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William Shakespeare

Excerpt

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## LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST

[I. I.] *The Park of Ferdinand, King of Navarre, hard by  
the gates leading to the palace; trees and a coppice*

*The KING, BEROWNE, LONGAVILLE, and DUMAINE*

*King.* Let fame, that all hunt after in their lives,  
Live regist'ed 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— 10  
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 20  
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

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## 4 LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST 1.1.27

Make rich the ribs, but bankrupt quite the wits.

*Dumaine.* My loving lord, Dumaine 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.

*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 enrolléd 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 enrolléd 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 enrolléd 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.

50 *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?

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## I.I.58 LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST 5

*King.* Ay, that is study's god-like recompense.*Berowne.* Com' on then—I will swear to study so,  
To know the thing I am forbid to know: 60

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, 70  
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 bookTo 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, 80

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, 90

Than those that walk and wot not what they are.

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## 6 LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST 1.1.92

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.

*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.

100 *King.* 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 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 to unlock the little gate.

110 *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.

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## 1.1.119 LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST 7

*Berowne* [*reads*]. 'Item, That no woman shall come within a mile of my court....' Hath this been pro- 120  
claimed?

*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 130  
public shame as the rest of the court can possible 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 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'admiréd princess hither. 140

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

*Berowne*. So study evermore is overshot.

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 lie here on mere necessity.

*Berowne*. Necessity will make us all forsworn

Three thousand times within this three years' space: 150  
For every man with his affects is born,

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## 8 LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST I.I.152

Not by might mast'red, but by special grace.

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,

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,

160 I am the last that will last keep his oath.... [*he subscribes*

But is there no quick recreation granted?

*King.* Ay that there is, our court you know

is haunted

With a refinéd traveller of Spain—

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

That hath a mint of phrases in his brain:

One who 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.

170 This child of fancy, that Armado hight,

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.

*Berowne.* 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,

180 And so to study three years is but short.

*DULL, the constable, and COSTARD, the clown, approach*

*Dull.* Which is the duke's own person?

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## 1.1.182 LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST 9

*Berowne.* This, fellow. What wouldst?

*Dull.* I myself reprehend his own person, for I am his grace's farborough. But I would see his own person in flesh and blood.

*Berowne.* This is he.

*Dull.* Signior Arm—Arm—commends you.... [*he presents a letter*] There's villainy abroad. This letter will tell you more.

*Costard.* Sir, the contempts thereof are as touching me. 190

*King.* A letter from the magnificent Armado.

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

*Longaville.* A high hope for a low heaven. God grant us patience.

*Berowne.* To hear, or forbear hearing?

*Longaville.* To hear meekly sir, and to laugh moderately—or to forbear both.

*Berowne.* Well sir, be it as the style shall give us cause to climb in the merriness. 200

*Costard.* The matter is to me, sir, as concerning Jaquenetta:

The manner of it is, I was taken with the manner.

*Berowne.* In what manner?

*Costard.* 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.

*Berowne.* For the following, sir? 210

*Costard.* As it shall follow in my correction—and God defend the right.

*King.* Will you hear this letter with attention?

*Berowne.* As we would hear an oracle.

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## 10 LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST I. I. 215

*Costard.* Such is the simplicity of man to hearken after the flesh.

*King [reads].* 'Great Deputy, the welkin's Vice-regent, and sole dominator of Navarre, my soul's earth's God, and body's fost'ring patron:'

220 *Costard.* Not a word of Costard yet.

*King [reads].* 'So it is,'

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

*King.* Peace!

*Costard.* —be to me, and every man that dares not fight.

*King.* No words.

*Costard.* —of other men's secrets I beseech you.

230 *King [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 ycleped Thy Park. Then for the place Where? where I mean I did encounter that obscene and most prepostrous event, that draweth

240 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 Minion of thy mirth,'

*Costard.* Me?

*King.* 'that unlettered small-knowing soul,'

*Costard.* Me?

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## 1.1.249 LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST

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*King.* 'that shallow vassal,'*Costard.* Still me? 250*King.* 'which, as I remember, hight Costard,'*Costard.* O me!*King.* 'sorted and consorted, contrary to thy established proclaimed Edict and continent Canon, †with, with, O with, but with this I passion to say wherewith:'*Costard.* With a wench.*King.* '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, Antony Dull, a man of good repute, carriage, bearing, and estimation.' 260*Dull.* Me, an't shall please you! I am Antony Dull.*King.* 'For Jaquenetta (so is the weaker vessel called) which I apprehended with the aforesaid Swain, I keep here as a vessel of thy Law's fury, and shall at the least of thy sweet notice, bring her to trial. Thine, in all complements of devoted and heart-burning heat of duty,  
DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO.'*Berowne.* This is not so well as I looked for, but the best that ever I heard. 270*King.* Ay, the best for the worst....But sirrah, what say you to this?*Costard.* Sir I confess the wench.*King.* Did you hear the proclamation?*Costard.* I do confess much of the hearing it, but little of the marking of it.*King.* 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. 280*King.* Well, it was proclaimed 'damsel.'

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## 12 LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST I. I. 283

*Costard.* This was no damsel neither sir, she was a virgin.

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

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

*King.* This 'maid' will not serve your turn, sir.

*Costard.* This maid will serve my turn, sir.

290 *King.* 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.

*King.* And Don Armado shall be your keeper.

My Lord Berowne see him delivered o'er—

And go we lords to put in practice that

Which each to other hath so strongly sworn.

*[the King, Longaville and Dumaine enter the gates*

*Berowne.* I'll lay my head to any goodman's hat,

These oaths and laws will prove an idle scorn—

300 *Sirrah,* come on.

*Costard.* 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 till then sit thee down, sorrow. *[they enter the gates*

[I. 2.] *ARMADO and MOTH come through the trees*

*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.