

# The Two Noble Kinsmen



## PERSONS REPRESENTED IN THE PLAY

Hymen,  
Theseus,  
Hippolita, Bride to Theseus  
Emelia, Sister to Theseus  
[Emelia's Woman],  
Nymphs,  
Three Queens,  
Three valiant Knights,  
Palamon, and  
Arcite, The two Noble Kinsmen, in love with fair Emelia  
[Valerius],  
Perithous,  
[A Herald],  
[A Gentleman],  
[A Messenger],  
[A Servant],  
[Wooer],  
[Keeper],  
Jaylor,  
His Daughter, in love with Palamon  
[His brother],  
[A Doctor],  
[4] Countreymen,  
[2 Friends of the Jaylor],  
[3 Knights],  
[Nel, and other]  
Wenches,  
A Taborer,  
Gerrold, A Schoolmaster.)

# ACT 1

## PROLOGUE

*[Florish.]*

New Playes, and Maydenheads, are neare a kin,  
Much follow'd both, for both much mony g'yn,  
If they stand sound, and well: And a good Play  
(Whose modest Sceanes blush on his marriage day,  
And shake to loose his honour) is like hir  
That after holy Tye and first nights stir  
Yet still is Modestie, and still retaines  
More of the maid to sight, than Husbands paines;  
We pray our Play may be so; For I am sure  
It has a noble Breeder, and a pure,  
A learned, and a Poet never went  
More famous yet twixt Po and silver Trent:  
Chaucer (of all admir'd) the Story gives,  
There constant to Eternity it lives.  
If we let fall the Noblenesse of this,  
And the first sound this child heare, be a hisse,  
How will it shake the bones of that good man,  
And make him cry from under ground, 'O fan  
From me the witles chaffe of such a wrighter  
That blastes my Bayes, and my fam'd workes makes lighter  
Then Robin Hood!' This is the feare we bring;  
For to say Truth, it were an endlesse thing,  
And too ambitious, to aspire to him,  
Weake as we are, and almost breathlesse swim  
In this deepe water. Do but you hold out  
Your helping hands, and we shall take about,  
And something doe to save us: You shall heare  
Sceanes, though below his Art, may yet appeare  
Worth two houres travell. To his bones sweet sleepe:  
Content to you. If this play doe not keepe  
A little dull time from us, we perceave  
Our losses fall so thicke, we must needs leave. *[Florish.]*

Actus Primus.

# SCENE 1

## (Athens. Before a temple.)

*[Enter Hymen with a Torch burning: a Boy, in a white Robe before singing, and strewing Flowres: After Hymen, a Nymph, encompast in her Tresses, bearing a wheaten Garland. Then Theseus betweene two other Nymphs with wheaten Chaplets on their heades. Then Hipolita the Bride, lead by Pirithous, and another holding a Garland over her head (her Tresses likewise hanging.) After her Emilia holding up her Traine. (Artesius and Attendants.)]*

*The Song, [Musike.]*

Roses their sharpe spines being gon,  
Not royall in their smels alone,  
But in their hew.  
Maiden Pinckes, of odour faint,  
Dazies smel-lesse, yet most quaint  
And sweet Time true.

Prim-rose first borne child of Ver,  
Merry Spring times Herbinger,  
With her bels dimme.  
Oxlips, in their Cradles growing,  
Mary-golds, on death beds blowing,  
Larkes-heeles trymme.

All deere natures children sweete,  
Ly fore Bride and Bridegroomes feete, [Strew Flowers.]  
Blessing their sence.  
Not an angle of the aire,  
Bird melodious, or bird faire,  
Is absent hence.

The Crow, the slaundrous Cuckoe, nor  
The boding Raven, nor Chough hore  
Nor chattring Pie,  
May on our Bridehouse pearch or sing,  
Or with them any discord bring,  
But from it fly.

*[Enter 3. Queenes in Blacke, with vailes staind, with imperiall Crownes. The 1. Queene fals downe at the foote of Theseus; The 2. fals downe at the foote of Hypolita. The 3. before Emilia.]*

**1. QUEEN.**

For pitties sake and true gentilities,  
Heare, and respect me.

**2. QUEEN.**

For your Mothers sake,  
And as you wish your womb may thrive with faire ones,  
Heare and respect me.

**3. QUEEN**

Now for the love of him whom love hath markd  
The honour of your Bed, and for the sake  
Of cleere virginity, be Advocate  
For us, and our distresses. This good deede  
Shall raze you out o'th Booke of Trespasses  
All you are set downe there.

**THESEUS.**

Sad Lady, rise.

**HIPPOLITA.**

Stand up.

**EMILIA.**

No knees to me.  
What woman I may steed that is distrest,  
Does bind me to her.

**THESEUS.**

What's your request? Deliver you for all.

**1. QUEEN.**

We are 3. Queenes, whose Soveraignes fel before  
The wrath of cruell Creon; who endured  
The Beakes of Ravens, Tallents of the Kights,  
And pecks of Crowes, in the fowle feilds of Thebs.

He will not suffer us to burne their bones,  
To urne their ashes, nor to take th' offence  
Of mortall loathsomenes from the blest eye  
Of holy Phoebus, but infects the windes  
With stench of our slaine Lords. O pittie, Duke:  
Thou purger of the earth, draw thy feard Sword  
That does good turnes to'th world; give us the Bones  
Of our dead Kings, that we may Chappell them;  
And of thy boundles goodnes take some note  
That for our crowned heades we have no roofe,  
Save this which is the Lyons, and the Beares,  
And vault to every thing.

### **THESEUS.**

Pray you, kneele not:  
I was transported with your Speech, and suffer'd  
Your knees to wrong themselves; I have heard the fortunes  
Of your dead Lords, which gives me such lamenting  
As wakes my vengeance, and revenge for'em,  
King Capaneus was your Lord: the day  
That he should marry you, at such a season,  
As now it is with me, I met your Groome,  
By Marsis Altar; you were that time faire,  
Not Iunos Mantle fairer then your Tresses,  
Nor in more bounty spread her. Your wheaten wreathe  
Was then nor threasht, nor blasted; Fortune at you  
Dimpled her Cheeke with smiles: Hercules our kinsman  
(Then weaker than your eies) laide by his Club,  
He tumbled downe upon his Nemean hide  
And swore his sinews thawd: O greife, and time,  
Fearefull consumers, you will all devoure.

### **1. QUEEN.**

O, I hope some God,  
Some God hath put his mercy in your manhood  
Whereto hee'l infuse powre, and presse you forth  
Our undertaker.

### **THESEUS.**

O no knees, none, Widdow,  
Vnto the Helmeted Belona use them,  
And pray for me your Souldier.  
Troubled I am. [turnes away.]

## **2. QUEEN.**

Honoured Hypolita,  
Most dreaded Amazonian, that hast slaine  
The Sith-tuskd Bore; that with thy Arme as strong  
As it is white, wast neere to make the male  
To thy Sex captive, but that this thy Lord,  
Borne to uphold Creation in that honour  
First nature stilde it in, shrunke thee into  
The bownd thou wast ore-flowing, at once subduing  
Thy force, and thy affection: Soldiresse  
That equally canst poize sternenes with pittie,  
Whom now I know hast much more power on him  
Then ever he had on thee, who ow'st his strength  
And his Love too, who is a Servant for  
The Tenour of thy Speech: Deere Glasse of Ladies,  
Bid him that we, whom flaming war doth scortch,  
Vnder the shaddow of his Sword may coole us:  
Require him he advance it ore our heades;  
Speak't in a womans key: like such a woman  
As any of us three; weepe ere you faile;  
Lend us a knee;  
But touch the ground for us no longer time  
Then a Doves motion, when the head's pluckt off:  
Tell him if he i'th blood cizd field lay swolne,  
Showing the Sun his Teeth, grinning at the Moone,  
What you would doe.

## **HIPPOLITA.**

Poore Lady, say no more:  
I had as leife trace this good action with you  
As that whereto I am going, and never yet  
Went I so willing way. My Lord is taken  
Hart deepe with your distresse: Let him consider:  
Ile speake anon.

## **3. QUEEN.**

O my petition was [kneele to Emilia.]  
Set downe in yce, which by hot greefe uncandied  
Melts into drops, so sorrow, wanting forme,  
Is prest with deeper matter.

## **EMILIA.**



Pray stand up,  
Your greefe is written in your cheeke.

### **3. QUEEN.**

O woe,  
You cannot reade it there, there through my teares—  
Like wrinckled peobles in a glassie streame  
You may behold 'em. Lady, Lady, alacke,  
He that will all the Treasure know o'th earth  
Must know the Center too; he that will fish  
For my least minnow, let him lead his line  
To catch one at my heart. O pardon me:  
Extremity, that sharpens sundry wits,  
Makes me a Foole.

### **EMILIA.**

Pray you say nothing, pray you:  
Who cannot feele nor see the raine, being in't,  
Knowes neither wet nor dry: if that you were  
The ground-peece of some Painter, I would buy you  
T'instruct me gainst a Capitall greefe indeed—  
Such heart peirc'd demonstration; but, alas,  
Being a naturall Sifter of our Sex  
Your sorrow beates so ardently upon me,  
That it shall make a counter reflect gainst  
My Brothers heart, and warme it to some pittie,  
Though it were made of stone: pray, have good comfort.

### **THESEUS.**

Forward to'th Temple, leave not out a lot  
O'th sacred Ceremony.

### **1. QUEEN.**

O, This Celebration  
Will long last, and be more costly then  
Your Suppliants war: Remember that your Fame  
Knowles in the eare o'th world: what you doe quickly  
Is not done rashly; your first thought is more  
Then others laboured medittance: your premeditating  
More then their actions: But, oh love! your actions,  
Soone as they mooves, as Asprayes doe the fish,  
Subdue before they touch: thinke, deere Duke, thinke  
What beds our slaine Kings have.

## **2. QUEEN.**

What greifes our beds,  
That our deere Lords have none.

## **3. QUEEN.**

None fit for 'th dead:  
Those that with Cordes, Knives, drams precipitance,  
Weary of this worlds light, have to themselves  
Beene deathes most horrid Agents, humaine grace  
Affords them dust and shaddow.

## **1. QUEEN.**

But our Lords  
Ly blistering fore the visitating Sunne,  
And were good Kings, when living.

## **THESEUS.**

It is true, and I will give you comfort,  
To give your dead Lords graves: the which to doe,  
Must make some worke with Creon.

## **1. QUEEN.**

And that worke presents it selfe to'th doing:  
Now twill take forme, the heates are gone to morrow.  
Then, booteles toyle must recompence it selfe  
With it's owne sweat; Now he's secure,  
Not dreames we stand before your puissance  
Wrinching our holy begging in our eyes  
To make petition cleere.

## **2. QUEEN.**

Now you may take him, drunke with his victory.

## **3. QUEEN.**

And his Army full of Bread, and sloth.

## **THESEUS.**

Artesius, that best knowest  
How to draw out fit to this enterprise  
The prim'st for this proceeding, and the number  
To carry such a businesse, forth and levy

Our worthiest Instruments, whilst we despatch  
This grand act of our life, this daring deede  
Of Fate in wedlocke.

### **1. QUEEN.**

Dowagers, take hands;  
Let us be Widdowes to our woes: delay  
Commends us to a famishing hope.

### **ALL.**

Farewell.

### **2. QUEEN.**

We come unseasonably: But when could greefe  
Cull forth, as unpanged judgement can, fit'st time  
For best solicitation.

### **THESEUS.**

Why, good Ladies,  
This is a service, whereto I am going,  
Greater then any was; it more imports me  
Then all the actions that I have foregone,  
Or futurely can cope.

### **1. QUEEN.**

The more proclaiming  
Our suit shall be neglected: when her Armes  
Able to locke love from a Synod, shall  
By warranting Moone-light corslet thee, oh, when  
Her twyning Cherries shall their sweetnes fall  
Vpon thy tastefull lips, what wilt thou thinke  
Of rotten Kings or blubberd Queenes, what care  
For what thou feelst not? what thou feelst being able  
To make Mars spurne his Drom. O, if thou couch  
But one night with her, every howre in't will  
Take hostage of thee for a hundred, and  
Thou shalt remember nothing more then what  
That Banket bids thee too.

### **HIPPOLITA.**

Though much unlike [Kneeling.]  
You should be so transported, as much sorry  
I should be such a Suitour; yet I thinke,

Did I not by th'abstayning of my joy,  
Which breeds a deeper longing, cure their surfeit  
That craves a present medicine, I should plucke  
All Ladies scandall on me. Therefore, Sir,  
As I shall here make tryall of my prayres,  
Either presuming them to have some force,  
Or sentencing for ay their vigour dombe:  
Prorogue this busines we are going about, and hang  
Your Sheild afore your Heart, about that necke  
Which is my ffee, and which I freely lend  
To doe these poore Queenes service.

### **ALL QUEENS.**

Oh helpe now,  
Our Cause cries for your knee.

### **EMILIA.**

If you grant not [Kneeling.]  
My Sister her petition in that force,  
With that Celerity and nature, which  
Shee makes it in, from henceforth ile not dare  
To aske you any thing, nor be so hardy  
Ever to take a Husband.

### **THESEUS.**

Pray stand up.  
I am entreating of my selfe to doe  
That which you kneele to have me. Pyri thous,  
Leade on the Bride; get you and pray the Gods  
For successe, and returne; omit not any thing  
In the pretended Celebration. Queenes,  
Follow your Soldier. As before, hence you [to Artesius]  
And at the banckes of Aulis meete us with  
The forces you can raise, where we shall finde  
The moytie of a number, for a busines  
More bigger look't. Since that our Theame is haste,  
I stamp this kisse upon thy currant lippe;  
Sweete, keepe it as my Token. Set you forward,  
For I will see you gone. [Exeunt towards the Temple.]  
Farewell, my beauteous Sister: Pyri thous,  
Keepe the feast full, bate not an howre on't.

### **PERITHOUS.**

Sir,  
Ile follow you at heeles; The Feasts solempnity  
Shall want till your returne.

**THESEUS.**

Cosen, I charge you  
Boudge not from Athens; We shall be returning  
Ere you can end this Feast, of which, I pray you,  
Make no abatement; once more, farewell all.

**1. QUEEN.**

Thus do'st thou still make good the tongue o'th world.

**2. QUEEN.**

And earnest a Deity equal with Mars.

**3. QUEEN.**

If not above him, for  
Thou being but mortall makest affections bend  
To Godlike honours; they themselves, some say,  
Grone under such a Mastry.

**THESEUS.**

As we are men,  
Thus should we doe; being sensually subdude,  
We loose our humane tytle. Good cheere, Ladies. [Florish.]  
Now turne we towards your Comforts. [Exeunt.]

## SCENE 2

**(Thebs).**

*[Enter Palamon, and Arcite.]*

**ARCITE.**

Deere Palamon, deerer in love then Blood  
And our prime Cosen, yet unhardned in  
The Crimes of nature; Let us leave the Citty  
Thebs, and the temptings in't, before we further  
Sully our glosse of youth:  
And here to keepe in abstinence we shame  
As in Incontinence; for not to swim  
I'th aide o'th Current were almost to sincke,  
At least to frustrate striving, and to follow  
The common Streame, twold bring us to an Edy  
Where we should turne or drowne; if labour through,  
Our gaine but life, and weakenes.

**PALAMON.**

Your advice  
Is cride up with example: what strange ruins  
Since first we went to Schoole, may we perceive  
Walking in Thebs? Skars, and bare weedes  
The gaine o'th Martialist, who did propound  
To his bold ends honour, and golden Ingots,  
Which though he won, he had not, and now flurted  
By peace for whom he fought: who then shall offer  
To Marsis so scornd Altar? I doe bleede  
When such I meete, and wish great Iuno would  
Resume her ancient fit of Ielouzie  
To get the Soldier worke, that peace might purge  
For her repletion, and retaine anew  
Her charitable heart now hard, and harsher  
Then strife or war could be.

**ARCITE.**

Are you not out?  
Meete you no ruine but the Soldier in  
The Cranckes and turnes of Thebs? you did begin  
As if you met decaies of many kindes: