

Two Gentlemen of Verona

[Shakespeare homepage](#) | [Two Gentlemen of Verona](#) | Act 3, Scene 1
[Previous scene](#) | [Next scene](#)

SCENE I. Milan. The DUKE's palace.

Enter DUKE, THURIO, and PROTEUS

DUKE

Sir Thurio, give us leave, I pray, awhile;
We have some secrets to confer about.

Exit THURIO

Now, tell me, Proteus, what's your will with me?

PROTEUS

My gracious lord, that which I would discover
The law of friendship bids me to conceal;
But when I call to mind your gracious favours
Done to me, undeserving as I am,
My duty pricks me on to utter that
Which else no worldly good should draw from me.
Know, worthy prince, Sir Valentine, my friend,
This night intends to steal away your daughter:
Myself am one made privy to the plot.
I know you have determined to bestow her
On Thurio, whom your gentle daughter hates;
And should she thus be stol'n away from you,
It would be much vexation to your age.
Thus, for my duty's sake, I rather chose
To cross my friend in his intended drift
Than, by concealing it, heap on your head
A pack of sorrows which would press you down,
Being unprevented, to your timeless grave.

DUKE

Proteus, I thank thee for thine honest care;
Which to requite, command me while I live.
This love of theirs myself have often seen,
Haply when they have judged me fast asleep,
And oftentimes have purposed to forbid
Sir Valentine her company and my court:
But fearing lest my jealous aim might err
And so unworthily disgrace the man,
A rashness that I ever yet have shunn'd,
I gave him gentle looks, thereby to find
That which thyself hast now disclosed to me.

And, that thou mayst perceive my fear of this,
Knowing that tender youth is soon suggested,
I nightly lodge her in an upper tower,
The key whereof myself have ever kept;
And thence she cannot be convey'd away.

PROTEUS

Know, noble lord, they have devised a mean
How he her chamber-window will ascend
And with a corded ladder fetch her down;
For which the youthful lover now is gone
And this way comes he with it presently;
Where, if it please you, you may intercept him.
But, good my Lord, do it so cunningly
That my discovery be not aimed at;
For love of you, not hate unto my friend,
Hath made me publisher of this pretence.

DUKE

Upon mine honour, he shall never know
That I had any light from thee of this.

PROTEUS

Adieu, my Lord; Sir Valentine is coming.

Exit

Enter VALENTINE

DUKE

Sir Valentine, whither away so fast?

VALENTINE

Please it your grace, there is a messenger
That stays to bear my letters to my friends,
And I am going to deliver them.

DUKE

Be they of much import?

VALENTINE

The tenor of them doth but signify
My health and happy being at your court.

DUKE

Nay then, no matter; stay with me awhile;
I am to break with thee of some affairs
That touch me near, wherein thou must be secret.
'Tis not unknown to thee that I have sought
To match my friend Sir Thurio to my daughter.

VALENTINE

I know it well, my Lord; and, sure, the match
Were rich and honourable; besides, the gentleman
Is full of virtue, bounty, worth and qualities
Beseeming such a wife as your fair daughter:
Cannot your Grace win her to fancy him?

DUKE

No, trust me; she is peevish, sullen, froward,
Proud, disobedient, stubborn, lacking duty,
Neither regarding that she is my child
Nor fearing me as if I were her father;
And, may I say to thee, this pride of hers,
Upon advice, hath drawn my love from her;
And, where I thought the remnant of mine age
Should have been cherish'd by her child-like duty,
I now am full resolved to take a wife
And turn her out to who will take her in:
Then let her beauty be her wedding-dower;
For me and my possessions she esteems not.

VALENTINE

What would your Grace have me to do in this?

DUKE

There is a lady in Verona here
Whom I affect; but she is nice and coy
And nought esteems my aged eloquence:
Now therefore would I have thee to my tutor--
For long ago I have forgot to court;
Besides, the fashion of the time is changed--
How and which way I may bestow myself
To be regarded in her sun-bright eye.

VALENTINE

Win her with gifts, if she respect not words:
Dumb jewels often in their silent kind
More than quick words do move a woman's mind.

DUKE

But she did scorn a present that I sent her.

VALENTINE

A woman sometimes scorns what best contents her.
Send her another; never give her o'er;
For scorn at first makes after-love the more.
If she do frown, 'tis not in hate of you,
But rather to beget more love in you:
If she do chide, 'tis not to have you gone;
For why, the fools are mad, if left alone.
Take no repulse, whatever she doth say;
For 'get you gone,' she doth not mean 'away!'
Flatter and praise, commend, extol their graces;
Though ne'er so black, say they have angels' faces.
That man that hath a tongue, I say, is no man,
If with his tongue he cannot win a woman.

DUKE

But she I mean is promised by her friends
Unto a youthful gentleman of worth,
And kept severely from resort of men,
That no man hath access by day to her.

VALENTINE

Why, then, I would resort to her by night.

DUKE

Ay, but the doors be lock'd and keys kept safe,
That no man hath recourse to her by night.

VALENTINE

What lets but one may enter at her window?

DUKE

Her chamber is aloft, far from the ground,
And built so shelving that one cannot climb it
Without apparent hazard of his life.

VALENTINE

Why then, a ladder quaintly made of cords,
To cast up, with a pair of anchoring hooks,
Would serve to scale another Hero's tower,
So bold Leander would adventure it.

DUKE

Now, as thou art a gentleman of blood,
Advise me where I may have such a ladder.

VALENTINE

When would you use it? pray, sir, tell me that.

DUKE

This very night; for Love is like a child,
That longs for every thing that he can come by.

VALENTINE

By seven o'clock I'll get you such a ladder.

DUKE

But, hark thee; I will go to her alone:
How shall I best convey the ladder thither?

VALENTINE

It will be light, my lord, that you may bear it
Under a cloak that is of any length.

DUKE

A cloak as long as thine will serve the turn?

VALENTINE

Ay, my good lord.

DUKE

Then let me see thy cloak:
I'll get me one of such another length.

VALENTINE

Why, any cloak will serve the turn, my lord.

DUKE

How shall I fashion me to wear a cloak?
I pray thee, let me feel thy cloak upon me.
What letter is this same? What's here? 'To Silvia'!
And here an engine fit for my proceeding.
I'll be so bold to break the seal for once.

Reads

'My thoughts do harbour with my Silvia nightly,
And slaves they are to me that send them flying:

O, could their master come and go as lightly,
Himself would lodge where senseless they are lying!
My herald thoughts in thy pure bosom rest them:
While I, their king, that hither them importune,
Do curse the grace that with such grace hath bless'd them,
Because myself do want my servants' fortune:
I curse myself, for they are sent by me,
That they should harbour where their lord would be.'
What's here?
'Silvia, this night I will enfranchise thee.'
'Tis so; and here's the ladder for the purpose.
Why, Phaeton,--for thou art Merops' son,--
Wilt thou aspire to guide the heavenly car
And with thy daring folly burn the world?
Wilt thou reach stars, because they shine on thee?
Go, base intruder! overweening slave!
Bestow thy fawning smiles on equal mates,
And think my patience, more than thy desert,
Is privilege for thy departure hence:
Thank me for this more than for all the favours
Which all too much I have bestow'd on thee.
But if thou linger in my territories
Longer than swiftest expedition
Will give thee time to leave our royal court,
By heaven! my wrath shall far exceed the love
I ever bore my daughter or thyself.
Be gone! I will not hear thy vain excuse;
But, as thou lovest thy life, make speed from hence.

Exit

VALENTINE

And why not death rather than living torment?
To die is to be banish'd from myself;
And Silvia is myself: banish'd from her
Is self from self: a deadly banishment!
What light is light, if Silvia be not seen?
What joy is joy, if Silvia be not by?
Unless it be to think that she is by
And feed upon the shadow of perfection
Except I be by Silvia in the night,
There is no music in the nightingale;
Unless I look on Silvia in the day,
There is no day for me to look upon;
She is my essence, and I leave to be,
If I be not by her fair influence
Foster'd, illumined, cherish'd, kept alive.
I fly not death, to fly his deadly doom:
Tarry I here, I but attend on death:
But, fly I hence, I fly away from life.

Enter PROTEUS and LAUNCE

PROTEUS

Run, boy, run, run, and seek him out.

LAUNCE

Soho, soho!

PROTEUS

What seest thou?

LAUNCE

Him we go to find: there's not a hair on's head
but 'tis a Valentine.

PROTEUS

Valentine?

VALENTINE

No.

PROTEUS

Who then? his spirit?

VALENTINE

Neither.

PROTEUS

What then?

VALENTINE

Nothing.

LAUNCE

Can nothing speak? Master, shall I strike?

PROTEUS

Who wouldst thou strike?

LAUNCE

Nothing.

PROTEUS

Villain, forbear.

LAUNCE

Why, sir, I'll strike nothing: I pray you,--

PROTEUS

Sirrah, I say, forbear. Friend Valentine, a word.

VALENTINE

My ears are stopt and cannot hear good news,
So much of bad already hath possess'd them.

PROTEUS

Then in dumb silence will I bury mine,
For they are harsh, untuneable and bad.

VALENTINE

Is Silvia dead?

PROTEUS

No, Valentine.

VALENTINE

No Valentine, indeed, for sacred Silvia.
Hath she forsworn me?

PROTEUS

No, Valentine.

VALENTINE

No Valentine, if Silvia have forsworn me.
What is your news?

LAUNCE

Sir, there is a proclamation that you are vanished.

PROTEUS

That thou art banished--O, that's the news!--
From hence, from Silvia and from me thy friend.

VALENTINE

O, I have fed upon this woe already,
And now excess of it will make me surfeit.
Doth Silvia know that I am banished?

PROTEUS

Ay, ay; and she hath offer'd to the doom--
Which, unreversed, stands in effectual force--
A sea of melting pearl, which some call tears:
Those at her father's churlish feet she tender'd;
With them, upon her knees, her humble self;
Wringing her hands, whose whiteness so became them
As if but now they waxed pale for woe:
But neither bended knees, pure hands held up,
Sad sighs, deep groans, nor silver-shedding tears,
Could penetrate her uncompassionate sire;
But Valentine, if he be ta'en, must die.
Besides, her intercession chafed him so,
When she for thy repeal was suppliant,
That to close prison he commanded her,
With many bitter threats of bidding there.

VALENTINE

No more; unless the next word that thou speak'st
Have some malignant power upon my life:
If so, I pray thee, breathe it in mine ear,
As ending anthem of my endless dolour.

PROTEUS

Cease to lament for that thou canst not help,
And study help for that which thou lament'st.
Time is the nurse and breeder of all good.
Here if thou stay, thou canst not see thy love;
Besides, thy staying will abridge thy life.
Hope is a lover's staff; walk hence with that
And manage it against despairing thoughts.
Thy letters may be here, though thou art hence;
Which, being writ to me, shall be deliver'd
Even in the milk-white bosom of thy love.
The time now serves not to expostulate:
Come, I'll convey thee through the city-gate;
And, ere I part with thee, confer at large
Of all that may concern thy love-affairs.
As thou lovest Silvia, though not for thyself,
Regard thy danger, and along with me!

VALENTINE

I pray thee, Launce, an if thou seest my boy,

Bid him make haste and meet me at the North-gate.

PROTEUS

Go, sirrah, find him out. Come, Valentine.

VALENTINE

O my dear Silvia! Hapless Valentine!

Exeunt VALENTINE and PROTEUS

LAUNCE

I am but a fool, look you; and yet I have the wit to think my master is a kind of a knave: but that's all one, if he be but one knave. He lives not now that knows me to be in love; yet I am in love; but a team of horse shall not pluck that from me; nor who 'tis I love; and yet 'tis a woman; but what woman, I will not tell myself; and yet 'tis a milkmaid; yet 'tis not a maid, for she hath had gossips; yet 'tis a maid, for she is her master's maid, and serves for wages. She hath more qualities than a water-spaniel; which is much in a bare Christian.

Pulling out a paper

Here is the cate-log of her condition.
'Imprimis: She can fetch and carry.' Why, a horse can do no more: nay, a horse cannot fetch, but only carry; therefore is she better than a jade. 'Item: She can milk;' look you, a sweet virtue in a maid with clean hands.

Enter SPEED

SPEED

How now, Signior Launce! what news with your mastership?

LAUNCE

With my master's ship? why, it is at sea.

SPEED

Well, your old vice still; mistake the word. What news, then, in your paper?

LAUNCE

The blackest news that ever thou heardest.

SPEED

Why, man, how black?

LAUNCE

Why, as black as ink.

SPEED

Let me read them.

LAUNCE

Fie on thee, jolt-head! thou canst not read.

SPEED

Thou liest; I can.

LAUNCE

I will try thee. Tell me this: who begot thee?

SPEED

Marry, the son of my grandfather.

LAUNCE

O illiterate loiterer! it was the son of thy grandmother: this proves that thou canst not read.

SPEED

Come, fool, come; try me in thy paper.

LAUNCE

There; and St. Nicholas be thy speed!

SPEED

[Reads] 'Imprimis: She can milk.'

LAUNCE

Ay, that she can.

SPEED

'Item: She brews good ale.'

LAUNCE

And thereof comes the proverb: 'Blessing of your heart, you brew good ale.'

SPEED

'Item: She can sew.'

LAUNCE

That's as much as to say, Can she so?

SPEED

'Item: She can knit.'

LAUNCE

What need a man care for a stock with a wench, when she can knit him a stock?

SPEED

'Item: She can wash and scour.'

LAUNCE

A special virtue: for then she need not be washed and scoured.

SPEED

'Item: She can spin.'

LAUNCE

Then may I set the world on wheels, when she can spin for her living.

SPEED

'Item: She hath many nameless virtues.'

LAUNCE

That's as much as to say, bastard virtues; that, indeed, know not their fathers and therefore have no names.

SPEED

'Here follow her vices.'

LAUNCE

Close at the heels of her virtues.

SPEED

'Item: She is not to be kissed fasting in respect
of her breath.'

LAUNCE

Well, that fault may be mended with a breakfast. Read on.

SPEED

'Item: She hath a sweet mouth.'

LAUNCE

That makes amends for her sour breath.

SPEED

'Item: She doth talk in her sleep.'

LAUNCE

It's no matter for that, so she sleep not in her talk.

SPEED

'Item: She is slow in words.'

LAUNCE

O villain, that set this down among her vices! To
be slow in words is a woman's only virtue: I pray
thee, out with't, and place it for her chief virtue.

SPEED

'Item: She is proud.'

LAUNCE

Out with that too; it was Eve's legacy, and cannot
be ta'en from her.

SPEED

'Item: She hath no teeth.'

LAUNCE

I care not for that neither, because I love crusts.

SPEED

'Item: She is curst.'

LAUNCE

Well, the best is, she hath no teeth to bite.

SPEED

'Item: She will often praise her liquor.'

LAUNCE

If her liquor be good, she shall: if she will not, I will; for good things should be praised.

SPEED

'Item: She is too liberal.'

LAUNCE

Of her tongue she cannot, for that's writ down she is slow of; of her purse she shall not, for that I'll keep shut: now, of another thing she may, and that cannot I help. Well, proceed.

SPEED

'Item: She hath more hair than wit, and more faults than hairs, and more wealth than faults.'

LAUNCE

Stop there; I'll have her: she was mine, and not mine, twice or thrice in that last article. Rehearse that once more.

SPEED

'Item: She hath more hair than wit,'--

LAUNCE

More hair than wit? It may be; I'll prove it. The cover of the salt hides the salt, and therefore it is more than the salt; the hair that covers the wit is more than the wit, for the greater hides the

less. What's next?

SPEED

'And more faults than hairs,'--

LAUNCE

That's monstrous: O, that that were out!

SPEED

'And more wealth than faults.'

LAUNCE

Why, that word makes the faults gracious. Well,
I'll have her; and if it be a match, as nothing is
impossible,--

SPEED

What then?

LAUNCE

Why, then will I tell thee--that thy master stays
for thee at the North-gate.

SPEED

For me?

LAUNCE

For thee! ay, who art thou? he hath stayed for a
better man than thee.

SPEED

And must I go to him?

LAUNCE

Thou must run to him, for thou hast stayed so long
that going will scarce serve the turn.

SPEED

Why didst not tell me sooner? pox of your love letters!

Exit

LAUNCE

Now will he be swinged for reading my letter; an unmannerly slave, that will thrust himself into secrets! I'll after, to rejoice in the boy's correction.

Exit

[Shakespeare homepage](#) | [Two Gentlemen of Verona](#) | Act 3, Scene 1
[Previous scene](#) | [Next scene](#)