Having sworn off women in pursuit of study, Ferdinand and his three companions are now secretly in love with the Princess of France and her three ladies. Berowne enters first lamenting this dilemma, then hides as the other three men enter doing the same thing. Berowne then comes out from hiding to scold the three for their lack of will power in falling for the ladies. Once two clowns enter and reveal a letter written by Berowne, exposing his love for one of the ladies, he is found out as being in the same situation as his friends. In the remainder of the scene, the men decide their oaths were foolish and unachievable, and the only course of action is to woo these women…

BEROWNE
Guilty, my lord, guilty! I confess, I confess.

FERDINAND
What?

BEROWNE
That you three fools lack'd me fool to make up the mess:
He, he, and you, and you, my liege, and I,
Are pick-purses in love, and we deserve to die.
O, dismiss this audience, and I shall tell you more.

DUMAINE
Now the number is even.

BEROWNE
True, true; we are four.

(after a pause)

Sweet lords, sweet lovers, O, let us embrace!
As true we are as flesh and blood can be:
The sea will ebb and flow, heaven show his face;
Young blood doth not obey an old decree:
We cannot cross the cause why we were born;
Therefore of all hands must we be forsworn.

FERDINAND
What, did these rent lines show some love of thine?

BEROWNE
Did they, quoth you? Who sees the heavenly Rosaline,
That, like a rude and savage man of Inde,
At the first opening of the gorgeous east,
Bows not his vassal head and stricken blind
Kisses the base ground with obedient breast?
What peremptory eagle-sighted eye
Dares look upon the heaven of her brow,
That is not blinded by her majesty?

FERDINAND
What zeal, what fury hath inspired thee now?
My love, her mistress, is a gracious moon;
She an attending star, scarce seen a light.

BEROWNE
My eyes are then no eyes, nor I Berowne:
O, but for my love, day would turn to night!
O, 'tis the sun that maketh all things shine.

FERDINAND
By heaven, thy love is black as ebony.

BEROWNE
Is ebony like her? O word divine!
No face is fair that is not full so black.

FERDINAND
O paradox! Black is the badge of hell.

DUMAINE
To look like her are chimney-sweepers black.

LONGAVILLE
And since her time are colliers counted bright.

DUMAINE
“colliers” – one that sells coal
Dark needs no candles now, for dark is light.

**BEROWNE**
Your mistresses dare never come in rain,
For fear their colours should be wash'd away.

“colours” referring to makeup

**FERDINAND**
'Twere good, yours did; for, sir, to tell you plain,
I'll find a fairer face not wash'd to-day.

**BEROWNE**
I'll prove her fair, or talk till doomsday here.

**FERDINAND**
No devil will fright thee then so much as she.

**DUMAINE**
I never knew man hold vile stuff so dear.

**LONGAVILLE**
Look, here's thy love: my foot and her face see.

**FERDINAND**
But what of this? are we not all in love?

**BEROWNE**
Nothing so sure; and thereby all forsown.

**FERDINAND**
Then leave this chat; and, good Berowne, now prove
Our loving lawful, and our faith not torn.

**DUMAINE**
Ay, marry, there; some flattery for this evil.

**LONGAVILLE**
O, some authority how to proceed;
Some tricks, some quillets, how to cheat the devil.

“quillets” – verbal niceties, subtle distinctions

**DUMAINE**
Some salve for perjury.

“salve” – balm, “perjury” – lying under oath

**BEROWNE**
O, 'tis more than need.
Have at you, then, affection's men at arms.
Consider what you first did swear unto,
To fast, to study, and to see no woman;
Flat treason 'gainst the kingly state of youth.
Say, can you fast? your stomachs are too young;
And abstinence engenders maladies.
And where that you have vow'd to study, lords,
In that each of you have forsworn his book,
Can you still dream and pore and thereon look?
For when would you, my lord, or you, or you,
Have found the ground of study's excellence
Without the beauty of a woman's face?
Then fools you were these women to forswear,
Or keeping what is sworn, you will prove fools.
Let us once lose our oaths to find ourselves,

**FERDINAND**
Saint Cupid, then! and, soldiers, to the field!

**BEROWNE**
Advance your standards, and upon them, lords;
Pell-mell, down with them! but be first advised,
In conflict that you get the sun of them.

“get the sun of them” – don’t turn them off

**LONGAVILLE**
Now to plain-dealing: lay these glozes by;
Shall we resolve to woo these girls of France?

“glozes” – flattery or deceit

**FERDINAND**
And win them too: therefore let us devise
Some entertainment for them in their tents.

**BEROWNE**
First, from the park let us conduct them thither;
Then homeward every man attach the hand
Of his fair mistress: in the afternoon
We will with some strange pastime solace them,
Such as the shortness of the time can shape;
For revels, dances, masks and merry hours
Forerun fair Love, strewing her way with flowers.

Exeunt