PRINCESS OF FRANCE

PRINCESS

Who are the votaries, my loving lords,

That are vow-fellows with this virtuous duke?

MARIA

Lord Longaville is one.

PRINCESS Know you the man? 40

MARIA

A man of sovereign parts he is esteemed, 45

Well fitted in arts, glorious in arms.

Nothing becomes him ill that he would well.

PRINCESS

Some merry mocking lord, belike. Is ’t so?

MARIA

They say so most that most his humors know.

PRINCESS

Such short-lived wits do wither as they grow. 55

Who are the rest?

KATHERINE

The young Dumaine, a well-accomplished youth,

Of all that virtue love for virtue loved.

ROSALINE

Another of these students at that time 65

Was there with him, if I have heard a truth.

Berowne they call him, but a merrier man,

Within the limit of becoming mirth,

I never spent an hour’s talk withal.

PRINCESS

God bless my ladies, are they all in love,

That every one her own hath garnishèd

With such bedecking ornaments of praise?

KING Fair Princess, welcome to the court of Navarre.

PRINCESS “Fair” I give you back again, and “welcome”

I have not yet. The roof of this court is too

high to be yours, and welcome to the wide fields too 95

base to be mine.

KING

You shall be welcome, madam, to my court.

PRINCESS

I will be welcome, then. Conduct me thither.

KING

Hear me, dear lady. I have sworn an oath.

PRINCESS

Our Lady help my lord! He’ll be forsworn. 100

KING

Not for the world, fair madam, by my will.

PRINCESS

Why, will shall break it, will and nothing else.

KING

Your Ladyship is ignorant what it is.

PRINCESS

Were my lord so, his ignorance were wise,

Where now his knowledge must prove ignorance. 105

I hear your Grace hath sworn out housekeeping.

’Tis deadly sin to keep that oath, my lord,

And sin to break it.

But pardon me, I am too sudden bold.

To teach a teacher ill beseemeth me. 110

Vouchsafe to read the purpose of my coming,

And suddenly resolve me in my suit.

*She gives him a paper.*

KING

Madam, I will, if suddenly I may.

PRINCESS

You will the sooner that I were away,

For you’ll prove perjured if you make me stay.

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PRINCESS

Was that the King that spurred his horse so hard

Against the steep uprising of the hill?

FORESTER

I know not, but I think it was not he.

PRINCESS

Whoe’er he was, he showed a mounting mind.—

Well, lords, today we shall have our dispatch. 5

Or Saturday we will return to France.—

Then, forester, my friend, where is the bush

That we must stand and play the murderer in?

FORESTER

Hereby, upon the edge of yonder coppice,

A stand where you may make the fairest shoot. 10

PRINCESS

I thank my beauty, I am fair that shoot,

And thereupon thou speakst “the fairest shoot.”

FORESTER

Pardon me, madam, for I meant not so.

PRINCESS

What, what? First praise me, and again say no?

O short-lived pride. Not fair? Alack, for woe! 15

FORESTER

Yes, madam, fair.

PRINCESS Nay, never paint me now.

Where fair is not, praise cannot mend the brow.

Here, good my glass, take this for telling true.

*She gives him money.*

Fair payment for foul words is more than due. 20

FORESTER

Nothing but fair is that which you inherit.

PRINCESS

See, see, my beauty will be saved by merit.

O heresy in fair, fit for these days!

A giving hand, though foul, shall have fair praise.

But come, the bow. *He hands her a bow.* Now 25

mercy goes to kill,

And shooting well is then accounted ill.

Thus will I save my credit in the shoot:

Not wounding, pity would not let me do ’t;

If wounding, then it was to show my skill, 30

That more for praise than purpose meant to kill.

And out of question so it is sometimes:

Glory grows guilty of detested crimes,

When for fame’s sake, for praise, an outward part,

We bend to that the working of the heart; 35

As I for praise alone now seek to spill

The poor deer’s blood, that my heart means no ill.

BOYET

Do not curst wives hold that self sovereignty

Only for praise’ sake when they strive to be

Lords o’er their lords? 40

PRINCESS

Only for praise; and praise we may afford

To any lady that subdues a lord.

PRINCESS*, to Boyet*

Prepare, I say.—I thank you, gracious lords,

For all your fair endeavors, and entreat, 805

Out of a new-sad soul, that you vouchsafe

In your rich wisdom to excuse or hide

The liberal opposition of our spirits,

If overboldly we have borne ourselves

In the converse of breath; your gentleness 810

Was guilty of it. Farewell, worthy lord.

A heavy heart bears not a humble tongue.

Excuse me so, coming too short of thanks

For my great suit so easily obtained.

KING

The extreme parts of time extremely forms 815

All causes to the purpose of his speed,

And often at his very loose decides

That which long process could not arbitrate.

And though the mourning brow of progeny

Forbid the smiling courtesy of love 820

The holy suit which fain it would convince,

Yet since love’s argument was first on foot,

Let not the cloud of sorrow jostle it

From what it purposed, since to wail friends lost

Is not by much so wholesome-profitable 825

As to rejoice at friends but newly found.

…

PRINCESS A time, methinks, too short 865

To make a world-without-end bargain in.

No, no, my lord, your Grace is perjured much,

Full of dear guiltiness, and therefore this:

If for my love—as there is no such cause—

You will do aught, this shall you do for me: 870

Your oath I will not trust, but go with speed

To some forlorn and naked hermitage,

Remote from all the pleasures of the world.

There stay until the twelve celestial signs

Have brought about the annual reckoning. 875

If this austere insociable life

Change not your offer made in heat of blood;

If frosts and fasts, hard lodging, and thin weeds

Nip not the gaudy blossoms of your love,

But that it bear this trial, and last love; 880

Then, at the expiration of the year,

Come challenge me, challenge me by these deserts,

*She takes his hand.*

And by this virgin palm now kissing thine,

I will be thine. And till that instant shut

My woeful self up in a mourning house, 885

Raining the tears of lamentation

For the remembrance of my father’s death.

If this thou do deny, let our hands part,

Neither entitled in the other’s heart.