

Noble Kinsmen from Thebes

Part 2: Shakespeare

GLAUCUS. Great son of Tydeus, why ask my lineage?

Human generations are blown away
like leaves, but new leaves come in spring
and young men spring up when old ones pass.

He sent me to Troy and charged me
always to be the bravest and the best
and not bring shame on my fathers' race,
the best in Ephyre and in wide Lycia.
This is my lineage, from this blood I spring.

James (Theseus)	Anne (Hippolyta)	Elizabeth (Emilia)
Theseus (James)	Hippolyta (Anne)	Emilia (Elizabeth)
Theseus	Hippolyta	Emilia

[Exeunt Palamon and his Knights]

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

Two Kinsmen from Thebes

(Act 5 of The Two Noble Kinsmen)

By William Shakespeare

Prelude

The scene is set in Athens.

A year has passed since the wedding of Duke Theseus
and Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons,

which was delayed by a war against Creon, king of Thebes.

Two Theban cousins, Arcite and Palamon,
were captured during the war
and held to ransom in Athens.

From the window of their prison they saw Emilia,
sister of Hippolyta.

Both fell in love with her — and became bitter rivals.

Arcite was ransomed
on condition that he never set foot again in Athens
(and could therefore never see Emilia again).

Palamon remained in prison
(where he could see Emilia in her garden every day).

Arcite returned to Athens under an assumed name,
making himself so important at court
that he became Emilia's attendant.

Palamon escaped from prison and hid in a forest.

The two rivals met by chance in a clearing,
during a celebration of Mayday.

Neither would renounce his love.

They agreed to meet again, secretly,
and fight to the death.

Their private duel was interrupted by Theseus.

The kinsmen were re-imprisoned and sentenced to death.

But Hippolyta has intervened.
She has persuaded Theseus
to allow the rivals to fight for the hand of Emilia
in a proper chivalrous tournament.

Each shall appear in the lists after an interval of three months,
each accompanied by three knights, as 'Assistants'.

The winner of the tournament shall marry Emilia.

The loser and his companion knights shall all be put to death.

Today is the day of the tournament.

Before it begins, the three protagonists
(the suitors and Emilia)
will pray for a good outcome to the god of their choice:

Arcite to Mars, the god of war;
Palamon to Venus, goddess of love;
Emily to Diana, the chaste huntress. .

How will the gods answer the suppliants?

Two Kinsmen from Thebes

INTRADA

[Enter Theseus, Hippolyta and Pirithous]

[Exeunt Palamon and his Knights.]

[Arcite prays to Mars]

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

[Arcite prays to Mars]

[Exeunt Arcite and his Knights]

[Enter Palamon and his Knights.]

[Exeunt Palamon and his Knights]

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

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

[Cornets and Trompets sound as to a charge.]

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

[Enter Servant.]

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

[Another cry and showt within, and Cornets.]

[Cornets. Cry within: Arcite, Arcite.]

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

Scene 3. (A Place of Execution ; a Block prepared.)

INTRADA

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

[Lies on the Blocke.]

[A great noise within crying, 'run, save, hold!'.]

[Enter Pirithous in haste.]

FINIS