

Louis:

When boughs are green in April I ask no more of life than beef and ale, an old dog and a fair and lusty wife. I may not be a rich man but all day long I'm free to take the prettiest girl in France and put her upon my knee. I may not be a wise man but what care I for that, if all the world is young again and spring is under my hat? When boughs are green in April, I ask no more of life than beef and ale, an old dog and a fair and lusty wife!

Alison:

The joy of a marriage will wear out soon with kissing at night and kissing at noon.

Louis:

Aye, you may tease, but how will you check a kiss on the pretty white nape of your neck?

Alison:

Louis, be off! Let go my arm! There's plenty of work for you on the farm.

Louis:

Plenty of work, fair wife? There is, but none for me till I've had a kiss!

Alison:

How you do plague me! Ride to town, and don't come back to the sun goes down!

Louis:

I'm off! Ho there, old dog, where are you? Hiding, you rascal? But I can see you! He'll lie all day in the sun, like a log; Whenever I whistle, he crawls, poor dog!

Alison:

A minute more and he might have met my dear fat Father Philippe! The Father never could conceal his admiration. Aye, he's gone, he and that idle old dog. He's gone, and now, while the fine weather holds, dear Father Philippe, come soon, soon, soon! You shall have everything that a cheerful man could require in the middle of April: A rich round almond-cake, a bottle of Burgundy, so... so. The most beautiful piece of pig's meat that you ever set eyes on, and a young wife who, in order to celebrate the springtime, will

stretch a point of conscience. And why should she not? When rainbows follow flying showers the almond-tree puts forth new flowers, and no one counts it strange at all If presently the blossoms fall. So too the heart should have its fling and put forth new love every spring. What folly in a girl to be less jocund than an almond-tree!

Philippe:

Piggy, piggy, piggy! Is my little pig at home?

Alison:

Father! When you are coming you know I never roam.

Philippe:

And where's your honest husband?

Alison:

A goodly way from here.

Philippe:

The time, then, was well chosen and we can make good cheer. I see that you have cake here and excellent red wine, And in the pot?

Alison:

Some pork, Father, that you and I may dine.

Philippe:

And while the meat is cooking, What, piggy, shall we do?

Alison:

The world is full of pastimes. I leave it, sir, to you.

Philippe:

Am I wrong, my daughter, to think that I espy A wanton elf of mischief sparkling in that eye?

Alison:

Though there be mischief here, I was merry from my birth. I'll not deceive my husband, Not for half the earth.

Philippe:

My child, by disavowing that little wanton elf you half deceive your husband and quite deceive yourself. So do you sin twice over, but if you have your will then you deceive one only, and your state is not so ill.

Alison:  
Calm my unruly longings, or I shall weep!

Philippe:  
Where does that ladder lead to?

Alison:  
An attic where we sleep.

Philippe:  
And when will the pork be ready?

Alison:  
In twenty minutes or so.

Philippe:  
Good! Let us climb the ladder.

Alison:  
But, Father, where would you go?

Philippe:  
Up, child, to the attic that I may exorcise the naughty devil of springtime who laughs at me in your eyes.

Alison:  
Someone is coming! Alas, the naughty devil must wait.

Philippe:  
Peste! Only a minute, though: your need of help is great.

Pierre:  
Fair lady, give a poor scholar something to eat!

Philippe:  
Rogue! Villain! Be off at once!

Pierre:  
I'll sing for my meat.

Philippe:  
Of all the abominable irreverent notions... To beg of a good soul when she's at her devotions!

Pierre:  
I heard no prayers, no murmur of goodly counsel

Philippe:  
Clear off, you scarecrow! And make your dinner of groundsel!

Alison:  
But, Father, I like him. His eyes are bright as a bird's are

Pierre:  
And his heart too!

Philippe:  
If you knew how wicked your words are! Drive him away!

Alison:  
The poor lad's lean as a linnet.

Philippe:  
What? You dare cross me?

Alison:  
I'll let him sing for a minute. But I shan't give him anything. Don't be furious, Father. You know, we women are born curious.

Pierre:  
Then, lady...

Philippe:  
Scoundrel!

Alison:  
Admit, he's not bad-looking...

Philippe:  
Outrageous!

Alison:  
And while he sings, I'll see to the cooking.

Pierre:  
Before that I was twenty I left my father's plenty, as a high-mettled hound will slip the collar; and at the University I lived in sole adversity, so great a passion I had to be a scholar.

Philippe:  
Cum sanctu sanctis eris Et cum perverso perverteris...

Pierre:  
I learned to read the poets, Latin and Greek...

Philippe:

Fumus tormentorum suorum Ascendit in  
secula seculorum...

Pierre:

But my poor savings dwindled, week by week;  
And now, with nought to squander, what can I  
do but wander and sing myself to happiness  
like the larks? Ovid, Virgil and Homer have  
made me a world-roamer, and truly they were  
learned marvellous clerks!

Philippe:

Fumus tormentorum suorum Ascendit in  
secula seculorum!

Pierre:

Good lady of this house, I beg, and have no  
shame to beg in Virgil's name, enough to feed  
a mouse! For Poetry's fair sake, let a poor  
scholar dine! Give him a glass of wine, a chunk  
of almond-cake! Much has my learning cost,  
for all I had is lost. I pawned my staff of oak,  
my hour-glass and my cloak, And, when the  
wind was cruel, sold Seneca for fuel. And next,  
as I grew thinner, thanked Ovid for my dinner;  
But still the butcher, baker and greedy candle-  
maker came to my garret and swore that they  
would wait no more, till, with a grieving heart,  
I said: 'Then I must part with mighty Homer's  
poem to pay the debts I owe 'em': Yet, to  
make full confession, I kept back one  
possession, one only; and the worst of cold,  
hunger and thirst shall never make me sell  
what I have loved so well, even till the hour I  
perish, that one thing will I cherish, And save,  
by hook or crook, Virgil's all-glorious book!

Alison:

So learned a clerk, and so comely!

Philippe:

Learned? Comely? He's neither one nor the  
other. I know him! A tavern-brawler, a lewd  
pagan, a disreputable rhymester, and a  
member of that Order of Wandering Scholars  
with whom no woman is safe! I'll teach you  
boy, to wander. Out with you instantly!

Pierre:

Lady!

Alison:

The dinner's for two!

Philippe:

Look at this cudgel! I give you fair warning, if  
you're not the other side of the door by the  
time that I have counted ten, you'll go on your  
journey with a pair of aching hams!

Pierre:

Not a bite?

Philippe:

One, two, three...

Pierre:

Not a drink?

Philippe:

Three, four, five...

Alison:

Pray, sir, be quick!

Philippe:

Five, six, seven...

Pierre:

And you so fat!

Philippe:

Seven, eight, nine...

Pierre:

Enough! I have said my say. With an empty  
belly I'll go my way, and since you've not even  
a bone to spare, I'll quaff the sunlight and eat  
the air. Good luck, fair lady! A plague on you,  
priest! May the pork choke you at the height  
of the feast!

Philippe:

One, two, three, I warn you again, Four, five,  
six, seven, eight, nine, ten!

Alison:

Heigho, a pretty knave!

Philippe:

Good gracious, how I'm sweating!

Alison:  
How firm you were, how brave!

Philippe:  
And now deserve some petting?

Alison:  
I wonder, is he married?

Philippe:  
A question vain and arid. Alison, my daughter,  
you are in grave peril of indulging too easily  
the pride of youth and the lust of the eye.

Philippe:  
Repent, repent on my bosom.

Alison:  
The demon of spring so torments me today  
That, Father, I beg you to drive him away.

Philippe:  
I will. You could not have come to a man of  
more experience than I in the subjugation of  
those particular devils.

Alison:  
Come then and grapple with this one! Be sure  
the patient has perfect belief in the cure.

Philippe:  
For the best results, however, we must have  
absolute quiet. Let us bolt the door.

Alison:  
But if my good man should return, it were  
hard to give him a reason the door should be  
barred.

Philippe:  
True. Yet a strenuous life engenders a great  
many difficult explanations.

Alison:  
What shall we do?

Philippe:  
Your ladder looks rickety. Will it bear my  
weight?

Alison:  
Try it at least.

Philippe:  
I fear I'm a ponderous faller.

Alison:  
Up, up, I say!

Philippe:  
It won't give way?

Alison:  
Why should it, pray?

Philippe:  
Ah, but it may!

Alison:  
I'll hold it steady. Now, are you ready?

Philippe:  
Oh, if my weight were not so great!

Alison:  
Now, don't despair, you're half-way there.

Philippe:  
I'm not so young or spry as you, and here's a  
rung that's missing, too!

Alison:  
Up, up you go!

Philippe:  
Don't push me so. I heard it crack!

Alison:  
You're coming back?

Philippe:  
I dare not trust myself.

Alison:  
You must

Philippe:  
Listen? I hear a kind of humming.

Alison:  
My faith! I fear 'tis Louis coming!

Philippe:  
Peste!

Alison:  
But he planned to ride to town...

Philippe:  
Your hand, your hand! I'm coming down.

Alison:  
I said we had nothing whatever to eat, and here is the cake and the wine and the meat

Philippe:  
Hide them away. But where shall I go?

Alison:  
Under the straw for a minute or so.

Philippe:  
Cover me well! Supposing he saw?

Alison:  
What a disaster! Get under the straw!

Alison:  
Your legs are showing. Now, do lie flat!

Philippe:  
It's terribly dusty here...

Alison:  
Never mind that!

Louis:  
He'll lie all day in the sun, like a log; whenever I whistle, he crawls, poor dog! Come in and sit down. Hey, Alison, look, here's a young scholar can read from his book.

Pierre:  
Good-morrow, fair mistress.

Alison:  
You're welcome, sir clerk.

Louis:  
The poor lad's not eaten a mouthful since dark. So what can we give him?

Alison:  
Did you not say you were going to town for provisions today?

Louis:  
Aye. So I will. But you've nothing at all?

Alison:  
Nothing.

Louis:  
Oh something, no matter how small.

Alison:  
I tell you, we've nothing.

Pierre:  
Good sir, I am passed the hour of discomfort that follows a fast. Pray, do not fret

Louis:  
But I promised...

Alison:  
You might walk the lad into town for a bite.

Louis:  
Well, so I might...

Pierre:  
Do you like a good tale?

Louis:  
Eh? To be sure, though it's better with ale!

Pierre:  
I'll tell you a story amusing and brief.

Alison:  
Take him to town for a penn'orth of beef.

Louis:  
Well?

Pierre:  
The tale first!

Alison:  
But you ought to have food.

Pierre:  
Aye, after the story. I'm just in the mood. As I was walking here to-day I left the road and took my way through a stream-tinkling flowery wood. I saw a herd of swine that went now here, now there, while well content the swineherd drowsed under his hood.

Louis:  
Were they fine pigs?

Pierre:  
From neck to rump, Sir, they were every inch as plump as that rich pork in yonder pot!

Louis:  
Pork, you say – pork? How now, good wife?

Alison:  
You'll find no pork, I stake my life.

Louis:  
Well, is that pork or is it not?

Alison:  
My faith! Why, so it is. Indeed, I'd quite forgotten it.

Louis:  
Proceed, sir! Wife, we'll to dinner. Up and cook!

Pierre:  
One fine fat sow had strayed apart. I watched her with a thumping heart, I stared, I pocketed my book: For through the trees I noted now a great wolf glaring at the sow. I picked up from the woodland-floor a stone that was in size like the delicious cake that lies concealed behind that cupboard door!

Alison:  
Your eyes are wondrous good, they can see through an inch of wood!

Louis:  
Open the door!

Alison:  
But the lad is a wizard... or else we are mad!

Louis:  
On, sir! Go on with your text. You picked up a stone. What next?

Pierre:  
I said, 'The old wolf shall rue it!' I took up the missile and threw it, a pretty good throw, I can tell ye, it caught him a crack on the belly so dire that he uttered a yell such the Devil might covet for Hell: and the blood ran out of him quicker than rain, and as red as the liquor that glows, if I do not mistake, in a bottle that's hid by the cake!

Alison:  
We'd not enough food for a lizard until he came here. He's a wizard! He means to

enchant you, I know it, with a spell from a heathenish poet: and if you aren't quick to escape you will turn to an owl or an ape!

Louis:  
Put the wine on the table!

Pierre:  
And now, sir, to finish the fable. I left the wood and climbed the hill, there through the trees I could see them still, staring at me, glaring at me, hot and bitter, all a-glitter, and red with dread in his ugly head, the eyes of the beast who'd lost his feast, they matched the eyes of the blackguardly priest who would not shrink to rob you, I think, of something more precious than food or drink and whom, but a minute ago, I saw quaking under that heap of straw!

Louis :  
Monster! Villain! Hypocrite! Hog!

Pierre:  
One, two, three, what do I see? Three, four, five, will he survive? Five, six, seven, chasten him for heaven! Seven, eight, nine, that's made him whine! Eight, nine, ten, do it all again!

Alison:  
Do it all again?

Louis:  
One, two, three, what do I see? Three, four, five, will he survive? Five, six, seven, chasten him for heaven! Seven, eight, nine...

Alison and Pierre:  
One, two, three, Three, four, five, Five, six, seven, Seven, eight, nine...

Louis:  
Young man, fall to! Nay, wife, not you! Up! Up the ladder! Up, up you go!

Pierre:  
One, two, three, what do I see? Three, four, five, will he survive? Five, six, seven, chasten him for heaven!