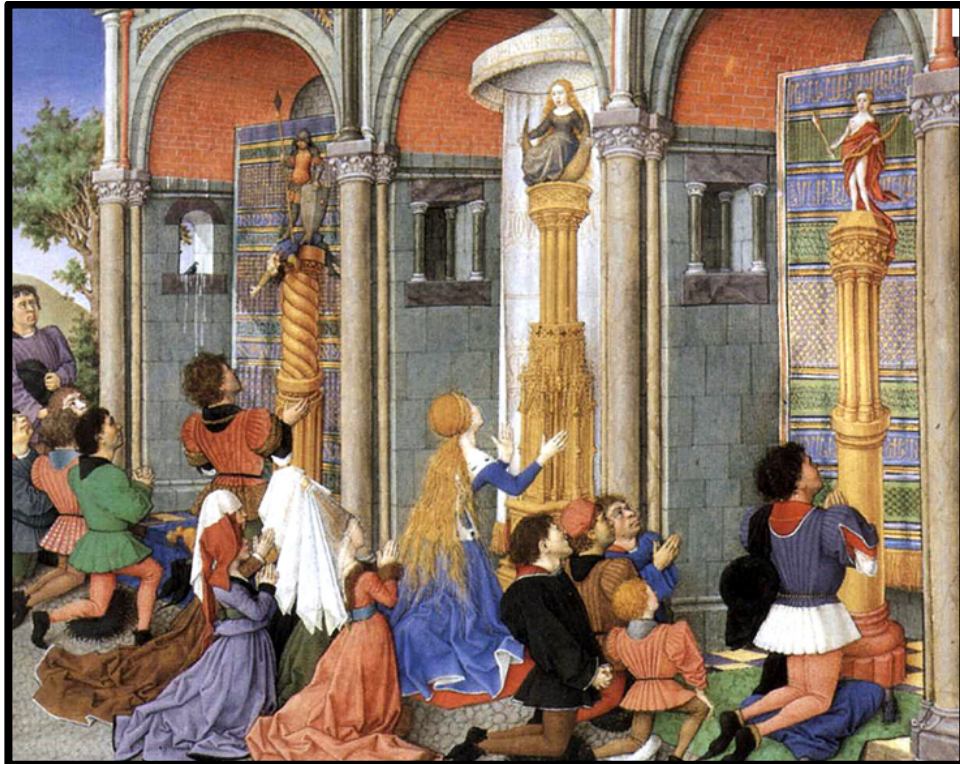


The Two Kinsmen from Thebes

(being the fifth act of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, c. 1613-15,

in an abridged version intended for use in a semi-staged production on 22 November 2012)



The downloaded text is that of the first edition of 1634.

To help the readers, it has been eclectically repunctuated in the light of recent editions (including the newly-published version in the New Cambridge Shakespeare, CUP, 2012). Quite a few words are given in their modern spellings, and quite a few sentences start on a new line (again, to help the readers).

The stage directions that survive (lightly adapted) will be projected on screen.

Cues for the harp are shown in red.

The image above is taken from a manuscript of Boccaccio's *Teseida*, which is the source of the story in Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*, which is the source of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*.

PRELUDE (Campion)

Scene 1. (*Before the Temples of Mars, Venus, and Diana.*)

INTRADA (Whitfield)

[*Enter Theseus, Pirithous, Hippolyta, attendants.*]

THESEUS.

Now let them enter, and before the gods
Tender their holy prayers. Let the Temples
Burne bright with sacred fires, and the Altars
In hallow'd clouds commend their swelling Incense
To those above us. Let no due be wanting;
They have a noble worke in hand.

PIRITHOUS.

Sir, they enter.

[*Enter Arcite, Palamon, and their Knights.*]

THESEUS.

You valiant and strong-hearted Enemies,
You royall german foes, that this day come
To blow that furnesse out that flames betweene ye,
Lay by your anger for an houre, and dove-like,
Before the holy Altars of your helpers,
(The all fear'd gods) bow downe your stubborne bodies.
Your ire is more than mortall; so your helpe be.
Ile leave you to your prayers, and betwixt ye
I part my wishes.

PIRITHOUS.

Honour crowne the worthiest.

[*Exit Theseus, and his train.*]

PALAMON.

The glasse is running now that cannot finish
Till one of us expire. Thinke you but thus:
That were there aught in me which strove to show
Mine enemy in this businesse, wer't one eye
Against another, arme opprest by arme,
I would destroy th'offender, Coz — I would,
Though parcell of my selfe. Then from this gather
How I should tender you.

ARCITE.

I am in labour

To push your name, your ancient love, our kindred
Out of my memory.

So hoist we

The sayles that must these vessells port even where
The heavenly Limiter pleases.

PALAMON.

You speake well.

Before I turne, let me embrace thee, Cousin:
This I shall never doe agen.

ARCITE.

One farewell.

PALAMON.

Why, let it be so: Farewell, Coz.

[Exeunt Palamon and his Knights.]

ARCITE.

Farewell, Sir.--

Knights, Kinsmen, Lovers,
True worshippers of Mars, goe with me
Before the god of our profession. There
Require of him the hearts of Lyons, and
The breath of Tigers, yea, the fearcenesse too,
Yea, the speed also,--to goe on, I meane:
Else wish we to be Snayles. You know my prize
Must be dragg'd out of blood.

Our intercession then
Must be to him that makes the Campe a Cistern
Brimm'd with the blood of men.

HARP: MONTEVERDI, (A)

Thou mighty one, that with thy power hast turn'd
Greene Neptune into purple, whose Approach
Comets prewarne, (...) who doth plucke
With hand armipotent from forth blue clowdes
The mason'd Turrets, that both mak'st and break'st
The stony girthes of Citties:

me thy pupil,
Youngest follower of thy Drum, instruct this day
With military skill, that to thy laud
I may advance my Streamer, and by thee
Be styl'd the Lord o'th day. Give me, great Mars,
Some token of thy pleasure.

HARP: VIOLENT FLOURISH

*[There is heard clanging of Armour, with a short Thunder as the burst of a
Battaile]*

O Great Corrector of enormous times,
that healst with blood
The earth when it is sicke, and cur'st the world
O'th pleuresie of people; I do take
Thy signes auspiciously, and in thy name
To my designe march boldly. Let us goe.

[Exeunt Arcite and his Knights]

[Enter Palamon and his Knights.]

PALAMON.

Our stars must glister with new fire, or be
Today extinct; our argument is love,
Which, if the goddess of it grant, she gives
Victory too. To the goddess Venus
Commend we our proceeding, and implore
Her power unto our partie.

HARP: MONTEVERDI, (B)

Haile, Sovereigne Queene of secrets, who hast power
To call the fiercest Tyrant from his rage
And weepe unto a Girle; that ha'st the might,
Even with an eye-glance, to choke Mars's Drum
And turne th'allarme to whispers; that canst make
A Cripple flourish with his Crutch, and cure him
Before Apollo; that may'st force the King
To be his subject's vassal, and induce
Stale gravitie to daunce: what godlike power
Hast thou not power upon?

Take to thy grace
Me, thy vow'd Souldier, who doe beare thy yoke
As t'were a wreath of Roses, yet is heavier
Then Lead itselke, stings more than Nettles.

I have never beene foule-mouth'd against thy law,
Never reveal'd secret, for I knew none--would not,
Had I ken'd all that were. I knew a man
Of eighty winters, who
A Lasse of fourteene bridged ('twas thy power
To put life into dust). The aged Cramp
Had screw'd his square foote round,
The Gout had knit his fingers into knots,
Torturing Convulsions from his globie eyes,
Had almost drawne their spheeres, that what was life
In him seem'd torture. This Anatomie
Had by his young faire fere a Boy, and I
Beleev'd it was him, for she swore it was,
And who would not beleeve her? Briefe, I am
To those that prate and have done, no Companion;
To those that boast and have not, a Defyer;
To those that would and cannot, a Rejoycer.

Such a one I am,
And vow that lover never yet made sigh
Truer than I. O, then, most soft, sweet goddess,
Give me the victory of this question, which
Is true love's merit, and blesse me with a signe
Of thy great pleasure.

HARP: GENTLE FLOURISH

[Here Musicke is heard, Doves are seene to flutter]

O thou, that from eleven to ninetie reign'st
In mortall bosomes, I give thee thanks
For this faire Token. Let us rise
And bow before the goddessse. Time comes on.
[*Exeunt Palamon and his Knights*]

HARP: DOWLAND

[Still Musicke. Enter Emilia in white, her haire about her shoulders, wearing a wheaten wreath, before the altar of Diana.]

EMILIA.

O sacred, shadowie, cold and constant Queene,
Sweet, solitary, pure as wind-fann'd Snow:
I heere, thy Priest, am humbled fore thine Altar.
Looke on thy virgin; and, sacred Mistris,
Lend thine eare to my petition,
Season'd with holy feare.

This is my last
 Of vestall office. I am bride-habited,
 But mayden-hearted.

A husband I have appointed,
But doe not know him. Out of two I should
Choose one and pray for his succeſſe, but I
Am guiltleſſe of election. Of mine eyes,
Were I to loſe one — they are equall precious —
I could doom neither: that which periſh'd ſhould
Goe to't unſentenc'd.

Therefore, most modest Queene,
He of the two Pretenders that best loves me
And has the truest title in't, let him
Take off my wheaten Garland, or else grant
The file and qualitie I hold, I may
Continue in thy Band.

HARP: RISING FLOURISH

[Over the Altar ascends a Rose Tree, having one Rose upon it.]

See what Diana
Out from the bowells of her holy Altar
With sacred act advances! But one Rose!

If well inspir'd, this Battaile shall confound
Both these brave Knights, and I, a virgin flowre,
Must grow alone unpluck'd.

HARP: 'TWANG' & FALLING FLOURISH

[Here is heard a sodaine twang of Instruments, and the Rose falls

from the Tree]

The flowre is falne, the tree descends: O, Mistris,
Thou here dischargest me.

I shall be gather'd;
I thinke so, but I know not thine owne will;
Vnclaspe thy Misterie.--I hope she's pleas'd,
Her Signes were gracious.

[*They curtsey and Exeunt.*]

Scene 2. (A Place near the Lists.)

INTRADA: ALMAN (anonymous)

[*Enter Theseus, Hipolita, Emilia, Perithous, and some Attendants*]

EMILIA.

I'll no step further.

PIRITHOUS.

Will you lose this sight?

EMILIA.

I had rather see a wren hawke at a fly
Than this decision; ev'ry blow that falls
Threats a brave life, each stroake laments
The place whereon it falls, and sounds more like
A Bell then blade.

I will stay here —

It is enough my hearing shall be punish'd
With what shall happen, not taint mine eye
With dread sights it may shun.

PIRITHOUS.

Sir, my good Lord,

Your Sister will no further.

THESEUS.

Oh, she must.

She shall see deeds of honour in their kind
Which sometime show well, pencil'd. Nature now
Shall make and act the Story, the beliefe
Both sealed with eye and eare. —

You must be present,

You are the victour's meed, the price, and garland
To crowne the Question's title.

EMILIA.

Pardon me.

THESEUS.

You must be there;

This Tryall is, as t'were, i'th night, and you
The onely star to shine.

EMILIA.

I am extinct;

There is but envy in that light, which shows
The one the other.

Darkness may even now,
By casting her black mantle over both,
That neither could finde other, get herself
Some part of a good name.

HIPPOLYTA.

You must goe.

EMILIA.

In faith, I will not.

THESEUS.

Why, the knights must kindle
Their valour at your eye. Know, of this war
You are the Treasure, and must needes be by
To give the Service pay.

EMILIA.

Sir, pardon me;
The title of a kingdome may be tried
Out of itselfe.

THESEUS.

Well, well, then, at your pleasure.

HIPPOLYTA.

Farewell, Sister;
I am like to know your husband fore yourselfe
By some small start of time. He whom the gods
Doe of the two know best, I pray them he
Be made your Lot.

[Exeunt Theseus, Hippolita, Pirithous, &c.]

EMILIA.

Arcite is gently visag'd; yet his eye is like a sharpe weapon
In a soft sheath; mercy and manly courage
Are bedfellowes in his visage.

Palamon
Has a most menacing aspect; his brow
Is grav'd, and seemes to bury what it frownes on.
Yet sometime 'tis not so, but alters to
The quality of his thoughts. Long time his eye
Will dwell upon his object. Melancholy
Becomes him nobly.

So does Arcite's mirth,
But Palamon's sadness is a kinde of mirth,
So mingled, as if mirth did make him sad,
And sadness, merry.

HARP: FLOURISH A, TRUMPETS

[Cornets and Trompets sound as to a charge.]

Harke how yon spurs-to-spirit doe incite
The Princes to their prooffe!

If I were by,
I might doe hurt, for they would glance their eies
Toward my Seat, and in that motion might
Omit a ward, or forfeit an offence

Which crav'd that very time.

It is much better
I am not there, Oh, better never born
Than minister to such harme.

HARP: FLOURISH B, TRUMPETS

*[Cornets. A great cry and noise within, crying 'a Palamon'.
[Enter Servant.]*

What is the chance?
SERVANT.
The Crie's 'a Palamon'.
EMILIA.

Then he has won! Twas ever likely;
He look'd all grace and successe, and he is
Doubtlesse the prim'st of men. I prithee, run
And tell me how it goes.

HARP: FLOURISH B, TRUMPETS

[Shout, and Cornets: Crying, 'a Palamon.']

SERVANT.
Still Palamon.
EMILIA.
Run and enquire.

Poore Arcite, thou hast lost.
Vpon my right side still I wore thy picture,
Palamon's on the left. Why so, I know not.
I had no end in't else; chance would have it so.
On the sinister side the heart lyes; Palamon
Had the best-boding chance.

HARP: FLOURISH B, TRUMPETS

[Another cry and showt within, and Cornets.]

This burst of clamour
Is sure th'end o'th Combat.
[Enter Servant.]

SERVANT.
They saide that Palamon had Arcite's body
Within an inch o'th Pyramid, that the cry
Was generall 'a Palamon!' But, anon,
Th'Assistants made a brave redemption, and
The two bold Titlers, at this instant are
Hand to hand at it.
EMILIA.

Would they were metamorphos'd
Both into one!

HARP: FLOURISH C, TRUMPETS

[Cornets. Cry within: Arcite, Arcite.]

More exulting?

Palamon still?

SERVANT.

Nay, now the sound is 'Arcite'.

EMILIA.

I prithee, lay attention to the Cry,

HARP: FLOURISH C, TRUMPETS

[Cornets. A great shout and cry, 'Arcite, victory!']

Set both thine eares to th' business.

SERVANT.

The cry is

'Arcite', and 'Victory!' Harke: 'Arcite, Victory!'

EMILIA.

Half sights saw

That Arcite was no babe. God's lid!, his richness
And costliness of spirit look't through him.

It could no more be hid in him than fire in flax,
Than humble banks can go to law with waters
That drift-winds force to raging.

I did think

Good Palamon would miscarry; yet I knew not
Why I did thinke so. Our reasons are not prophets,
When oft our fancies are.

They are coming off.

Alas, poore Palamon!

INTRADA: ALMAN (anonymous, repeated)

[Enter Theseus, Hippolyta, Pirithous, Arcite as victor, and attendants]

THESEUS.

Lo, where our Sister is in expectation,
Yet quaking and unsettled.

— Fairest Emily,

The gods by their divine arbitrament
Have given you this Knight.

Give me your hands;

Receive you her, you him; be plighted with
A love that growes as you decay.

ARCITE.

Emily,

To buy you, I have lost what's dearest to me:
And yet I purchase cheapely, as I do rate your value.

THESEUS.

O lovèd Sister,

He speakes now of as brave a Knight as ere
Did spur a noble Steed.

But he that was thus good

Encountered yet his Better.

I have heard

Two emulous Philomels beate the eare o'th night

With their contentious throates, now one the higher,

Anon the other, then againe the first,
And by and by out-breasted, that the sense
Could not be judge betweene them. So it fared
Good space betweene these kinsmen, till heavens did
Make hardly one the winner.
Weare the Garland with joy that you have won.

For the subdued,
Give them our present Justice, since I know
Their lives but pinch them.

Let it here be done.
The Scene's not for our seeing, goe we hence,
Right joyfull, with some sorrow.

--Hippolita,
I see one eye of yours conceives a teare
The which it will deliver.
EMILIA.

Is this winning?
Oh all you heavenly powers, where is your mercy?
But that your wills have saide it must be so,
And charge me live to comfort this unfriended,
This miserable Prince, that cuts away
A life more worthy from him than all women,
I should, and would, die too.
HIPPOLYTA.

Infinite pity,
That four such eyes should be so fix'd on one
That two must needes be blinde for't.
THESEUS.

So it is.

[*Exeunt.*]

Scene 3. (*The same; a Block prepared.*)

INTRADA: LAWES (*I rise and grieve, bars 1-8*)

[*Enter Palamon and his Knights pinion'd: Jaylor, Executioner, and Guard.*]

PALAMON.

There's many a man alive that hath outliv'd
The love o'th people; yea, i'th self-same state
Stands many a Father with his childe.

Some comfort

We have by so considering. We expire
And not without men's pittie, to live still,
Have their good wishes. We prevent
The loathsome misery of age, beguile
The Gowt and Rheume, that in last howres attend
For grey approachers. We come towards the gods
Young and unwapper'd, not halting under Crimes
Many and stale. That sure shall please the gods,
Sooner than such, to give us Nectar with 'em,

For we are more cleare Spirits.

My deare kinsmen,
Whose lives (for this poore comfort) are laid downe,
You have sold 'em too too cheape.
Adiew; and let my life be now as short
As my leave taking.
[Lies on the Blocke.]

HARP: FLOURISH, TUMULTOUS ARRIVAL

[A great noise within crying, 'run, save, hold!'. Enter in hast a <Servant>.]

PIRITHOUS (*rising, but still 'off-stage'*)

Hold, hold! O hold, hold, hold!
[Enter Pirithous in haste.]

PIRITHOUS (*on reaching his music stand*).
Hold! hoa! It is a cursèd haste you made,
If you have done so quickly. Noble Palamon,
The gods will shew their glory in a life,
That thou art yet to leade.
PALAMON.

Can that be,
When Venus, I have said, is false? How doe things fare?
PIRITHOUS.

Arise, great Sir, and give the tydings eare
That are most dearly sweet and bitter.
PALAMON.

What
Hath wakt us from our dreame?

PIRITHOUS.

List then. Your cousin,
Mounted upon a steed that Emily
Did first bestow on him, a black one, owing
Not a hayre-worth of white. (...)

On this horse is Arcite, trotting the stones of Athens.

As he thus went counting the flinty pavement,
Dancing, as t'were, to'th Musick his owne hoofes made —
For, as they say, from iron came Musick's origin —
Some envious flint darted a spark.

The hot horse, hot as fire,
Tooke toy at this, and fell to what disorder
His power could give his will; bounds, comes on end,
Forgets schoole dooing, being therein train'd.

Pig-like he whines at the sharpe rowell,
Which he frets at rather than any jot obeys;
Seekes all foule meanes of boyst'rous and rough jad'rie
To disseat his Lord, who kept it bravely.

When nought serv'd,
When neither curb would cracke, girth breake, nor diffring plunges
Disroot his rider whence he grew, but that
He kept him tweene his legges, on end he stands,
That Arcite's legs, being higher than his head,
Seem'd with strange art to hang. His victor's wreath
Even then fell off his head:

and presently
Backward the jade comes o'er, and his full poise
Becomes the rider's load.

Yet is he living,
But such a vessell 'tis, that floats but for
The surge that next approaches.

He much desires
To have some speech with you. Lo he appeares.

[Enter Theseus, Hipolita, Emilia, Arcite in a chaire.]

PALAMON.

O miserable end of our alliance!
The gods are mightie. Arcite, if thy heart,
Thy worthie, manly heart, be yet unbroken,
Give me thy last words. I am Palamon,
One that yet loves thee dying.
ARCITE.

Take Emilia
And with her all the world's joy: Reach thy hand;
Farewell; I have told my last houre. I was false,
Yet never treacherous. Forgive me, Cousin.
One kisse from faire Emilia. — 'Tis done.
Take her. I die.
PALAMON.

Thy brave soule seeke Elizium.
EMILIA.

Ile close thine eyes, Prince; blessèd soules be with thee!
Thou art a right good man, and while I live,
This day I give to teares.
PALAMON.

And I to honour.
THESEUS.
In this place first you fought: ev'n very here
I sunder'd you. Acknowledge to the gods
Our thanks that you are living.

His part is play'd, and though it were too short,
He did it well. *Your* day is lengthened, and
The blissefull dew of heaven does arroze you.
The powerfull Venus well hath grac'd her Altar,
And given you your love.

Our Master Mars
Hath vouch'd his Oracle, and to Arcite gave
The grace of the Contention. So the Deities

Have shew'd due justice. Beare this hence.

PALAMON.

O Cousin,

That we should things desire, which doe cost us
The losse of our desire! That nought could buy
Deare love, but losse of deare love!

THESEUS.

Never Fortune

Did play a subtler Game. The conquer'd triumphes,
The victor has the Losse. Yet in the passage
The gods have beene most equall.

Palamon,

Your kinsman hath confest the right o'th Lady
Did lye in you, for you first saw her, and
Even then proclaim'd your fancie. He restor'd her
As your stolne Jewell, and desir'd your spirit
To send him hence forgiven. The gods my justice
Take from my hand, and they themselves become
The Executioners. Leade your Lady off;
And call your Lovers from the stage of death,
Whom I adopt my Friends.

A day or two

Let us looke sadly, and give grace unto
The Funerall of Arcite.

In whose end

The visages of Bridegroomes we'll put on
And smile with Palamon, for whom an houre,
But one houre since, I was as dearely sorry,
As glad of Arcite: and am now as glad,
As for him sorry. O you heavenly Charmers,
What things you make of us! For what we lacke
We laugh, for what we have, are sorry; still
Are children in some kind. Let us be thankfull
For that which is, and with you leave dispute
That are above our question. Let's goe off,
And beare us like the time.

FINIS