

BLANCHE

Upon thy wedding-day?
Against the blood that thou hast married?
What, shall our feast be kept with slaughter'd men?
Shall braying trumpets and loud churlish drums,
Clamours of hell, be measures to our pomp?
O husband, hear me! ay, alack, how new
Is husband in my mouth! even for that name,
Which till this time my tongue did ne'er pronounce,
Upon my knee I beg, go not to arms
Against mine uncle.

The sun's o'er-cast with blood: fair day, adieu!
Which is the side that I must go withal?
I am with both: each army hath a hand;
And in their rage, I having hold of both,
They swirl asunder and dismember me.
Husband, I cannot pray that thou mayst win;
Uncle, I needs must pray that thou mayst lose;
Father, I may not wish the fortune thine;
Grandam, I will not wish thy fortunes thrive:
Whoever wins, on that side shall I lose
Assured loss before the match be play'd.

There where my fortune lives, there my life dies.

Blanche of Castile is the niece of King John who has recently been appointed King of England. King Philip of France has just declared war with England believing that King John's nephew, Arthur, is the true heir to the English throne. King Philip of France sends troupes to invade the English-ruled town of Angiers and threatens the citizens with attack if they do not support Arthur's claim. The English arrive, and King Philip and King John state their claims to the people of Angiers. The people of Angier say they will support whoever is the rightful king. Philip the Bastard, King John's half-brother, suggests Blanche should marry King Philip's nephew, Louis the Dauphin, in order to unite France and England. Following this, Cardinal Pandolf tells Louis that his claim to the throne is as strong as Arthur, after King John is ex-communicated from the church. In this scene, Blanche has just discovered that Louis plans to invade England and go to war with her uncle, almost immediately after they are married.

Antony and Cleopatra – Act Five, Scene Two

Cleopatra

You laugh when boys or women tell their dreams;
Is't not your trick?
I dream'd there was an Emperor Antony:
O, such another sleep, that I might see
But such another man!
His face was as the heavens; and therein stuck
A sun and moon, which kept their course,
And lighted the little O, the earth.
His legs bestrid the ocean: his rear'd arm
Crested the world: his voice was propertyed
As all the tuned spheres, and that to friends;
But when he meant to quail and shake the orb,
He was as rattling thunder. For his bounty,
There was no winter in't; an autumn 'twas
That grew the more by reaping: his delights
Were dolphin-like; they show'd his back above
The element they lived in: in his livery
Walk'd crowns and crownets; realms and islands were
As plates dropp'd from his pocket.
Think you there was, or might be, such a man
As this I dream'd of?
But, if there be, or ever were, one such,
It's past the size of dreaming: nature wants stuff
To vie strange forms with fancy; yet, to imagine
An Antony, were nature's piece 'gainst fancy,
Condemning shadows quite.

Cleopatra is the Queen of Egypt and lives a life of decadence in Alexandria with her lover, Mark Antony. Antony is one of the three rulers of the Roman Empire and neglects his duties to Rome by spending all his time with Cleopatra. News arrives that Antony's wife in Rome has died, and that Pompey threaten the Roman Empire. Antony leaves Cleopatra to return home to his office. In Rome, Antony's associate, Octavius Caesar suggests to Antony that he marry his sister, Octavia, in order to fix their alliance and overpower Pompey, and Antony agrees. Antony and Octavius make peace with Pompey, but when Octavius decides to attack Pompey anyway, Antony sends Octavia back to her brother and sneaks back to Cleopatra. Learning that Cleopatra and Antony have crowned themselves King and Queen of Egypt, Octavius wages war on them. Egypt loses a battle at sea, because of Antony retreating from battle to follow Cleopatra's fleeing ship. Cleopatra offers Octavius a secret treaty. Antony accuses Cleopatra of betraying him, Cleopatra flees to her monument and sends a false report that she has died. Antony attempts to kill himself and asks to be brought to die in Cleopatra's arms. In this scene, Cleopatra is resolved to kill herself rather than give herself up to Roman forces and live without Antony.

King Henry the Fifth – Act Three, Scene Two

BOY

As young as I am, I have observ'd these three swashers. I am boy to them all three; but all they three, though they would serve me, could not be man to me; for indeed three such antics do not amount to a man.

For Bardolph, he is white-liver'd and red-fac'd; by the means whereof 'a faces it out, but fights not.

For Pistol, he hath a killing tongue and a quiet sword; by the means whereof 'a breaks words and keeps whole weapons.

For Nym, he hath heard that men of few words are the best men, and therefore he scorns to say his prayers lest 'a should be thought a coward; but his few bad words are match'd with as few good deeds; for 'a never broke any man's head but his own, and that was against a post when he was drunk.

They will steal anything, and call it purchase. Bardolph stole a lute-case, bore it twelve leagues, and sold it for three halfpence. Nym and Bardolph are sworn brothers in filching, and in Calais they stole a fire-shovel; I knew by that piece of service the men would carry coals.

They would have me as familiar with men's pockets as their gloves or their handkerchers; which makes much against my manhood, if I should take from another's pocket to put into mine; for it is plain pocketing up of wrongs.

I must leave them and seek some better service; their villainy goes against my weak stomach, and therefore I must cast it up.

The unnamed Boy is John Falstaff's page. After Falstaff dies in the war between England and France, the boy follows Bardolph, Nym and Pistol who once were soldiers for Falstaff. In this speech, the boy tells us about what he has observed since being in the company of these men.

BRUTUS

It must be by his death: and for my part,
I know no personal cause to spurn at him,
But for the general. He would be crown'd:
How that might change his nature, there's the question.
It is the bright day that brings forth the adder;
And that craves wary walking. Crown him?--that;--
And then, I grant, we put a sting in him,
That at his will he may do danger with.
The abuse of greatness is, when it disjoins
Remorse from power: and, to speak truth of Caesar,
I have not known when his affections sway'd
More than his reason. But 'tis a common proof,
That lowliness is young ambition's ladder,
Whereto the climber-upward turns his face;
But when he once attains the upmost round,
He then unto the ladder turns his back,
Looks in the clouds, scorning the base degrees
By which he did ascend. So Caesar may.
Then, lest he may, prevent. And, since the quarrel
Will bear no colour for the thing he is,
Fashion it thus; that what he is, augmented,
Would run to these and these extremities:
And therefore think him as a serpent's egg
Which, hatch'd, would, as his kind, grow mischievous,
And kill him in the shell.

Julius Caesar has returned to Rome victorious in the war against Pompey, and the republic plan to gift Caesar with many honours to reward him for his triumph. The Roman senators worry that these new titles might mean that too much power is held by Caesar. Brutus is persuaded by Cassius to join the conspirators that are plotting to assassinate Caesar. Initially, Brutus is doubtful but is convinced by Cassius that Caesar's death would be for the greater good of the people.

DEMETRIUS

My lord, fair Helen told me of their stealth,
Of this their purpose hither to this wood;
And I in fury hither follow'd them,
Fair Helena in fancy following me.
But, my good lord, I wot not by what power,--
But by some power it is,--my love to Hermia,
Melted as the snow, seems to me now
As the remembrance of an idle gaud
Which in my childhood I did dote upon;
And all the faith, the virtue of my heart,
The object and the pleasure of mine eye,
Is only Helena. To her, my lord,
Was I betroth'd ere I saw Hermia:
But, like in sickness, did I loathe this food;
But, as in health, come to my natural taste,
Now I do wish it, love it, long for it,
And will for evermore be true to it.

Demetrius is a young man from Athens, who once loved Helena and now loves her best friend Hermia, whom he is bound to marry. Hermia rejects Demetrius's marriage proposal, protesting that she instead loves Lysander. The Duke decrees that Hermia must marry Demetrius in four days, or a punishment of death or confinement in a nunnery. With this news, Hermia and Lysander run away together into the forest, and Demetrius follows them, while Helena, still infatuated with Demetrius, follows him. Things become more complicated in the forest, when King of the Fairies, Oberon, orders that love-juice should be put on Demetrius's eyes to reconcile his love with Helena. The love-juice is mistakenly put on Lysander as well as Demetrius, causing them both to fall in love with Helena. The boys fight over her, and the two girls row.

CORDELIA

O my dear father, restoration hang
Thy medicine on my lips, and let this kiss
Repair those violent harms that my two sisters
Have in thy reverence made!
Had you not been their father, these white flakes
Had challeng'd pity of them. Was this a face
To be oppos'd against the warring winds?
To stand against the deep dread-bolted thunder?
In the most terrible and nimble stroke
Of quick cross lightning? to watch-poor perdu!-
With this thin helm? Mine enemy's dog,
Though he had bit me, should have stood that night
Against my fire; and wast thou fain, poor father,
To hovel thee with swine and rogues forlorn,
In short and musty straw? Alack, alack!
'Tis wonder that thy life and wits at once
Had not concluded all.-He wakes. Speak to him.
Sir, do you know me? O, look upon me, sir,
And hold your hands in benediction o'er me.

Cordelia is the youngest of three sisters, and the daughter of Lear, King of Britain. When Lear divided up his kingdom between his children, he asked each of them to describe their love for him. Cordelia's older sisters showered him with affection and when Cordelia came to speak, she told her father that she loved him according to her bond, no more, no less. Lear takes offence to this; he disinherits Cordelia and divides up her portion of the kingdom between her sisters. Cordelia marries the King of France and leaves England. In this scene, Cordelia returns to England to find that her father has been cast out into a terrible storm by her older sisters. This mistreatment has driven her father to madness. Cordelia attempts to comfort her father and berates her sisters for not showing more kindness to their father.

EDMUND

This is the excellent foppery of the world, that, when we are sick in fortune,--often the surfeit of our own behavior,--we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and the stars: as if we were villains by necessity; fools by heavenly compulsion; knaves, thieves, and treachers, by spherical predominance; drunkards, liars, and adulterers, by an enforced obedience of planetary influence; and all that we are evil in, by a divine thrusting on: an admirable evasion of whoremaster man, to lay his goatish disposition to the charge of a star! My father compounded with my mother under the dragon's tail; and my nativity was under Ursa major; so that it follows, I am rough and lecherous. Tut, I should have been that I am, had the maidenliest star in the firmament twinkled on my bastardizing. Edgar--

[Enter EDGAR]

And pat he comes like the catastrophe of the old comedy: my cue is villanous melancholy, with a sigh like Tom o' Bedlam. O, these eclipses do portend these divisions! fa, sol, la, mi.

Context

Edmund is the illegitimate son of the Earl of Gloucester, and has a half-brother, Edgar. Edmund begrudges his status of being a 'bastard' child and hatches a plot to turn Gloucester against the legitimate son, Edgar. He gives Gloucester a forged letter that says Edgar has plans to seize his father's estate. Gloucester says he should have seen this treachery coming in the ominous positions of the sun and moon, and that all evils occur after eclipses. Alone, Edmund examines his father's theory, that we are only good or bad because it is written in the stars.

HAMLET

How all occasions do inform against me,
And spur my dull revenge! What is a man,
If his chief good and market of his time
Be but to sleep and feed? a beast, no more.
Sure, he that made us with such large discourse,
Looking before and after, gave us not
That capability and god-like reason
To fust in us unused. Now, whether it be
Bestial oblivion, or some craven scruple
Of thinking too precisely on the event,
A thought which, quarter'd, hath but one part wisdom
And ever three parts coward, I do not know
Why yet I live to say 'This thing's to do;'
Sith I have cause and will and strength and means
To do't. Examples gross as earth exhort me:
Witness this army of such mass and charge
Led by a delicate and tender prince,
Whose spirit with divine ambition puff'd
Makes mouths at the invisible event,
Exposing what is mortal and unsure
To all that fortune, death and danger dare,
Even for an egg-shell. Rightly to be great
Is not to stir without great argument,
But greatly to find quarrel in a straw
When honour's at the stake. How stand I then,
That have a father kill'd, a mother stain'd,
Excitements of my reason and my blood,
And let all sleep? while, to my shame, I see
The imminent death of twenty thousand men,
That, for a fantasy and trick of fame,
Go to their graves like beds, fight for a plot
Whereon the numbers cannot try the cause,
Which is not tomb enough and continent
To hide the slain? O, from this time forth,
My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth!

Hamlet is the Prince of Denmark, and has recently lost his father King Hamlet, while his widowed mother, Gertrude, has re-married Hamlet's uncle and successor to the throne, Claudius. Hamlet has been visited by the ghost of his dead father, who tells Hamlet that he was murdered by Claudius, and demands him to avenge his death. Hamlet asks a group of actors to play out the story of a murder that mirrors his own father's death, and by observing Claudius' reaction to the play, he finds him guilty of King Hamlet's murder. Prior to this speech, Hamlet speaks to an army captain who tells him he and his soldiers are about to go into battle for a small and inconsequential plot of land, which will no doubt be the cause of many deaths. This reminds him of his own duty in avenging his father's death.

All's Well That Ends Well – Act Three, Scene Two

HELENA

'Till I have no wife, I have nothing in France.'
Nothing in France, until he has no wife!
Thou shalt have none, Rousillon, none in France;
Then hast thou all again. Poor lord! is't I
That chase thee from thy country and expose
Those tender limbs of thine to the event
Of the none-sparing war? and is it I
That drive thee from the sportive court, where thou
Wast shot at with fair eyes, to be the mark
Of smoky muskets? O you leaden messengers,
That ride upon the violent speed of fire,
Fly with false aim; move the still-peering air,
That sings with piercing; do not touch my lord.
Whoever shoots at him, I set him there;
Whoever charges on his forward breast,
I am the caitiff that do hold him to't;
And, though I kill him not, I am the cause
His death was so effected: better 'twere
I met the ravin lion when he roar'd
With sharp constraint of hunger; better 'twere
That all the miseries which nature owes
Were mine at once. No, come thou home, Rousillon,
Whence honour but of danger wins a scar,
As oft it loses all: I will be gone;
My being here it is that holds thee hence:
Shall I stay here to do't? no, no, although
The air of paradise did fan the house
And angels officed all: I will be gone,
That pitiful rumour may report my flight,
To console thine ear. Come, night; end, day!
For with the dark, poor thief, I'll steal away.

Helena is the orphaned daughter of a doctor and is now in the care of the widowed Countess of Rossillion. She is in love with the countess's son, Bertram, who pays her no attention. Bertram goes to the Parisian court to be an attendant to the sick King of France. Helena follows Bertram to Paris and offers the King her services as a healer. The King is unsure, but Helena promises to heal the King, claiming knowledge in medicine from her father. The King recovers, and in reward Helena may choose a husband from the court. Helena chooses Bertram, who rejects her because of her low status and lack of money. The King forces Bertram to marry, but after the wedding Bertram goes to war in Italy without saying goodbye to Helena. In this scene, Helena has read Bertram's note that says he will only marry if she obtains his family ring from his finger and become pregnant with his child. Until then, he does not recognise her as his wife.

Two Gentlemen of Verona – Act Four, Scene Four

JULIA

And she shall thank you for't, if e'er you know her.
A virtuous gentlewoman, mild and beautiful
I hope my master's suit will be but cold,
Since she respects my mistress' love so much.
Alas, how love can trifle with itself!
Here is her picture: let me see; I think,
If I had such a tire, this face of mine
Were full as lovely as is this of hers:
And yet the painter flatter'd her a little,
Unless I flatter with myself too much.
Her hair is auburn, mine is perfect yellow:
If that be all the difference in his love,
I'll get me such a colour'd periwig.
Her eyes are grey as glass, and so are mine:
Ay, but her forehead's low, and mine's as high.
What should it be that he respects in her
But I can make respective in myself,
If this fond Love were not a blinded god?
Come, shadow, come and take this shadow up,
For 'tis thy rival. O thou senseless form,
Thou shalt be worshipp'd, kiss'd, loved and adored!
And, were there sense in his idolatry,
My substance should be statue in thy stead.
I'll use thee kindly for thy mistress' sake,
That used me so; or else, by Jove I vow,
I should have scratch'd out your unseeing eyes
To make my master out of love with thee!

Julia is a lady of Verona and in love with Proteus. Proteus sets off from Julia to join his closest friend, Valentine, in Milan. Julia decides to follow Proteus to Milan, and dresses as a boy for the journey to keep her from harm. When she arrives, she discovers that Proteus has fallen in love with Silvia, along with his best friend, Valentine. Julia, unsure of what to do, stays in Proteus's company disguised as a boy and becomes Proteus's page, Sebastian. Proteus sends "Sebastian" to Silvia to woo her with a ring that Julia gave him before he left Verona. Silvia rejects the ring, knowing that it was a love token from Julia, saying she is disgusted with him to forget her so quickly. Silvia says farewell to "Sebastian" and leaves him with some money to give to Julia.

MACBETH

If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well
It were done quickly: if the assassination
Could trammel up the consequence, and catch
With his surcease success; that but this blow
Might be the be-all and the end-all here,
But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,
We'd jump the life to come. But in these cases
We still have judgment here; that we but teach
Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return
To plague the inventor: this even-handed justice
Commends the ingredients of our poison'd chalice
To our own lips. He's here in double trust;
First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,
Strong both against the deed; then, as his host,
Who should against his murderer shut the door,
Not bear the knife myself. Besides, this Duncan
Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been
So clear in his great office, that his virtues
Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongued, against
The deep damnation of his taking-off;
And pity, like a naked new-born babe,
Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubim, horsed
Upon the sightless couriers of the air,
Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,
That tears shall drown the wind. I have no spur
To prick the sides of my intent, but only
Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself
And falls on the other.

Macbeth is a general holding the title of Thane of Glamis in the army of Duncan, the King of Scotland, and he has just led his men to victory over the forces of Norway and Ireland. On his return from battle, three witches appear to Macbeth and proclaim him as the Thane of Cawdor, and soon 'be King hereafter'. The witches disappear, and immediately after, another Thane tells Macbeth that for the bravery he has shown in war, he has been bestowed his new title – the Thane of Cawdor. Macbeth takes this news as confirmation of the first part of the witches' prophecy, and Macbeth, now less doubtful of their predictions, begins to foster ambitions to become King. Duncan arrives to congratulate Macbeth on his new title and tells him that he will stay in Macbeth's castle tonight. Macbeth sends word of the King's coming and the prophecy to his wife, who encourages him to kill Duncan tonight. In this speech Macbeth debates if the decision to kill his King is the best course of action.

OLIVIA.

'What is your parentage?'
'Above my fortunes, yet my state is well:
I am a gentleman.' I'll be sworn thou art;
Thy tongue, thy face, thy limbs, actions, and spirit,
Do give thee five-fold blazon. Not too fast! Soft, soft!
Unless the master were the man. How now!
Even so quickly may one catch the plague?
Methinks I feel this youth's perfections
With an invisible and subtle stealth
To creep in at mine eyes. Well, let it be.
What ho, Malvolio!
Run after that same peevish messenger,
The County's man. He left this ring behind him,
Would I or not. Tell him I'll none of it.
Desire him not to flatter with his lord,
Nor hold him up with hopes; I am not for him.
If that the youth will come this way to-morrow,
I'll give him reasons for't. Hie thee, Malvolio.
I do I know not what, and fear to find
Mine eye too great a flatterer for my mind.
Fate, show thy force: ourselves we do not owe;
What is decreed must be; and be this so!

Olivia is a wealthy countess in Illyria, who is in mourning for the death of her father and brother. While in mourning she has refused to accept proposals of love, even from Orsino, the Duke of Illyria, until seven years have passed. Orsino has made many declarations of love to Olivia, and now has sent his new assistant Cesario (who is actually a woman in disguise called Viola) to her house to proclaim his love for Olivia. Things become more complicated, when Olivia rejects Orsino's love, and instead, becomes attracted to his messenger 'Cesario'. She orders Cesario to tell Orsino she cannot love him and not to send any more messengers to her house – unless Cesario is the one who visits her, to tell her how Orsino has received her decision. In this scene, Cesario has just left Olivia and she analyses the details of the conversation, and sends her steward Malvolio after Cesario with a ring to give him an excuse to visit her again.

PRINCESS OF FRANCE

A time, methinks, too short
To make a world-without-end bargain in.
No, no, my lord, your Grace is perjur'd much,
Full of dear guiltiness; and therefore this,
If for my love, as there is no such cause,
You will do aught- this shall you do for me:
Your oath I will not trust; but go with speed
To some forlorn and naked hermitage,
Remote from all the pleasures of the world;
There stay until the twelve celestial signs
Have brought about the annual reckoning.
If this austere insociable life
Change not your offer made in heat of blood,
If frosts and fasts, hard lodging and thin weeds,
Nip not the gaudy blossoms of your love,
But that it bear this trial, and last love,
Then, at the expiration of the year,
Come, challenge me, challenge me by these deserts;
And, by this virgin palm now kissing thine,
I will be thine; and, till that instant, shut
My woeful self up in a mournful house,
Raining the tears of lamentation
For the remembrance of my father's death.
If this thou do deny, let our hands part,
Neither intitled in the other's heart.

King Ferdinand of Navarre and his lords plan to isolate themselves for three years and commit to studying the great works, and to promise they will not entertain the company of any women. The Princess of France and her attending ladies arrive in Navarre and are intrigued by the King and his lord's vow. In time, the Princess and her ladies fall in love with the King and his lords, leading them to break their vows. Shortly after, a letter arrives from France to tell the Princess that her father has died. The Princess and her attending ladies must return to France, and ask the men to wait for them for one year to prove their love. In this scene the Princess tells King Ferdinand he must withdraw himself from all his comforts for one year, while she does the same, and if King Ferdinand still loves her after this time, then she will accept his love.

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.

Valentine is a young man from Verona who has set off to travel the world. On arrival in Milan, he falls in love with the Duke's daughter, Silvia. When Valentine's closest friend, Proteus, is sent to Milan to accompany Valentine on his journey, he too falls in love with Silvia, keeping his affections a secret. Valentine hatches a plan to elope with Silvia and foil the Duke's plans to marry her to Thurio, and shares this plan with Proteus. Proteus hopes to win Silvia for himself, and betrays Valentine by telling the Duke of his plan to run away with Silvia. In this scene, the Duke has just captured Valentine, and punished him with banishment from the city of Milan.

REGAN

But are my brother's powers set forth?

Himself in person there?

Lord Edmund spake not with your lord at home?

What might import my sister's letter to him?

'Faith, he is posted hence on serious matter.
It was great ignorance, Gloucester's eyes being out,
To let him live: where he arrives he moves
All hearts against us: Edmund, I think, is gone,
In pity of his misery, to dispatch
His nighted life: moreover, to descry
The strength o' the enemy.

Our troops set forth to-morrow: stay with us;
The ways are dangerous.

Why should she write to Edmund? Might not you
Transport her purposes by word? Belike,
Something--I know not what: I'll love thee much,
Let me unseal the letter.

I know your lady does not love her husband;
I am sure of that: and at her late being here
She gave strange oeillades and most speaking looks
To noble Edmund. I know you are of her bosom.

I speak in understanding; you are; I know't:
Therefore I do advise you, take this note:
My lord is dead; Edmund and I have talk'd;
And more convenient is he for my hand
Than for your lady's: you may gather more.
If you do find him, pray you, give him this;
And when your mistress hears thus much from you,
I pray, desire her call her wisdom to her.
So, fare you well.

If you do chance to hear of that blind traitor,
Preferment falls on him that cuts him off.

Fare thee well.

Regan is the middle of three sisters, and daughter to Lear, King of Britain. Her husband has recently been killed while he and Regan gouged out the Earl of Gloucester's eyes – a punishment for withholding information about the French army's plans to invade Britain. Since his death she has become attracted to Edmund, who also has the affection of Regan's older sister, Goneril. In this scene, Regan is talking to Goneril's steward, who has been ordered by Goneril to bring Edmund a letter. Regan wants to intercept her sister's letter and gives the steward a love token or letter of her own to bring to Edmund.

The Merchant of Venice – Act Three, Scene Two

PORTIA

You see me, Lord Bassanio, where I stand,
Such as I am: though for myself alone
I would not be ambitious in my wish,
To wish myself much better; yet, for you
I would be trebled twenty times myself;
A thousand times more fair, ten thousand times more rich;
That only to stand high in your account,
I might in virtue, beauties, livings, friends,
Exceed account; but the full sum of me
Is sum of something, which, to term in gross,
Is an unlesson'd girl, unschool'd, unpractised;
Happy in this, she is not yet so old
But she may learn; happier than this,
She is not bred so dull but she can learn;
Happiest of all is that her gentle spirit
Commits itself to yours to be directed,
As from her lord, her governor, her king.
Myself and what is mine to you and yours
Is now converted: but now I was the lord
Of this fair mansion, master of my servants,
Queen o'er myself: and even now, but now,
This house, these servants and this same myself
Are yours, my lord: I give them with this ring;
Which when you part from, lose, or give away,
Let it presage the ruin of your love
And be my vantage to exclaim on you.

Portia is a wealthy heiress of Belmont. Her father has stipulated in his will that she will marry whichever suitor makes the correct choice when presented with three caskets, made of gold, silver, and lead. Many men come to woo her, but it is a young nobleman from Venice, Bassanio that chooses the right casket, picking lead. In this speech, Portia talks to Bassanio after he has just won her hand in marriage.

Two Gentlemen of Verona – Act Four, Scene Three

SILVIA

O Eglamour, thou art a gentleman--
Think not I flatter, for I swear I do not--
Valiant, wise, remorseful, well accomplish'd:
Thou art not ignorant what dear good will
I bear unto the banish'd Valentine,
Nor how my father would enforce me marry
Vain Thurio, whom my very soul abhors.
Thyself hast loved; and I have heard thee say
No grief did ever come so near thy heart
As when thy lady and thy true love died,
Upon whose grave thou vow'dst pure chastity.
Sir Eglamour, I would to Valentine,
To Mantua, where I hear he makes abode;
And, for the ways are dangerous to pass,
I do desire thy worthy company,
Upon whose faith and honour I repose.
Urge not my father's anger, Eglamour,
But think upon my grief, a lady's grief,
And on the justice of my flying hence,
To keep me from a most unholy match,
Which heaven and fortune still rewards with plagues.
I do desire thee, even from a heart
As full of sorrows as the sea of sands,
To bear me company and go with me:
If not, to hide what I have said to thee,
That I may venture to depart alone.

Silvia is the daughter of the Duke of Milan, and is arranged to marry Thurio – a man Silvia hates. Valentine, a young man from Verona, has come to Milan and fallen in love with Silvia. Valentine's close friend Proteus is sent to accompany Valentine on his travels, and on arrival in Milan, he too falls in love with Silvia, keeping his infatuation a secret to Valentine. Valentine confides in Proteus with his plans to elope with Silvia and scupper the Duke's plans to marry her to Thurio. Proteus, hoping to woo Silvia for himself, betrays Valentine by telling the Duke of his plans to escape. The Duke captures Valentine and banishes him from Milan. Silvia decides to flee Milan to be with Valentine with the help of Sir Eglamour. In this speech, Silvia asks Eglamour for his help to bring her to Mantua, where it is rumoured Valentine is lodging.