

# The Taming of the Shrew

By William Shakespeare



KATHARINE was the oldest daughter of Baptista, a rich gentleman of Padua in Italy. She was a girl of such an ungovernable spirit and fiery temper, such a loud-tongued scold, that she was known in Padua by no other name than “Katharine the **Shrew**.” It seemed very unlikely, indeed impossible, that any gentleman would *ever* be found who would dare to marry this lady, and so Baptista was very much blamed for not giving his consent to many excellent offers that were made to her gentle sister Bianca, putting off all Bianca’s suitors with the excuse that when the oldest sister was off his hands, they should have permission to address young Bianca.



Bianca



Bianca’s Suitor, Lucentio

It happened, however, that a gentleman named Petruchio came to Padua purposely to look for a wife. He wasn’t discouraged by these reports of Katharine’s shrewish temper, and hearing she was rich and beautiful, he resolved to marry this

famous **termagant**, and tame her into a meek and manageable wife. And truthfully there was none was so fit to set about this **herculean** labor as Petruchio, whose spirit was as high as Katharine's.



Katherine the Shrew



Petruchio

And he was a witty and happy-tempered humorist, and so wise and clever that he well knew how to fake a passionate and furious attitude, when actually his spirits were so calm that he himself could have laughed merrily at his own pretended anger; for his natural temper was relaxed and easy. The boisterous airs he assumed were only in sport, or more properly speaking, motivated by his excellent judgment, as the only means to overcome, in her own way, the passionate ways of the furious Katharine.

A-courting then Petruchio went to Katharine the Shrew; and first of all he applied to Baptista her father, for permission to woo his gentle daughter Katharine, as Petruchio called her, saying that, having heard of her bashful modesty and mild behavior, he had come from Verona to **solicit** her love.



Baptista, Katherine's father

Her father, though he wished her married, was forced to confess that Katharine wasn't really like this - it being soon apparent of what manner of gentleness she was composed, for her music master rushed into the room to complain that the *gentle* Katharine, his pupil, had broken his head with her **lute**, for presuming to find fault with her performance.

Which, when Petruchio heard, he said, “She is a brave girl; I love her more than ever, and I long to have some chat with her;” and hurrying the old gentleman for a positive answer, he said, “My business is in haste, Signior Baptista, I can’t come every day to woo. You knew my father: well, he is dead, and has left me **heir** to all his lands and goods. Then tell me, if I get your daughter’s love, what **dowry** you will give with her.”

Baptista thought his manner was somewhat blunt for a lover, but being glad to get Katharine married, he answered that he would give her twenty thousand **crowns** for her dowry, and half his **estate** at his death. So this odd match was quickly agreed on, and Baptista went to tell his shrewish daughter of her lover’s addresses, and sent her in to Petruchio to listen to his **suit**.

In the meantime, Petruchio was deciding the method of courtship he should pursue. And he said to himself, “I will woo her with some spirit when she comes in. If she screams at me, why then I will tell her she sings as sweetly as a nightingale. And if she frowns, I will say she looks as clear as roses newly washed with dew. If she won’t speak a word, I will praise the eloquence of her language. And if she tells me to get out, I will give her thanks as if she asked me to stay with her for a week.”

Now the stately Katharine entered, and Petruchio first addressed her with “Good morrow, Kate, for that’s your name, I hear.”

Katharine, not liking this plain **salutation**, said disdainfully, “They call me Katharine.”

“You lie,” replied the lover: “You’re called plain Kate, and **bonny** Kate, and sometimes Kate the Shrew. But, Kate, you are the prettiest Kate in Christendom, and therefore, Kate, hearing your mildness praised in every town, I am come to woo you for my wife.”

A strange courtship they made of it. She in loud and angry terms showing him how justly she had gained the name of “Shrew,” while he still praised her sweet and courteous words, till at length, hearing her father coming, he said (intending to make it quick), “Sweet Katharine, let us set this idle chat aside, for your father has consented that you shall be my wife. Your dowry is agreed on, and whether you agree or not, I am going to marry you.”

And when Baptista entered, Petruchio told him his daughter had received him kindly, and that she had promised to be married the next Sunday. This Katharine denied, saying she would rather see him hanged on Sunday, and ticked her father off for wishing to wed her to such a mad-cap ruffian as Petruchio.

Petruchio desired her father not to listen to her angry words, for they had agreed she should seem reluctant before him, but that when they were alone, he said, he had found her very fond and loving. And he said to her, “Give me your hand, Kate; I will go to Venice to buy you fine clothes for our wedding-day. You

provide the feast, father, and send out the invitations, and I'll be sure to bring rings and rich clothes, so that my Katharine may look wonderful. And kiss me, Kate, for we will be married on Sunday."

On the Sunday, all the wedding guests were assembled, but they waited a long time before Petruchio came, and Katharine wept for frustration to think that Petruchio had only been making a joke of her. At last, however, he appeared.

But he brought none of the bridal **finery** he had promised Katharine, nor was he dressed himself like a bridegroom, but in strange untidy way, as if he meant to make a joke of the serious business he came about; and his servant and the very horses on which they rode were in the same way got up in a mean and fantastic fashion.

Petruchio could not be persuaded to change his outfit; he said Katharine was to be married to him and not to his clothes; and finding it was in hopeless to argue with him, to the church they went, he still behaving in the same mad way. For when the priest asked Petruchio if Katharine should be his wife, he swore so loud that she should, that, completely amazed, the priest let fall his book, and as he stooped to take it up, this mad-brained bridegroom gave him such a clout that down fell the priest and his book again. And all the while they were being married Petruchio stamped and swore so much, that the high-spirited Katharine trembled and shook with fear.

After the ceremony was over, while they were still in the church, he called for wine, and drank a loud health to the company, and threw a **sop** which was at the bottom of the glass full in the **sexton's** face, giving no other reason for this strange act than that the sexton's beard grew thin and sparse, and seemed to need something to make it grow. Never, they all thought, was there such a mad marriage.

(But Petruchio was putting all this wildness on, the better to succeed in the plot he had formed to tame his shrewish wife.)

Baptista had provided a sumptuous marriage feast, but when they returned from church, Petruchio, taking hold of Katharine, declared his intention of carrying his wife home instantly, and no **remonstrance** of his father-in-law, or angry words from the enraged Katharine, could make him change his mind. He claimed a husband's right to dispose of his wife as he pleased, and he hurried Katharine away, seeming so forceful and resolute that no one dared attempt to stop him.

Petruchio mounted his wife upon a miserable horse, lean and lank, which he had picked out for the purpose, and he and his servant no better mounted; they journeyed on through rough and muddy ways, and whenever this horse of Katharine's stumbled, he would storm and swear at the poor beast, who could scarcely crawl under his burden.

At last, after a weary journey, during which Katharine had heard nothing but the wild ravings of Petruchio at the servant and the horses, they arrived at his house. Petruchio welcomed her kindly to her home, but he had decided that she should have neither rest nor food that night. The tables were spread, and supper soon served; but Petruchio, pretending to find fault with every dish, threw the meat onto the floor, and ordered the servants to remove it. And all this he did, as he said, in love for his Katharine, that she wouldn't have to eat meat that was not well prepared. And when Katharine, weary and supperless, retired to rest, he found the same fault with the bed, throwing the pillows and bedclothes about the room, so that she was forced to sit down in a chair, where if she fell asleep, she was immediately woken by the loud voice of her husband, storming at the servants for the bad making of his wife's bridal-bed.

The next day Petruchio pursued the same course, still speaking kind words to Katharine, but when she attempted to eat, he found fault with everything that was set before her, throwing the breakfast on the floor as he had done the supper. And Katharine, the **haughty** Katherine, had to beg the servants would bring her secretly a morsel of food; but they being instructed by Petruchio, replied, they dared not give her anything unknown to their master. "Ah," said she, "did he marry me to starve me? Beggars that come to my father's door have food given to them. But I, who never knew what it was to beg for anything, am starved for want of food, giddy for want of sleep, with **oaths** kept awake, and only fed with brawling. And what vexes me more than anything, he does it under the name of perfect love, pretending that if I sleep or eat, it would kill me."

Here her thoughts were interrupted by the entrance of Petruchio. He, not meaning she should be quite starved, had brought her a small portion of meat, and he said to her, "How's my sweet Kate? Here, love, you see how diligent I am, I have dressed your meat myself. I am sure my kindness merits thanks. Hmm. What, not a word? So then you love not the meat, and all the pains I have taken is to no purpose." He then ordered the servant to take the dish away.

Extreme hunger, which had abated the pride of Katharine, made her say, though hungered to the heart, "I pray you let it stand."

But Petruchio replied, "The poorest service is repaid with thanks, and so shall mine be before you touch the meat."

At this Katharine brought out a reluctant "I thank you, sir."

And now he allowed her to make a slender meal, saying, "Much good may it do your gentle heart, Kate; eat quickly! And now, my honey love, we will return to your father's house, and **revel** it as bravely as the best, with silken coats and caps and golden rings, with ruffs and scarfs and fans and double change of finery." And to make her believe he really intended to give her these lovely things, he called in a tailor and a **haberdasher**, who brought some new clothes he had ordered for her,

and then giving her plate to the servant to take away before she had half satisfied her hunger, he said, “What, have you finished?”

The haberdasher presented a cap, saying, “Here is the cap your worship bespoke.” On which Petruchio began to storm afresh, saying the cap was moulded in a **porringer**, and that it was no bigger than a cockle or walnut shell, desiring the haberdasher to take it away and make it bigger.

Katharine said, “I-I will have this; all gentlewomen wear these sorts of caps.”

“When you are gentle,” replied Petruchio, “you shall have one too, and not till then.”

The meat Katharine had eaten had a little revived her fallen spirits, and she said, “Why, sir, I trust I may have permission to speak, and speak I will: I am no child, no baby; your betters have endured to hear me say my mind; and if you cannot, you had better stop your ears.”

Petruchio would not hear these angry words, for he had happily discovered a better way of managing his wife than keeping up a jangling argument with her. Therefore, his answer was, “Why, you say true; it is a paltry cap, and I love you for not liking it.”

“Love me, or love me not,” said Katharine, “I like the cap, and I will have this cap or none.”

“You say you wish to see the gown?” said Petruchio, still pretending to misunderstand her. The tailor then came forward and showed her a fine gown he had made for her. Petruchio, whose intent was that she should have neither cap nor gown, found as much fault with that. “O mercy, Heaven!” said he, “what stuff is this! What, do you call this a sleeve? it is like a small cannon, carved up and down like an apple tart.”

The tailor said, “You bid me make it according to the fashion of the times.”

And Katharine said she never saw a better fashioned gown.

This was enough for Petruchio, and privately ordering these people might be paid for their goods, and excuses made to them for the seemingly strange treatment, he with fierce words and furious gestures drove the tailor and the haberdasher out of the room. And then, turning to Katharine, he said, “Well, come, my Kate! We will go to your father’s even in these **mean** garments we now wear.” And then he ordered his horses, confirming they should reach Baptista’s house by lunch time, for it was now seven o’clock in the morning.

Now it was *not* early morning, but the very middle of the day when he spoke this, so Katharine ventured to say, though modestly, being almost overcome

by the vehemence of his manner, "I dare assure you, sir, it is two o'clock, and it will be supper-time before we get there."

But Petruchio meant that she should be so completely subdued, that she should agree to *everything* he said before he carried her to her father; and therefore, as if he were lord even of the sun, and could command the hours themselves, he said it should be what time he pleased to have it, before he set out. "For," he said, "whatever I say or do, you *still* are arguing with me. I will not go today, and when I go, it shall be what time I say it is."

So another day Katherine was forced to practice her newly found obedience. And not till he had brought her proud spirit to such a perfect subjection that she dared not remember there was such a word as contradiction would Petruchio allow her to go to her father's house. And even while they were on their journey, she was in danger of being turned back again, only because she happened to hint that it was the sun, when he said the moon shone brightly at noonday. "Now, by my mother's son," said he, "and that is myself, it shall be the moon, or stars, or what I wish, before I travel to your father's house."

He then made as if he were going back again; but Katherine, no longer Katherine the Shrew, but the obedient wife, said, "Let us go forward, please, now we have come so far, and it shall be the sun, or moon, or what you please; and if you please to call it a rush candle, I promise it shall be so for me."

*This* he decided to prove, so he said again, "I say, it is the moon."

"I know it is the moon," replied Katherine.

"You lie, it is the blessed sun," said Petruchio.

"Then it *is* the blessed sun," replied Katherine. "But sun it is not, when you say it is not. What you will have it called, that's what it is, and so it shall always be for Katherine."

*Now* then he allowed her to proceed on her journey; but then to see if this yielding mood would last, he addressed an old gentleman they met on the road as if he had been a young woman, saying to him, "Good morning, gentle mistress," and asked Katherine if she had ever seen a fairer gentlewoman, praising the red and white of the old man's cheeks, and comparing his eyes to two bright stars. And again he addressed him, saying, "Fair lovely maid, once more - good day to you!" And said to his wife, "Sweet Kate, embrace her for her beauty's sake."

The now completely vanquished Katharine quickly adopted her husband's opinion, and spoke to the old gentleman, saying to him, "Young budding virgin, you are fair, and fresh, and sweet. Where are you going, and where is your house? Happy are the parents of so fair a child."

“Why, hang on, Kate,” said Petruchio; “I hope you are not mad. This is a man, old and wrinkled, faded and withered, and not a young girl, as you say he is.”

At this Katharine said, “Oh - pardon me, old gentleman; the sun has so dazzled my eyes, that everything I look on seems green. Now I perceive you are a reverend father. I hope you will pardon me for my sad mistake.”

“Do, good old grandpa,” said Petruchio, “and tell us which way you are travelling. We shall be glad of your company, if you are going our way.”

The old gentleman replied, “Fair sir, and you my merry mistress, your strange encounter has much amazed me. My name is Vincentio, and I am going to visit a son of mine who lives at Padua.”

Then Petruchio knew the old gentleman to be the father of Lucentio, a young gentleman who was to be married to Baptista’s younger daughter, Bianca. And he made Vincentio very happy by telling him the rich marriage his son was about to make. And they all journeyed on pleasantly together till they came to Baptista’s house, where there was a large company assembled to celebrate the wedding of Bianca and Lucentio, Baptista having willingly consented to the marriage of Bianca, now that he had got Katharine off his hands.

When they entered, Baptista welcomed them to the wedding feast, and there was also present another newly married pair. Lucentio, Bianca’s husband, and Hortensio, the other new married man, couldn’t resist making sly jests which seemed to hint at the shrewish disposition of Petruchio’s wife, and these bridegrooms seemed high pleased with the mild tempers of the ladies *they* had chosen, laughing at Petruchio for his less fortunate choice. Petruchio took little notice of their jokes till the ladies retired after dinner, and then he perceived Baptista himself joined in the laugh against him. For when Petruchio affirmed that his wife would prove more obedient than theirs, the father of Katharine said, “Now, son Petruchio, I fear you have got the worst shrew of all.”

“Well,” said Petruchio, “I say no, and therefore for proof that I speak the truth, let us each send for his wife, and he whose wife is most obedient to come at first when she is sent for, shall win the bet which we will propose.”

To this bet, the other two husbands willingly consented, for they were quite confident that their gentle wives would prove more obedient than the headstrong Katharine. And they proposed a wager of twenty crowns, but Petruchio merrily said, he would lay as much as that upon his hawk or hound, but twenty times as much upon his wife.

Lucentio and Hortensio raised the bet to a hundred crowns, and then Lucentio first sent his servant to desire Bianca would come to him. But the servant returned, and said, “Sir, my mistress sends you word she is busy and cannot come.”

“What,” said Petruchio, “does she say she is busy and cannot come? Is that an answer for a wife?” Then they laughed at him, and said, it would be alright if Katharine didn’t send him a worse answer.

And now it was Hortensio’s turn to send for his wife. And he said to his servant, “Go, and **entreat** my wife to come to me.”

“Oh ho! *entreat* her!” said Petruchio. “Well then, she’ll *have* to come.”

“I am afraid, sir,” said Hortensio, “your wife will not be entreated.” But presently this civil husband looked a little blank, when the servant returned without his mistress; and Hortensio said to him, “How now! Where is my wife?”

“Sir,” said the servant, “my mistress says, that this is some sort of joke, and therefore she won’t come. She says ‘You come to her.’”

“Worse and worse!” said Petruchio; and then he sent *his* servant, saying, “Go to your mistress, and tell her I *command* her to come to me.”

The company had scarcely time to think that she would not obey this summons, when Baptista, completely amazed, exclaimed, “Good god, here comes Katharine!”

And she entered, saying meekly to Petruchio, “What is your will, sir, that you send for me?”

“Where is your sister and Hortensio’s wife?” said he.

Katharine replied, “They sitting and talking by the parlor fire.”

“Go, fetch them!” said Petruchio.

And away went Katharine without a reply to perform her husband’s command.

“Well, here’s a wonder,” said Lucentio, “if you talk of a wonder.”

“And so it is,” said Hortensio. “I marvel at what it means.”

“It means peace,” said Petruchio, “and love, and quiet life, and right supremacy; and, in short, everything that is sweet and happy.”

Katharine’s father, overjoyed to see this reformation in his daughter, said, “Well now, good luck to you, son Petruchio! You’ve won the wager, and I will add another twenty thousand crowns to her dowry, as if she were another daughter, for she is completely changed.”

“No,” said Petruchio, “I will win the wager even better, and demonstrate more signs of her new-built virtue and obedience.”

Katharine now entered with the two ladies, and he said to her , “Katharine, that cap of yours does’nt suit you; off with it, and throw it on the floor.”

Katharine instantly took off her cap, and threw it down.

“Lord!” said Hortensio’s wife, “may I never be brought to do such a silly thing!”

And Bianca, she too said, “What foolish duty do you call this?”

At this, Bianca’s husband said to her, “I wish your duty were as foolish too! The wisdom of your duty, fair Bianca, has cost me a hundred crowns since dinner time.”

“The more fool you,” said Bianca, “for betting on my duty.”

“Katharine,” said Petruchio, “You tell these headstrong women what duty they owe their lords and husbands.”

And to the wonder of all present, the reformed shrewish lady spoke as eloquently in praise of the wife-like duty of obedience as she had demonstrated it implicitly in a ready submission to Petruchio’s will. And Katharine once more became famous in Padua. but ever afterwards those who had heard her wifely speech on that day swore that there had been a twinkle, a loving twinkle, in the bright beautiful eyes of Katharine no longer apparently the Shrew, but as Katharine the most obedient and duteous wife in Padua.

