

# William Shakespeare

## Love's Labour's Lost

### Dramatis Personae

**Ferdinand**, King of Navarre

**Biron**, **Longaville**, **Dumain**, three Lords  
attending upon the King

**Boyet**, **Marcade**, Lords attending upon the  
Princess of France

**Adriano de Armado**, a fantastical Spaniard

**Nathaniel**, a curate

**Dull**, a constable

**Holofernes**, a schoolmaster

**Costard**, a clown

**Moth**, Page to Don Adriano

**A Forester**

**Princess of France**

**Rosaline**, **Maria**, **Katharine**, ladies attending  
upon the Princess

**Jaquenetta**, a country wench

**Lords**, **Attendants**, etc.

*Scene: Navarre.*

# Act I

## Scene I

The king of Navarre's park.

Enter Ferdinand king of Navarre, Biron,  
Longaville and Dumain.

### **Ferdinand.**

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 endeavor 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, Biron, 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 pass'd; 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 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  
Make rich the ribs, but bankrupt quite the wits.

**Dumain.**

My loving lord, Dumain is mortified:  
The grosser manner of these world's delights  
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.

**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!

**Ferdinand.**

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.

**Ferdinand.**

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

**Biron.**

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

**Ferdinand.**

Ay, that is study's godlike recompense.

**Biron.**

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

**Ferdinand.**

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 purchased 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 it was 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.

**Ferdinand.**

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

**Dumain.**

Proceeded well, to stop all good proceeding!

**Longaville.**

He weeds the corn and still lets 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.

**Ferdinand.**

Biron is like an envious sneaping 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 any abortive birth?  
At Christmas I no more desire a rose  
Than wish a snow in May's new-fangled mirth;  
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.

**Ferdinand.**

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 swore  
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.

**Ferdinand.**

How well this yielding rescues thee from shame!

**Biron.** [*Reads*] 'Item, That no woman shall come within a mile of my court:' Hath this been proclaimed?

**Longaville.** Four days ago.

**Biron.** Let's see the penalty. [*Reads*] 'On pain of losing her tongue.' Who devised this penalty?

**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!





### **Biron.**

Necessity will make us all forsworn  
Three thousand times within this three years' space;  
For every man with his affects is born,  
Not by might master'd 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:

### **Subscribes.**

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,  
I am the last that will last keep his oath.  
But is there no quick recreation granted?

### **Ferdinand.**

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 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:  
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.

**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.

Enter Dull with a letter, and Costard.

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

**Biron.** This, fellow: what wouldst?

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

**Biron.** This is he.

**Dull.** Signior Arme-Arme-commends you.  
There's villany abroad: this letter will tell you more.

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

**Ferdinand.** A letter from the magnificent  
Armado.

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

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

**Biron.** To hear? or forbear laughing?

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

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

**Costard.** The matter is to me, sir, as concerning Jaquenetta. The manner of it is, I was taken with the manner.

**Biron.** 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.

**Biron.** For the following, sir?

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

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

**Biron.** As we would hear an oracle.

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

**Ferdinand.** [*Reads*] 'Great deputy, the welkin's vicegerent and sole dominator of Navarre, my soul's earth's god, and body's fostering patron.'

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

**Ferdinand.** [*Reads*] 'So it is,'-

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

**Ferdinand.** Peace!

**Costard.** Be to me and every man that dares not fight!

**Ferdinand.** No words!

**Costard.** Of other men's secrets, I beseech you.

**Ferdinand.** [*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 y-cleped thy park. Then for the place where; where, I mean, I did encounter that obscene and preposterous event, that draweth 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 minnow of thy mirth,'-

**Costard.** Me?

**Ferdinand.** [*Reads*] 'that unlettered small-knowing soul,'-

**Costard.** Me?

**Ferdinand.** [*Reads*] 'that shallow vassal,'-

**Costard.** Still me?

**Ferdinand.** [*Reads*] 'which, as I remember, hight Costard,'-

**Costard.** O, me!

**Ferdinand.** [*Reads*] 'sorted and consorted, contrary to thy established proclaimed edict and continent canon, which with, — O, with-but with this I passion to say wherewith,-

**Costard.** With a wench.

**Ferdinand.** [*Reads*] '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, Anthony Dull; a man of good repute, carriage, bearing, and estimation.'

**Dull.** 'Me, an't shall please you; I am Anthony Dull.

**Ferdinand.** [*Reads*] 'For Jaquenetta, — so is the weaker vessel called which I apprehended with the aforesaid swain, — I keep her as a vessel of the law's fury; and shall, at the least of thy sweet notice, bring

her to trial. Thine, in all compliments of devoted and heart-burning heat of duty. Adriano de Armado.'

**Biron.** This is not so well as I looked for, but the best that ever I heard.

**Ferdinand.** Ay, the best for the worst. But, sirrah, what say you to this?

**Costard.** Sir, I confess the wench.

**Ferdinand.** Did you hear the proclamation?

**Costard.** I do confess much of the hearing it but little of the marking of it.

**Ferdinand.** 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.

**Ferdinand.** Well, it was proclaimed 'damsel.'

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

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

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

**Ferdinand.** This maid will not serve your turn, sir.

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

**Ferdinand.** 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.