

Two Gentlemen of Verona

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SCENE I. The frontiers of Mantua. A forest.

Enter certain Outlaws

First Outlaw

Fellows, stand fast; I see a passenger.

Second Outlaw

If there be ten, shrink not, but down with 'em.

Enter VALENTINE and SPEED

Third Outlaw

Stand, sir, and throw us that you have about ye:
If not: we'll make you sit and rifle you.

SPEED

Sir, we are undone; these are the villains
That all the travellers do fear so much.

VALENTINE

My friends,--

First Outlaw

That's not so, sir: we are your enemies.

Second Outlaw

Peace! we'll hear him.

Third Outlaw

Ay, by my beard, will we, for he's a proper man.

VALENTINE

Then know that I have little wealth to lose:
A man I am cross'd with adversity;
My riches are these poor habiliments,
Of which if you should here disfurnish me,
You take the sum and substance that I have.

Second Outlaw

Whither travel you?

VALENTINE

To Verona.

First Outlaw

Whence came you?

VALENTINE

From Milan.

Third Outlaw

Have you long sojourned there?

VALENTINE

Some sixteen months, and longer might have stay'd,
If crooked fortune had not thwarted me.

First Outlaw

What, were you banish'd thence?

VALENTINE

I was.

Second Outlaw

For what offence?

VALENTINE

For that which now torments me to rehearse:
I kill'd a man, whose death I much repent;
But yet I slew him manfully in fight,
Without false vantage or base treachery.

First Outlaw

Why, ne'er repent it, if it were done so.
But were you banish'd for so small a fault?

VALENTINE

I was, and held me glad of such a doom.

Second Outlaw

Have you the tongues?

VALENTINE

My youthful travel therein made me happy,
Or else I often had been miserable.

Third Outlaw

By the bare scalp of Robin Hood's fat friar,
This fellow were a king for our wild faction!

First Outlaw

We'll have him. Sirs, a word.

SPEED

Master, be one of them; it's an honourable kind of thievery.

VALENTINE

Peace, villain!

Second Outlaw

Tell us this: have you any thing to take to?

VALENTINE

Nothing but my fortune.

Third Outlaw

Know, then, that some of us are gentlemen,
Such as the fury of ungovern'd youth
Thrust from the company of awful men:
Myself was from Verona banished
For practising to steal away a lady,
An heir, and near allied unto the duke.

Second Outlaw

And I from Mantua, for a gentleman,
Who, in my mood, I stabb'd unto the heart.

First Outlaw

And I for such like petty crimes as these,
But to the purpose--for we cite our faults,
That they may hold excus'd our lawless lives;

And partly, seeing you are beautified
With goodly shape and by your own report
A linguist and a man of such perfection
As we do in our quality much want--

Second Outlaw

Indeed, because you are a banish'd man,
Therefore, above the rest, we parley to you:
Are you content to be our general?
To make a virtue of necessity
And live, as we do, in this wilderness?

Third Outlaw

What say'st thou? wilt thou be of our consort?
Say ay, and be the captain of us all:
We'll do thee homage and be ruled by thee,
Love thee as our commander and our king.

First Outlaw

But if thou scorn our courtesy, thou diest.

Second Outlaw

Thou shalt not live to brag what we have offer'd.

VALENTINE

I take your offer and will live with you,
Provided that you do no outrages
On silly women or poor passengers.

Third Outlaw

No, we detest such vile base practises.
Come, go with us, we'll bring thee to our crews,
And show thee all the treasure we have got,
Which, with ourselves, all rest at thy dispose.

Exeunt