgar do call three.

Armado. True.

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

Armado. A most fine figure!

⁵ The name of a coin once current.

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Moth. To prove you a cipher. [*Aside.*

Armado. I will hereupon confess, I am in love: and my love is most immaculate white and red.

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

Armado. Define, define, well-educated infant.

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

Armado. Sweet invocation of a child; most pretty and pathological!

Moth. If she be made of white and red,
 Her faults will ne'er be known;
 For blushing cheeks by faults are bred,
 And fears by pale white shown:
 Then, if she fear, or be to blame,
 By this you shall not know;
 For still her cheeks possess the same,
 Which native she doth owe.⁶

A dangerous rhyme, master, against the reason of white and red.

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

Moth. 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.

Armado. I will have the 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.

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

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

Moth. And that's great marvel, loving a light woman.

Armado. I say sing.

Moth. Forbear till this company be past.

⁶ Of which she is naturally possessed.