

The Taming of the Shrew

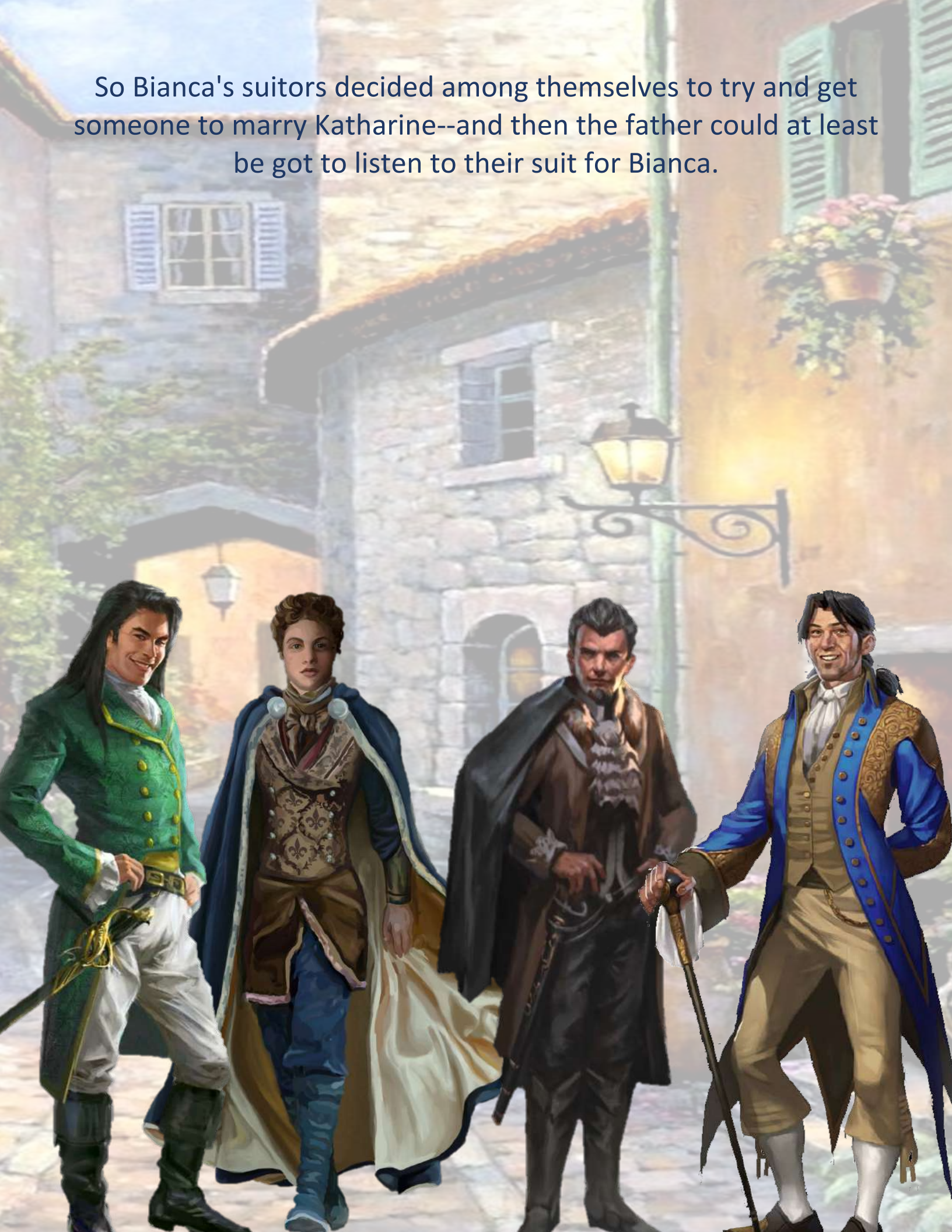
William Shakespeare



There lived in Padua a gentleman named Baptista, who had two fair daughters. The eldest, Katharine, was so very cross and ill-tempered, and unmannerly, that no one ever dreamed of marrying her, while her sister, Bianca, was so sweet and pretty, and pleasant-spoken, that more than one suitor asked her father for her hand. But Baptista said the elder daughter must marry first.



So Bianca's suitors decided among themselves to try and get someone to marry Katharine--and then the father could at least be got to listen to their suit for Bianca.



A gentleman from Verona, named Petruchio, was the one they thought of, and, half in jest, they asked him if he would marry Katharine, the disagreeable scold.

Much to their surprise he said yes, that was just the sort of wife for him, and if Katharine were handsome and rich, he himself would undertake soon to make her good-tempered.



Petruchio began by asking Baptista's permission to pay court to his gentle daughter Katharine--and Baptista was obliged to own that she was anything but gentle.



And just then her music master rushed in, complaining that the naughty girl had broken her lute over his head, because he told her she was not playing correctly.

"Never mind," said Petruchio, "I love her better than ever, and long to have some chat with her."



When Katharine came, he said, "Good-morrow, Kate--for that, I hear, is your name."

"You've only heard half," said Katharine, rudely.

"Oh, no," said Petruchio, "they call you plain Kate, and bonny Kate, and sometimes Kate the shrew, and so, hearing your mildness praised in every town, and your beauty too, I ask you for my wife."



"Your wife!" cried Kate. "Never!" She said some extremely disagreeable things to him, and, I am sorry to say, ended by boxing his ears.

"If you do that again, I'll cuff you," he said quietly; and still protested, with many compliments, that he would marry none but her.



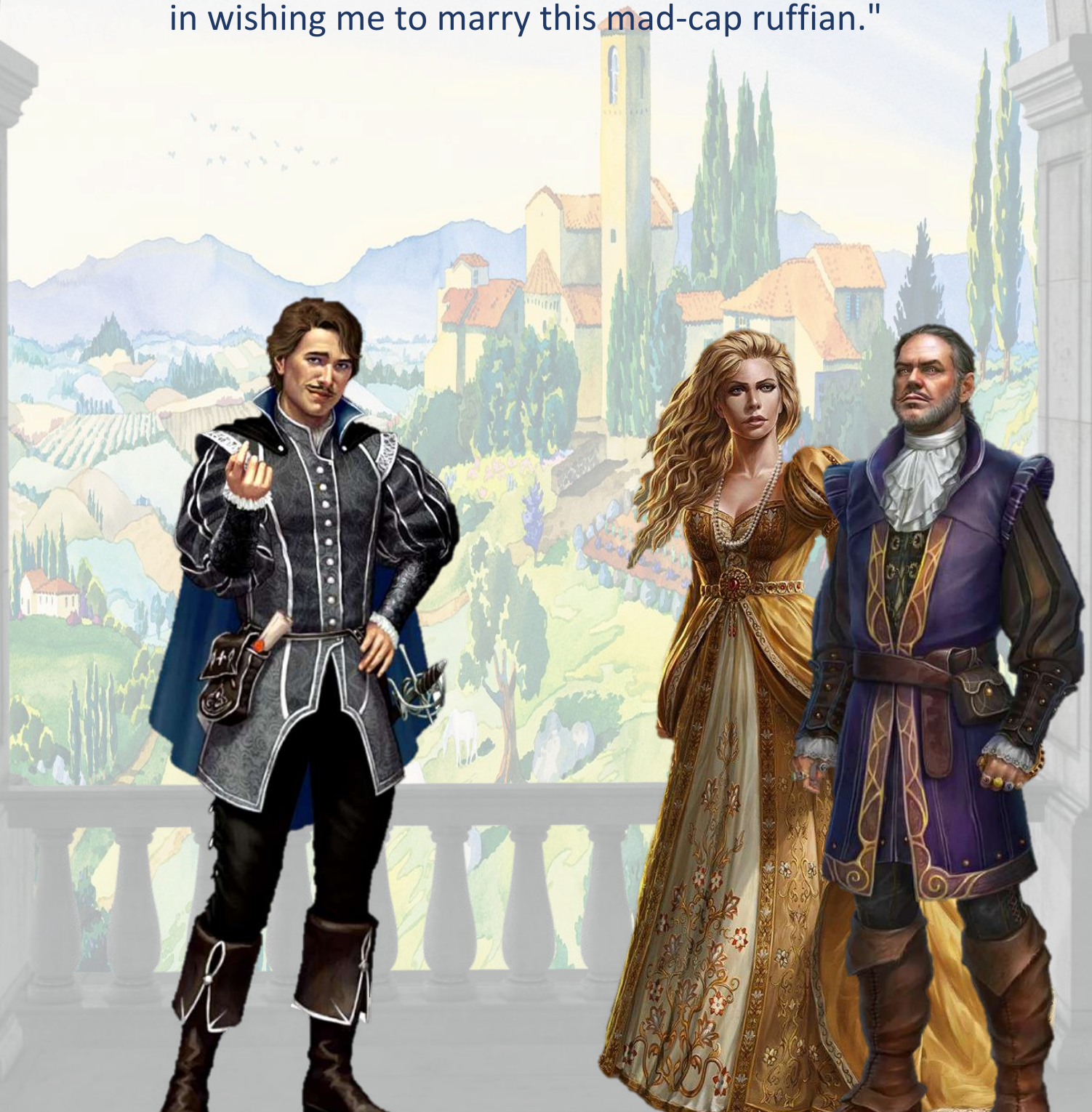
When Baptista came back, he asked at once--

"How speed you with my daughter?"

"How should I speed but well," replied Petruchio--"how, but well?"

"How now, daughter Katharine?" the father went on.

"I don't think," said Katharine, angrily, "you are acting a father's part in wishing me to marry this mad-cap ruffian."



"Ah!" said Petruchio, "you and all the world would talk amiss of her. You should see how kind she is to me when we are alone. In short, I will go off to Venice to buy fine things for our wedding--for--kiss me, Kate! we will be married on Sunday."



With that, Katharine flounced off in a violent temper, and he, laughing, went off the other way. But whether she fell in love with Petruchio, or whether she was only glad to meet a man who was not afraid of her, or whether she was flattered that, in spite of her rough words and spiteful usage, he still desired her for his wife--she did indeed marry him on Sunday, as he had sworn she should.

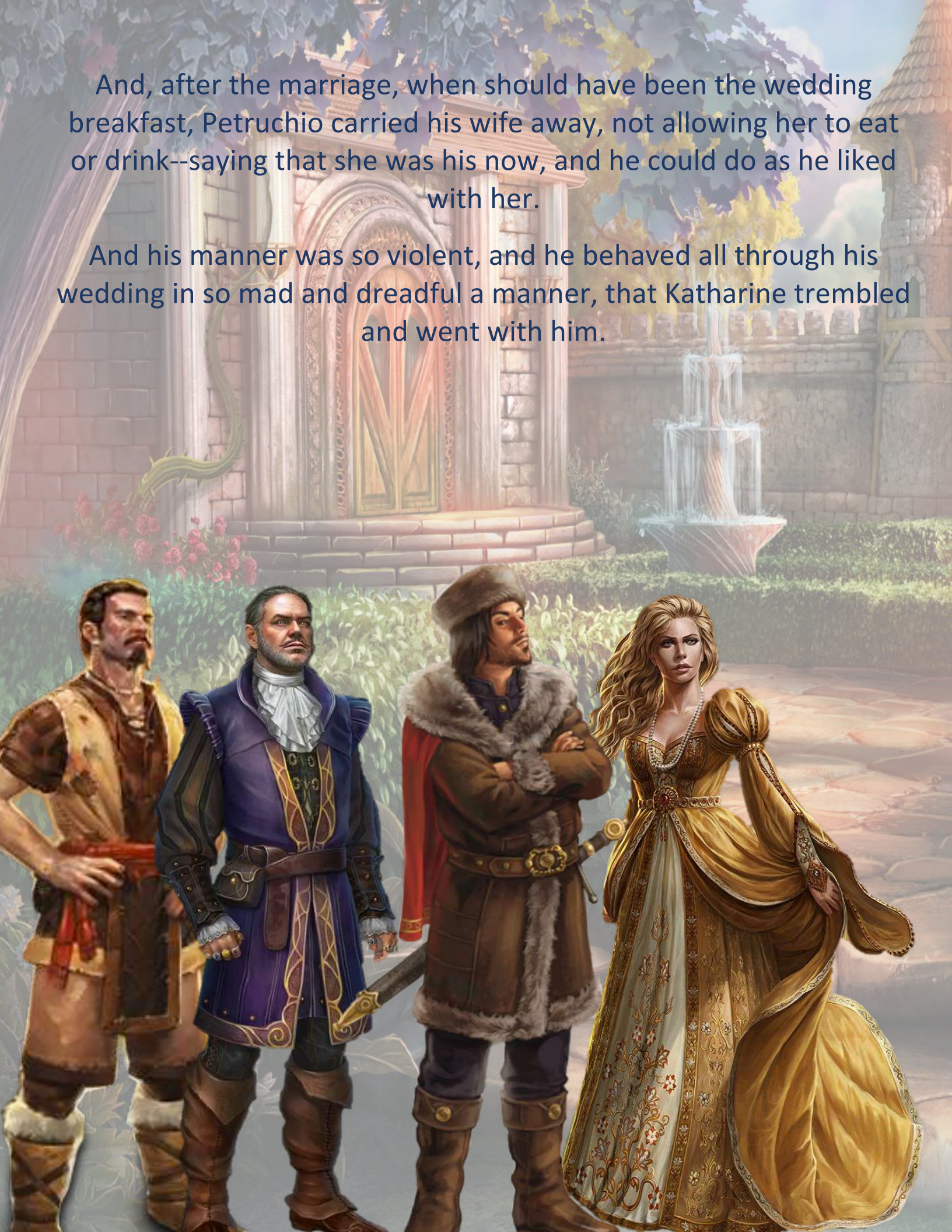


To vex and humble Katharine's naughty, proud spirit, he was late at the wedding, and when he came, came wearing such shabby clothes that she was ashamed to be seen with him. His servant was dressed in the same shabby way, and the horses they rode were the sport of everyone they passed.

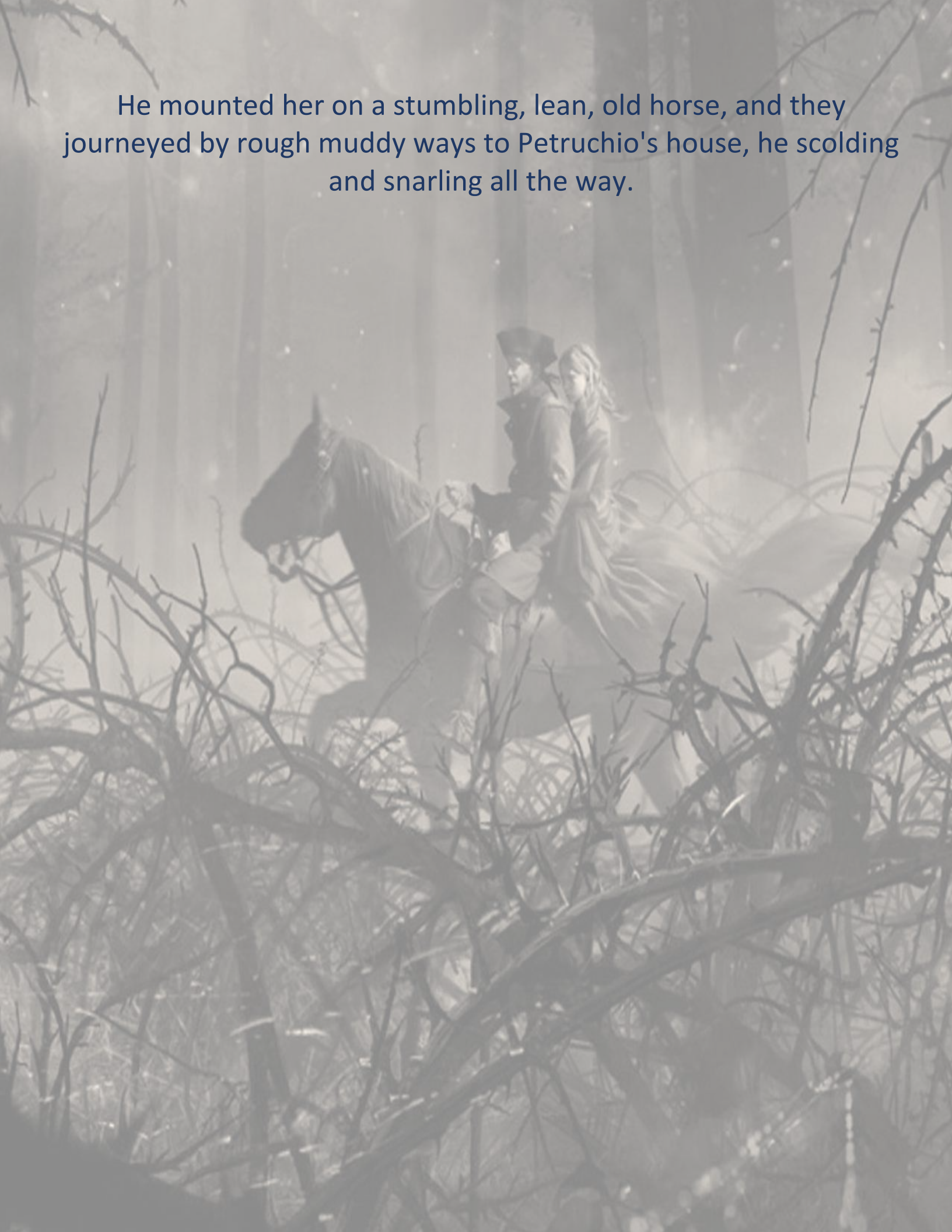


And, after the marriage, when should have been the wedding breakfast, Petruchio carried his wife away, not allowing her to eat or drink--saying that she was his now, and he could do as he liked with her.

And his manner was so violent, and he behaved all through his wedding in so mad and dreadful a manner, that Katharine trembled and went with him.



He mounted her on a stumbling, lean, old horse, and they journeyed by rough muddy ways to Petruchio's house, he scolding and snarling all the way.



She was terribly tired when she reached her new home, but Petruchio was determined that she should neither eat nor sleep that night, for he had made up his mind to teach his bad-tempered wife a lesson she would never forget.



So he welcomed her kindly to his house, but when supper was served he found fault with everything--the meat was burnt, he said, and ill-served, and he loved her far too much to let her eat anything but the best. At last Katharine, tired out with her journey, went supperless to bed.



Then her husband, still telling her how he loved her, and how anxious he was that she should sleep well, pulled her bed to pieces, throwing the pillows and bedclothes on the floor, so that she could not go to bed at all, and still kept growling and scolding at the servants so that Kate might see how unbeautiful a thing ill-temper was.



The next day, too, Katharine's food was all found fault with, and caught away before she could touch a mouthful, and she was sick and giddy for want of sleep.



Then she said to one of the servants--

"I pray thee go and get me some repast. I care not what."

"What say you to a neat's foot?" said the servant.

Katharine said "Yes," eagerly; but the servant, who was in his master's secret, said he feared it was not good for hasty-tempered people. Would she like tripe?

"Bring it me," said Katharine.



"I don't think that is good for hasty-tempered people," said the servant. "What do you say to a dish of beef and mustard?"

"I love it," said Kate.

"But mustard is too hot."

"Why, then, the beef, and let the mustard go," cried Katharine, who was getting hungrier and hungrier.

"No," said the servant, "you must have the mustard, or you get no beef from me."



"Then," cried Katharine, losing patience, "let it be both, or one, or anything thou wilt."

"Why, then," said the servant, "the mustard without the beef!"

Then Katharine saw he was making fun of her, and boxed his ears.



Just then Petruchio brought her some food--but she had scarcely begun to satisfy her hunger, before he called for the tailor to bring her new clothes, and the table was cleared, leaving her still hungry.



Katharine was pleased with the pretty new dress and cap that the tailor had made for her, but Petruchio found fault with everything, flung the cap and gown on the floor vowing his dear wife should not wear any such foolish things.

"I will have them," cried Katharine. "All gentlewomen wear such caps as these--"

"When you are gentle you shall have one too," he answered, "and not till then."



When he had driven away the tailor with angry words--but privately asking his friend to see him paid--Petruchio said--

"Come, Kate, let's go to your father's, shabby as we are, for as the sun breaks through the darkest clouds, so honour peereth in the meanest habit. It is about seven o'clock now. We shall easily get there by dinner-time."



"It's nearly two," said Kate, but civilly enough, for she had grown to see that she could not bully her husband, as she had done her father and her sister; "it's nearly two, and it will be supper-time before we get there."

"It shall be seven," said Petruchio, obstinately, "before I start. Why, whatever I say or do, or think, you do nothing but contradict. I won't go to-day, and before I do go, it shall be what o'clock I say it is."



At last they started for her father's house.

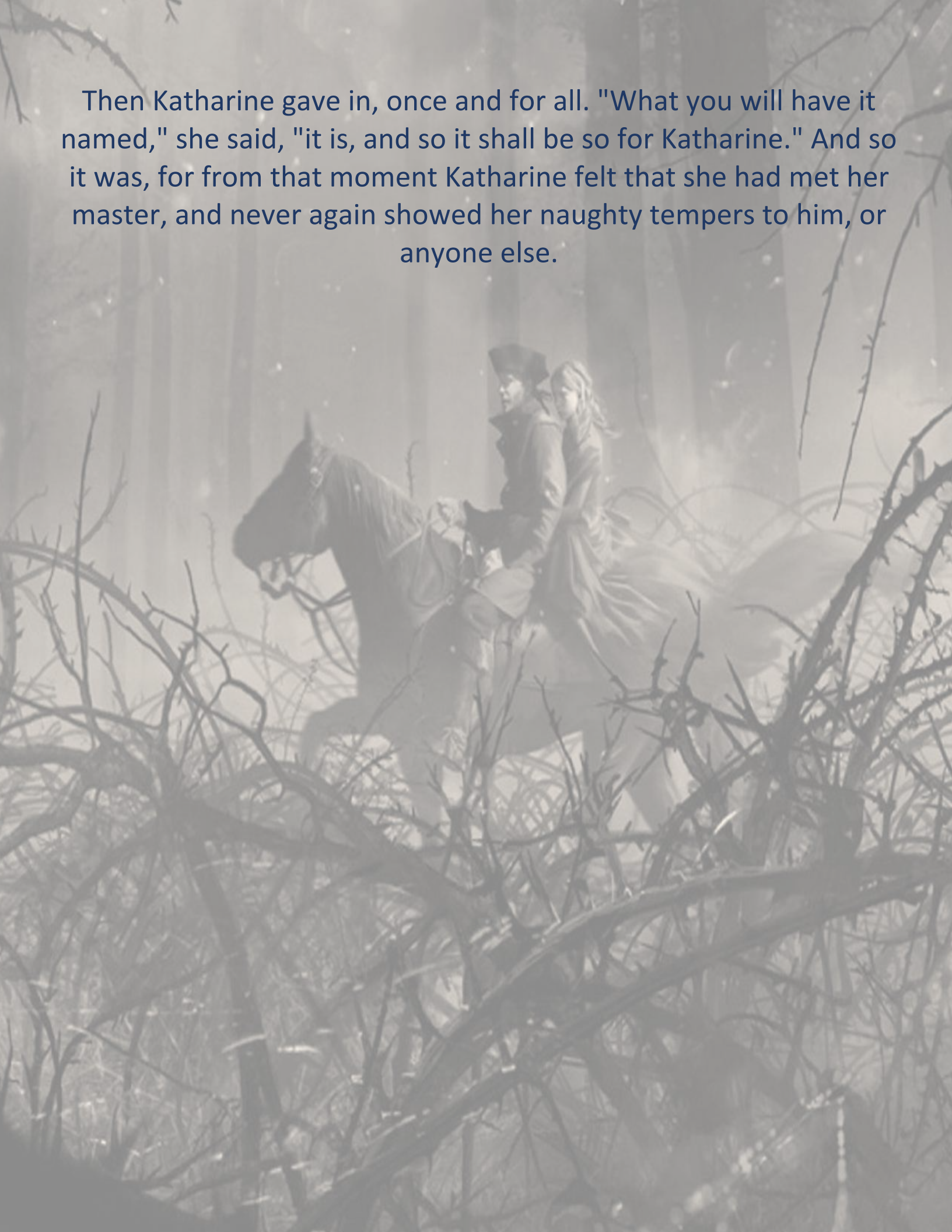
"Look at the moon," said he.

"It's the sun," said Katharine, and indeed it was.

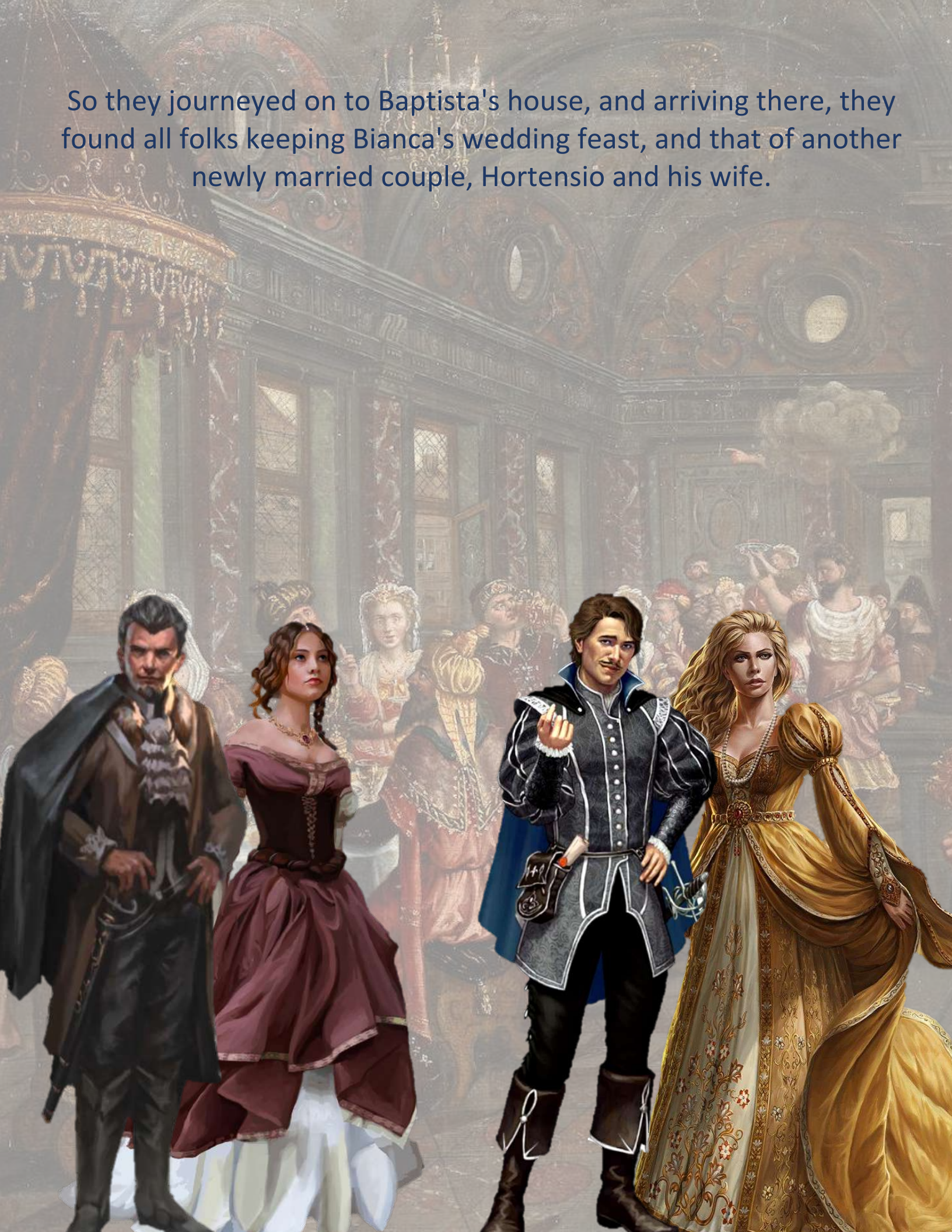
"I say it is the moon. Contradicting again! It shall be sun or moon, or whatever I choose, or I won't take you to your father's."



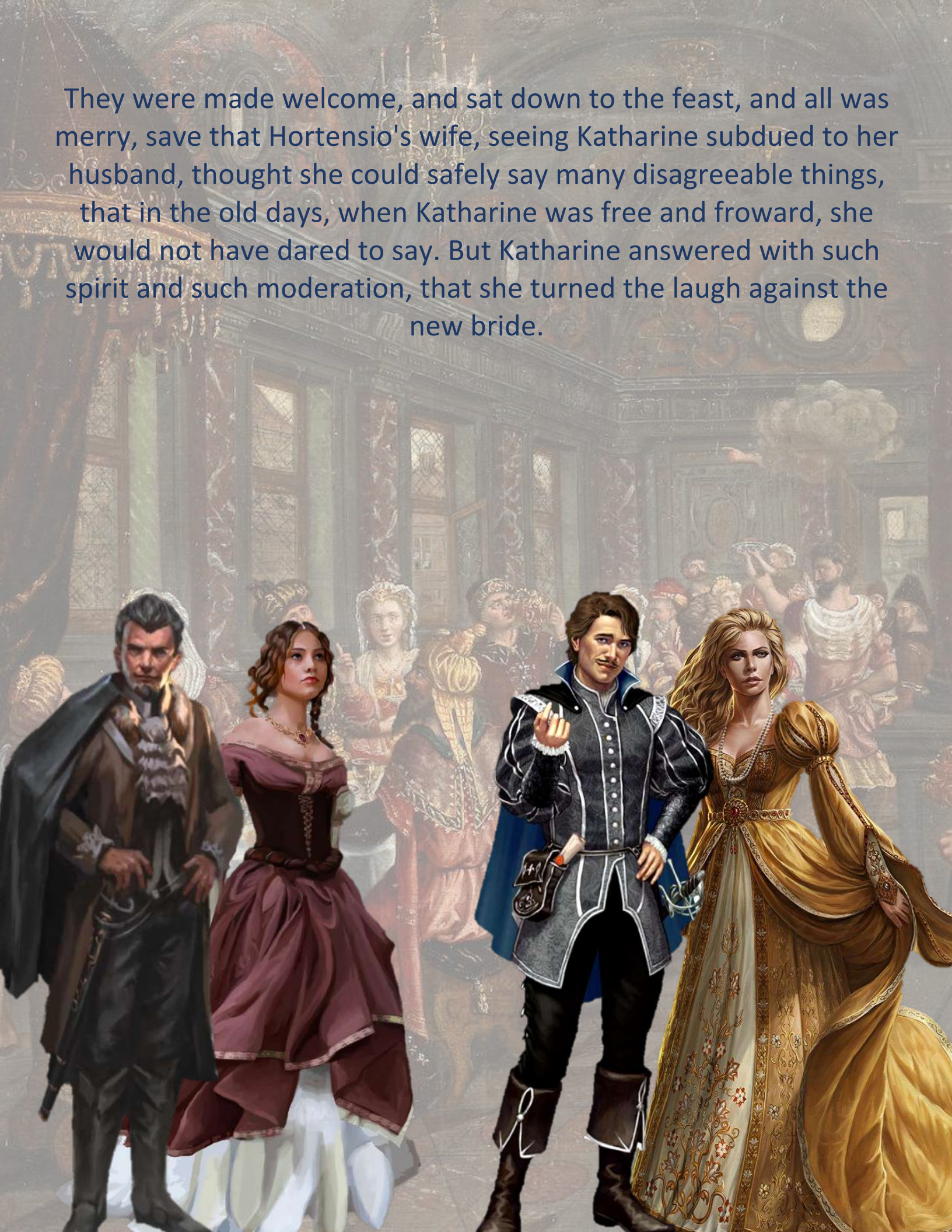
Then Katharine gave in, once and for all. "What you will have it named," she said, "it is, and so it shall be so for Katharine." And so it was, for from that moment Katharine felt that she had met her master, and never again showed her naughty tempers to him, or anyone else.



So they journeyed on to Baptista's house, and arriving there, they found all folks keeping Bianca's wedding feast, and that of another newly married couple, Hortensio and his wife.



They were made welcome, and sat down to the feast, and all was merry, save that Hortensio's wife, seeing Katharine subdued to her husband, thought she could safely say many disagreeable things, that in the old days, when Katharine was free and froward, she would not have dared to say. But Katharine answered with such spirit and such moderation, that she turned the laugh against the new bride.



After dinner, when the ladies had retired, Baptista joined in a laugh against Petruchio, saying "Now in good sadness, son Petruchio, I fear you have got the veriest shrew of all."

"You are wrong," said Petruchio, "let me prove it to you. Each of us shall send a message to his wife, desiring her to come to him, and the one whose wife comes most readily shall win a wager which we will agree on."



The others said yes readily enough, for each thought his own wife the most dutiful, and each thought he was quite sure to win the wager.

They proposed a wager of twenty crowns.

"Twenty crowns," said Petruchio, "I'll venture so much on my hawk or hound, but twenty times as much upon my wife."

"A hundred then," cried Lucentio, Bianca's husband.

"Content," cried the others.



Then Lucentio sent a message to the fair Bianca bidding her to come to him. And Baptista said he was certain his daughter would come.

But the servant coming back, said--

"Sir, my mistress is busy, and she cannot come."

"There's an answer for you," said Petruchio.

"You may think yourself fortunate if your wife does not send you a worse."



"I hope, better," Petruchio answered. Then Hortensio said--

"Go and entreat my wife to come to me at once."

"Oh--if you entreat her," said Petruchio.

"I am afraid," answered Hortensio, sharply, "do what you can, yours will not be entreated."



But now the servant came in, and said--

"She says you are playing some jest, she will not come."

"Better and better," cried Petruchio; "now go to your mistress and say I command her to come to me."

They all began to laugh, saying they knew what her answer would be, and that she would not come.



Then suddenly Baptista cried--
"Here comes Katharine!" And sure enough--there she was.
"What do you wish, sir?" she asked her husband.
"Where are your sister and Hortensio's wife?"
"Talking by the parlour fire."
"Fetch them here."



When she was gone to fetch them, Lucentio said--

"Here is a wonder!"

"I wonder what it means," said Hortensio.

"It means peace," said Petruchio, "and love, and quiet life."



"Well," said Baptista, "you have won the wager, and I will add another twenty thousand crowns to her dowry--another dowry for another daughter--for she is as changed as if she were someone else."



So Petruchio won his wager, and had in Katharine always a loving wife and true, and now he had broken her proud and angry spirit he loved her well, and there was nothing ever but love between those two. And so they lived happy ever





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