

All's Well That Ends Well

William Shakespeare

Act I

SCENE I. Rousillon. The COUNT's palace.

Enter BERTRAM, the COUNTESS of Rousillon, HELENA, and LAFEU, all in black

COUNTESS

In delivering my son from me, I bury a second husband.

BERTRAM

And I in going, madam, weep o'er my father's death anew: but I must attend his majesty's command, to whom I am now in ward, evermore in subjection.

LAFEU

You shall find of the king a husband, madam; you, sir, a father: he that so generally is at all times good must of necessity hold his virtue to you; whose worthiness would stir it up where it wanted rather than lack it where there is such abundance.

COUNTESS

What hope is there of his majesty's amendment?

LAFEU

He hath abandoned his physicians, madam; under whose practises he hath persecuted time with hope, and finds no other advantage in the process but only the losing of hope by time.

COUNTESS

This young gentlewoman had a father,—O, that 'had'! how sad a passage 'tis!—whose skill was almost as great as his honesty; had it stretched so far, would have made nature immortal, and death should have play for lack of work. Would, for the king's sake, he were living! I think it would be the death of the king's disease.

LAFEU

How called you the man you speak of, madam?

COUNTESS

He was famous, sir, in his profession, and it was his great right to be so: Gerard de Narbon.

LAFEU

He was excellent indeed, madam: the king very lately spoke of him admiringly and mourningly: he was skilful enough to have lived still, if knowledge could be set up against mortality.

BERTRAM

What is it, my good lord, the king languishes of?

LAFEU

A fistula, my lord.

BERTRAM

I heard not of it before.

LAFEU

I would it were not notorious. Was this gentlewoman the daughter of Gerard de Narbon?

COUNTESS

His sole child, my lord, and bequeathed to my overlooking. I have those hopes of her good that her education promises; her dispositions she inherits, which makes fair gifts fairer; for where an unclean mind carries virtuous qualities, there commendations go with pity; they are virtues and traitors too; in her they are the better for their simpleness; she derives her honesty and achieves her goodness.

LAFEU

Your commendations, madam, get from her tears.

COUNTESS

'Tis the best brine a maiden can season her praise in. The remembrance of her father never approaches her heart but the tyranny of her sorrows takes all livelihood from her cheek. No more of this, Helena; go to, no more; lest it be rather thought you affect a sorrow than have it.

HELENA

I do affect a sorrow indeed, but I have it too.

LAFEU

Moderate lamentation is the right of the dead, excessive grief the enemy to the living.

COUNTESS

If the living be enemy to the grief, the excess makes it soon mortal.

BERTRAM

Madam, I desire your holy wishes.

LAFEU

How understand we that?

COUNTESS

Be thou blest, Bertram, and succeed thy father
In manners, as in shape! thy blood and virtue
Contend for empire in thee, and thy goodness
Share with thy birthright! Love all, trust a few,
Do wrong to none: be able for thine enemy
Rather in power than use, and keep thy friend
Under thy own life's key: be cheque'd for silence,
But never tax'd for speech. What heaven more will,
That thee may furnish and my prayers pluck down,
Fall on thy head! Farewell, my lord;
'Tis an unseason'd courtier; good my lord,
Advise him.

LAFEU

He cannot want the best
That shall attend his love.

COUNTESS

Heaven bless him! Farewell, Bertram.

Exit

BERTRAM

[To HELENA] The best wishes that can be forged in your thoughts be servants to you! Be comfortable to my mother, your mistress, and make much of her.

LAFEU

Farewell, pretty lady: you must hold the credit of your father.

Exeunt BERTRAM and LAFEU

HELENA

O, were that all! I think not on my father;
And these great tears grace his remembrance more
Than those I shed for him. What was he like?
I have forgot him: my imagination
Carries no favour in't but Bertram's.
I am undone: there is no living, none,
If Bertram be away. 'Twere all one
That I should love a bright particular star
And think to wed it, he is so above me:
In his bright radiance and collateral light
Must I be comforted, not in his sphere.
The ambition in my love thus plagues itself:
The hind that would be mated by the lion
Must die for love. 'Twas pretty, though plague,
To see him every hour; to sit and draw
His arched brows, his hawking eye, his curls,
In our heart's table; heart too capable
Of every line and trick of his sweet favour:
But now he's gone, and my idolatrous fancy
Must sanctify his reliques. Who comes here?

Enter PAROLLES

Aside

One that goes with him: I love him for his sake;
And yet I know him a notorious liar,
Think him a great way fool, solely a coward;
Yet these fixed evils sit so fit in him,

That they take place, when virtue's steely bones
Look bleak i' the cold wind: withal, full oft we see
Cold wisdom waiting on superfluous folly.

PAROLLES

Save you, fair queen!

HELENA

And you, monarch!

PAROLLES

No.

HELENA

And no.

PAROLLES

Are you meditating on virginity?

HELENA

Ay. You have some stain of soldier in you: let me
ask you a question. Man is enemy to virginity; how
may we barricado it against him?

PAROLLES

Keep him out.

HELENA

But he assails; and our virginity, though valiant,
in the defence yet is weak: unfold to us some
warlike resistance.

PAROLLES

There is none: man, sitting down before you, will
undermine you and blow you up.

HELENA

Bless our poor virginity from underminers and
blowers up! Is there no military policy, how

virgins might blow up men?

PAROLLES

Virginity being blown down, man will quicklier be blown up: marry, in blowing him down again, with the breach yourselves made, you lose your city. It is not politic in the commonwealth of nature to preserve virginity. Loss of virginity is rational increase and there was never virgin got till virginity was first lost. That you were made of is metal to make virgins. Virginity by being once lost may be ten times found; by being ever kept, it is ever lost: 'tis too cold a companion; away with 't!

HELENA

I will stand for 't a little, though therefore I die a virgin.

PAROLLES

There's little can be said in 't; 'tis against the rule of nature. To speak on the part of virginity, is to accuse your mothers; which is most infallible disobedience. He that hangs himself is a virgin: virginity murders itself and should be buried in highways out of all sanctified limit, as a desperate offendress against nature. Virginity breeds mites, much like a cheese; consumes itself to the very paring, and so dies with feeding his own stomach. Besides, virginity is peevish, proud, idle, made of self-love, which is the most inhibited sin in the canon. Keep it not; you cannot choose but loose by't: out with 't! within ten year it will make itself ten, which is a goodly increase; and the principal itself not much the worse: away with 't!

HELENA

How might one do, sir, to lose it to her own liking?

PAROLLES

Let me see: marry, ill, to like him that ne'er it likes. 'Tis a commodity will lose the gloss with lying; the longer kept, the less worth: off with 't while 'tis vendible; answer the time of request.

Virginity, like an old courtier, wears her cap out
of fashion: richly suited, but unsuitable: just
like the brooch and the tooth-pick, which wear not
now. Your date is better in your pie and your
porridge than in your cheek; and your virginity,
your old virginity, is like one of our French
withered pears, it looks ill, it eats drily; marry,
'tis a withered pear; it was formerly better;
marry, yet 'tis a withered pear: will you anything with it?

HELENA

Not my virginity yet []
There shall your master have a thousand loves,
A mother and a mistress and a friend,
A phoenix, captain and an enemy,
A guide, a goddess, and a sovereign,
A counsellor, a traitress, and a dear;
His humble ambition, proud humility,
His jarring concord, and his discord dulcet,
His faith, his sweet disaster; with a world
Of pretty, fond, adoptious christendoms,
That blinking Cupid gossips. Now shall he—
I know not what he shall. God send him well!
The court's a learning place, and he is one—

PAROLLES

What one, i' faith?

HELENA

That I wish well. 'Tis pity—

PAROLLES

What's pity?

HELENA

That wishing well had not a body in't,
Which might be felt; that we, the poorer born,
Whose baser stars do shut us up in wishes,
Might with effects of them follow our friends,
And show what we alone must think, which never
Return us thanks.

Enter Page

Page

Monsieur Parolles, my lord calls for you.

Exit

PAROLLES

Little Helen, farewell; if I can remember thee, I will think of thee at court.

HELENA

Monsieur Parolles, you were born under a charitable star.

PAROLLES

Under Mars, I.

HELENA

I especially think, under Mars.

PAROLLES

Why under Mars?

HELENA

The wars have so kept you under that you must needs be born under Mars.

PAROLLES

When he was predominant.

HELENA

When he was retrograde, I think, rather.

PAROLLES

Why think you so?

HELENA

You go so much backward when you fight.

PAROLLES

That's for advantage.

HELENA

So is running away, when fear proposes the safety;
but the composition that your valour and fear makes
in you is a virtue of a good wing, and I like the wear well.

PAROLLES

I am so full of businesses, I cannot answer thee
acutely. I will return perfect courtier; in the
which, my instruction shall serve to naturalize
thee, so thou wilt be capable of a courtier's
counsel and understand what advice shall thrust upon
thee; else thou diest in thine unthankfulness, and
thine ignorance makes thee away: farewell. When
thou hast leisure, say thy prayers; when thou hast
none, remember thy friends; get thee a good husband,
and use him as he uses thee; so, farewell.

Exit

HELENA

Our remedies oft in ourselves do lie,
Which we ascribe to heaven: the fated sky
Gives us free scope, only doth backward pull
Our slow designs when we ourselves are dull.
What power is it which mounts my love so high,
That makes me see, and cannot feed mine eye?
The mightiest space in fortune nature brings
To join like likes and kiss like native things.
Impossible be strange attempts to those
That weigh their pains in sense and do suppose
What hath been cannot be: who ever strove
So show her merit, that did miss her love?
The king's disease—my project may deceive me,
But my intents are fix'd and will not leave me.

Exit

SCENE II. Paris. The KING's palace.

Flourish of cornets. Enter the KING of France, with letters, and divers Attendants

KING

The Florentines and Senoys are by the ears;
Have fought with equal fortune and continue
A braving war.

First Lord

So 'tis reported, sir.

KING

Nay, 'tis most credible; we here received it
A certainty, vouch'd from our cousin Austria,
With caution that the Florentine will move us
For speedy aid; wherein our dearest friend
Prejudicates the business and would seem
To have us make denial.

First Lord

His love and wisdom,
Approved so to your majesty, may plead
For amplest credence.

KING

He hath arm'd our answer,
And Florence is denied before he comes:
Yet, for our gentlemen that mean to see
The Tuscan service, freely have they leave
To stand on either part.

Second Lord

It well may serve
A nursery to our gentry, who are sick
For breathing and exploit.

KING

What's he comes here?

Enter BERTRAM, LAFEU, and PAROLLES

First Lord

It is the Count Rousillon, my good lord,
Young Bertram.

KING

Youth, thou bear'st thy father's face;
Frank nature, rather curious than in haste,
Hath well composed thee. Thy father's moral parts
Mayst thou inherit too! Welcome to Paris.

BERTRAM

My thanks and duty are your majesty's.

KING

I would I had that corporal soundness now,
As when thy father and myself in friendship
First tried our soldiership! He did look far
Into the service of the time and was
Disciplined of the bravest: he lasted long;
But on us both did haggish age steal on
And wore us out of act. It much repairs me
To talk of your good father. In his youth
He had the wit which I can well observe
To-day in our young lords; but they may jest
Till their own scorn return to them unnoted
Ere they can hide their levity in honour;
So like a courtier, contempt nor bitterness
Were in his pride or sharpness; if they were,
His equal had awaked them, and his honour,
Clock to itself, knew the true minute when
Exception bid him speak, and at this time
His tongue obey'd his hand: who were below him
He used as creatures of another place
And bow'd his eminent top to their low ranks,
Making them proud of his humility,
In their poor praise he humbled. Such a man
Might be a copy to these younger times;
Which, follow'd well, would demonstrate them now
But goes backward.

BERTRAM

His good remembrance, sir,
Lies richer in your thoughts than on his tomb;
So in approval lives not his epitaph
As in your royal speech.

KING

Would I were with him! He would always say—
Methinks I hear him now; his plausible words
He scatter'd not in ears, but grafted them,
To grow there and to bear,—'Let me not live,'—
This his good melancholy oft began,
On the catastrophe and heel of pastime,
When it was out,—'Let me not live,' quoth he,
'After my flame lacks oil, to be the snuff
Of younger spirits, whose apprehensive senses
All but new things disdain; whose judgments are
Mere fathers of their garments; whose constancies
Expire before their fashions.' This he wish'd;
I after him do after him wish too,
Since I nor wax nor honey can bring home,
I quickly were dissolved from my hive,
To give some labourers room.

Second Lord

You are loved, sir:
They that least lend it you shall lack you first.

KING

I fill a place, I know't. How long is't, count,
Since the physician at your father's died?
He was much famed.

BERTRAM

Some six months since, my lord.

KING

If he were living, I would try him yet.
Lend me an arm; the rest have worn me out
With several applications; nature and sickness
Debate it at their leisure. Welcome, count;
My son's no dearer.

BERTRAM

Thank your majesty.

Exeunt. Flourish

SCENE III. Rousillon. The COUNT's palace.

Enter COUNTESS, Steward, and Clown

COUNTESS

I will now hear; what say you of this gentlewoman?

Steward

Madam, the care I have had to even your content, I wish might be found in the calendar of my past endeavours; for then we wound our modesty and make foul the clearness of our deservings, when of ourselves we publish them.

COUNTESS

What does this knave here? Get you gone, sirrah: the complaints I have heard of you I do not all believe: 'tis my slowness that I do not; for I know you lack not folly to commit them, and have ability enough to make such knaveries yours.

Clown

'Tis not unknown to you, madam, I am a poor fellow.

COUNTESS

Well, sir.

Clown

No, madam, 'tis not so well that I am poor, though many of the rich are damned: but, if I may have your ladyship's good will to go to the world, Isbel the woman and I will do as we may.

COUNTESS

Wilt thou needs be a beggar?

Clown

I do beg your good will in this case.

COUNTESS

In what case?

Clown

In Isbel's case and mine own. Service is no heritage: and I think I shall never have the blessing of God till I have issue o' my body; for they say barnes are blessings.

COUNTESS

Tell me thy reason why thou wilt marry.

Clown

My poor body, madam, requires it: I am driven on by the flesh; and he must needs go that the devil drives.

COUNTESS

Is this all your worship's reason?

Clown

Faith, madam, I have other holy reasons such as they are.

COUNTESS

May the world know them?

Clown

I have been, madam, a wicked creature, as you and all flesh and blood are; and, indeed, I do marry that I may repent.

COUNTESS

Thy marriage, sooner than thy wickedness.

Clown

I am out o' friends, madam; and I hope to have friends for my wife's sake.

COUNTESS

Such friends are thine enemies, knave.

Clown

You're shallow, madam, in great friends; for the knaves come to do that for me which I am weary of. He that ears my land spares my team and gives me leave to in the crop; if I be his cuckold, he's my drudge: he that comforts my wife is the cherisher of my flesh and blood; he that cherishes my flesh and blood loves my flesh and blood; he that loves my flesh and blood is my friend: ergo, he that kisses my wife is my friend. If men could be contented to be what they are, there were no fear in marriage; for young Charbon the Puritan and old Poysam the Papist, howsome'er their hearts are severed in religion, their heads are both one; they may jowl horns together, like any deer i' the herd.

COUNTESS

Wilt thou ever be a foul-mouthed and calumnious knave?

Clown

A prophet I, madam; and I speak the truth the next way:
For I the ballad will repeat,
Which men full true shall find;
Your marriage comes by destiny,
Your cuckoo sings by kind.

COUNTESS

Get you gone, sir; I'll talk with you more anon.

Steward

May it please you, madam, that he bid Helen come to you: of her I am to speak.

COUNTESS

Sirrah, tell my gentlewoman I would speak with her; Helen, I mean.

Clown

Was this fair face the cause, quoth she,
Why the Grecians sacked Troy?
Fond done, done fond,
Was this King Priam's joy?
With that she sighed as she stood,
With that she sighed as she stood,
And gave this sentence then;
Among nine bad if one be good,
Among nine bad if one be good,
There's yet one good in ten.

COUNTESS

What, one good in ten? you corrupt the song, sirrah.

Clown

One good woman in ten, madam; which is a purifying
o' the song: would God would serve the world so all
the year! we'd find no fault with the tithe-woman,
if I were the parson. One in ten, quoth a'! An we
might have a good woman born but one every blazing
star, or at an earthquake, 'twould mend the lottery
well: a man may draw his heart out, ere a' pluck
one.

COUNTESS

You'll be gone, sir knave, and do as I command you.

Clown

That man should be at woman's command, and yet no
hurt done! Though honesty be no puritan, yet it
will do no hurt; it will wear the surplice of
humility over the black gown of a big heart. I am
going, forsooth: the business is for Helen to come hither.

Exit

COUNTESS

Well, now.

Steward

I know, madam, you love your gentlewoman entirely.

COUNTESS

Faith, I do: her father bequeathed her to me; and she herself, without other advantage, may lawfully make title to as much love as she finds: there is more owing her than is paid; and more shall be paid her than she'll demand.

Steward

Madam, I was very late more near her than I think she wished me: alone she was, and did communicate to herself her own words to her own ears; she thought, I dare vow for her, they touched not any stranger sense. Her matter was, she loved your son: Fortune, she said, was no goddess, that had put such difference betwixt their two estates; Love no god, that would not extend his might, only where qualities were level; Dian no queen of virgins, that would suffer her poor knight surprised, without rescue in the first assault or ransom afterward. This she delivered in the most bitter touch of sorrow that e'er I heard virgin exclaim in: which I held my duty speedily to acquaint you withal; sithence, in the loss that may happen, it concerns you something to know it.

COUNTESS

You have discharged this honestly; keep it to yourself: many likelihoods informed me of this before, which hung so tottering in the balance that I could neither believe nor misdoubt. Pray you, leave me: stall this in your bosom; and I thank you for your honest care: I will speak with you further anon.

Exit Steward

Enter HELENA

Even so it was with me when I was young:
If ever we are nature's, these are ours; this thorn
Doth to our rose of youth rightly belong;
Our blood to us, this to our blood is born;
It is the show and seal of nature's truth,
Where love's strong passion is impress'd in youth:
By our remembrances of days foregone,
Such were our faults, or then we thought them none.

Her eye is sick on't: I observe her now.

HELENA

What is your pleasure, madam?

COUNTESS

You know, Helen,
I am a mother to you.

HELENA

Mine honourable mistress.

COUNTESS

Nay, a mother:
Why not a mother? When I said 'a mother,'
Methought you saw a serpent: what's in 'mother,'
That you start at it? I say, I am your mother;
And put you in the catalogue of those
That were enwombed mine: 'tis often seen
Adoption strives with nature and choice breeds
A native slip to us from foreign seeds:
You ne'er oppress'd me with a mother's groan,
Yet I express to you a mother's care:
God's mercy, maiden! does it curd thy blood
To say I am thy mother? What's the matter,
That this distemper'd messenger of wet,
The many-colour'd Iris, rounds thine eye?
Why? that you are my daughter?

HELENA

That I am not.

COUNTESS

I say, I am your mother.

HELENA

Pardon, madam;
The Count Rousillon cannot be my brother:
I am from humble, he from honour'd name;
No note upon my parents, his all noble:
My master, my dear lord he is; and I

His servant live, and will his vassal die:
He must not be my brother.

COUNTESS

Nor I your mother?

HELENA

You are my mother, madam; would you were,—
So that my lord your son were not my brother,—
Indeed my mother! or were you both our mothers,
I care no more for than I do for heaven,
So I were not his sister. Can't no other,
But, I your daughter, he must be my brother?

COUNTESS

Yes, Helen, you might be my daughter-in-law:
God shield you mean it not! daughter and mother
So strive upon your pulse. What, pale again?
My fear hath catch'd your fondness: now I see
The mystery of your loneliness, and find
Your salt tears' head: now to all sense 'tis gross
You love my son; invention is ashamed,
Against the proclamation of thy passion,
To say thou dost not: therefore tell me true;
But tell me then, 'tis so; for, look thy cheeks
Confess it, th' one to th' other; and thine eyes
See it so grossly shown in thy behaviors
That in their kind they speak it: only sin
And hellish obstinacy tie thy tongue,
That truth should be suspected. Speak, is't so?
If it be so, you have wound a goodly clew;
If it be not, forswear't: howe'er, I charge thee,
As heaven shall work in me for thine avail,
Tell me truly.

HELENA

Good madam, pardon me!

COUNTESS

Do you love my son?

HELENA

Your pardon, noble mistress!

COUNTESS

Love you my son?

HELENA

Do not you love him, madam?

COUNTESS

Go not about; my love hath in't a bond,
Whereof the world takes note: come, come, disclose
The state of your affection; for your passions
Have to the full appeach'd.

HELENA

Then, I confess,
Here on my knee, before high heaven and you,
That before you, and next unto high heaven,
I love your son.
My friends were poor, but honest; so's my love:
Be not offended; for it hurts not him
That he is loved of me: I follow him not
By any token of presumptuous suit;
Nor would I have him till I do deserve him;
Yet never know how that desert should be.
I know I love in vain, strive against hope;
Yet in this captious and intenable sieve
I still pour in the waters of my love
And lack not to lose still: thus, Indian-like,
Religious in mine error, I adore
The sun, that looks upon his worshipper,
But knows of him no more. My dearest madam,
Let not your hate encounter with my love
For loving where you do: but if yourself,
Whose aged honour cites a virtuous youth,
Did ever in so true a flame of liking
Wish chastely and love dearly, that your Dian
Was both herself and love: O, then, give pity
To her, whose state is such that cannot choose
But lend and give where she is sure to lose;
That seeks not to find that her search implies,
But riddle-like lives sweetly where she dies!

COUNTESS

Had you not lately an intent,—speak truly,—
To go to Paris?

HELENA

Madam, I had.

COUNTESS

Wherefore? tell true.

HELENA

I will tell truth; by grace itself I swear.
You know my father left me some prescriptions
Of rare and proved effects, such as his reading
And manifest experience had collected
For general sovereignty; and that he will'd me
In heedfull'st reservation to bestow them,
As notes whose faculties inclusive were
More than they were in note: amongst the rest,
There is a remedy, approved, set down,
To cure the desperate languishings whereof
The king is render'd lost.

COUNTESS

This was your motive
For Paris, was it? speak.

HELENA

My lord your son made me to think of this;
Else Paris and the medicine and the king
Had from the conversation of my thoughts
Haply been absent then.

COUNTESS

But think you, Helen,
If you should tender your supposed aid,
He would receive it? he and his physicians
Are of a mind; he, that they cannot help him,
They, that they cannot help: how shall they credit
A poor unlearned virgin, when the schools,
Embowell'd of their doctrine, have left off

The danger to itself?

HELENA

There's something in't,
More than my father's skill, which was the greatest
Of his profession, that his good receipt
Shall for my legacy be sanctified
By the luckiest stars in heaven: and, would your honour
But give me leave to try success, I'd venture
The well-lost life of mine on his grace's cure
By such a day and hour.

COUNTESS

Dost thou believe't?

HELENA

Ay, madam, knowingly.

COUNTESS

Why, Helen, thou shalt have my leave and love,
Means and attendants and my loving greetings
To those of mine in court: I'll stay at home
And pray God's blessing into thy attempt:
Be gone to-morrow; and be sure of this,
What I can help thee to thou shalt not miss.

Exeunt

Act II

SCENE I. Paris. The KING's palace.

Flourish of cornets. Enter the KING, attended with divers young Lords taking leave for the Florentine war; BERTRAM, and PAROLLES

KING

Farewell, young lords; these warlike principles
Do not throw from you: and you, my lords, farewell:
Share the advice betwixt you; if both gain, all
The gift doth stretch itself as 'tis received,
And is enough for both.

First Lord

'Tis our hope, sir,
After well enter'd soldiers, to return
And find your grace in health.

KING

No, no, it cannot be; and yet my heart
Will not confess he owes the malady
That doth my life besiege. Farewell, young lords;
Whether I live or die, be you the sons
Of worthy Frenchmen: let higher Italy,—
Those bated that inherit but the fall
Of the last monarchy,—see that you come
Not to woo honour, but to wed it; when
The bravest questant shrinks, find what you seek,
That fame may cry you loud: I say, farewell.

Second Lord

Health, at your bidding, serve your majesty!

KING

Those girls of Italy, take heed of them:
They say, our French lack language to deny,
If they demand: beware of being captives,
Before you serve.

Both

Our hearts receive your warnings.

KING

Farewell. Come hither to me.

Exit, attended

First Lord

O, my sweet lord, that you will stay behind us!

PAROLLES

'Tis not his fault, the spark.

Second Lord

O, 'tis brave wars!

PAROLLES

Most admirable: I have seen those wars.

BERTRAM

I am commanded here, and kept a coil with
'Too young' and 'the next year' and 'tis too early.'

PAROLLES

An thy mind stand to't, boy, steal away bravely.

BERTRAM

I shall stay here the forehorse to a smock,
Creaking my shoes on the plain masonry,
Till honour be bought up and no sword worn
But one to dance with! By heaven, I'll steal away.

First Lord

There's honour in the theft.

PAROLLES

Commit it, count.

Second Lord

I am your accessory; and so, farewell.

BERTRAM

I grow to you, and our parting is a tortured body.

First Lord

Farewell, captain.

Second Lord

Sweet Monsieur Parolles!

PAROLLES

Noble heroes, my sword and yours are kin. Good sparks and lustrous, a word, good metals: you shall find in the regiment of the Spinii one Captain Spurio, with his cicatrice, an emblem of war, here on his sinister cheek; it was this very sword entrenched it: say to him, I live; and observe his reports for me.

First Lord

We shall, noble captain.

Exeunt Lords

PAROLLES

Mars dote on you for his novices! what will ye do?

BERTRAM

Stay: the king.

Re-enter KING. BERTRAM and PAROLLES retire

PAROLLES

[To BERTRAM] Use a more spacious ceremony to the noble lords; you have restrained yourself within the list of too cold an adieu: be more expressive to them: for they wear themselves in the cap of the time, there do muster true gait, eat, speak, and move under the influence of the most received star; and though the devil lead the measure, such are to

be followed: after them, and take a more dilated farewell.

BERTRAM

And I will do so.

PAROLLES

Worthy fellows; and like to prove most sinewy sword-men.

Exeunt BERTRAM and PAROLLES

Enter LAFEU

LAFEU

[Kneeling] Pardon, my lord, for me and for my tidings.

KING

I'll fee thee to stand up.

LAFEU

Then here's a man stands, that has brought his pardon.
I would you had kneel'd, my lord, to ask me mercy,
And that at my bidding you could so stand up.

KING

I would I had; so I had broke thy pate,
And ask'd thee mercy for't.

LAFEU

Good faith, across: but, my good lord 'tis thus;
Will you be cured of your infirmity?

KING

No.

LAFEU

O, will you eat no grapes, my royal fox?
Yes, but you will my noble grapes, an if
My royal fox could reach them: I have seen a medicine
That's able to breathe life into a stone,
Quicken a rock, and make you dance canary
With spritely fire and motion; whose simple touch,

Is powerful to araise King Pepin, nay,
To give great Charlemain a pen in's hand,
And write to her a love-line.

KING

What 'her' is this?

LAFEU

Why, Doctor She: my lord, there's one arrived,
If you will see her: now, by my faith and honour,
If seriously I may convey my thoughts
In this my light deliverance, I have spoke
With one that, in her sex, her years, profession,
Wisdom and constancy, hath amazed me more
Than I dare blame my weakness: will you see her
For that is her demand, and know her business?
That done, laugh well at me.

KING

Now, good Lafeu,
Bring in the admiration; that we with thee
May spend our wonder too, or take off thine
By wondering how thou took'st it.

LAFEU

Nay, I'll fit you,
And not be all day neither.

Exit

KING

Thus he his special nothing ever prologues.

Re-enter LAFEU, with HELENA

LAFEU

Nay, come your ways.

KING

This haste hath wings indeed.

LAFEU

Nay, come your ways:
This is his majesty; say your mind to him:
A traitor you do look like; but such traitors
His majesty seldom fears: I am Cressid's uncle,
That dare leave two together; fare you well.

Exit

KING

Now, fair one, does your business follow us?

HELENA

Ay, my good lord.
Gerard de Narbon was my father;
In what he did profess, well found.

KING

I knew him.

HELENA

The rather will I spare my praises towards him:
Knowing him is enough. On's bed of death
Many receipts he gave me: chiefly one.
Which, as the dearest issue of his practise,
And of his old experience the oily darling,
He bade me store up, as a triple eye,
Safer than mine own two, more dear; I have so;
And hearing your high majesty is touch'd
With that malignant cause wherein the honour
Of my dear father's gift stands chief in power,
I come to tender it and my appliance
With all bound humbleness.

KING

We thank you, maiden;
But may not be so credulous of cure,
When our most learned doctors leave us and
The congregated college have concluded
That labouring art can never ransom nature
From her inaidible estate; I say we must not
So stain our judgment, or corrupt our hope,
To prostitute our past-cure malady
To empirics, or to dissever so

Our great self and our credit, to esteem
A senseless help when help past sense we deem.

HELENA

My duty then shall pay me for my pains:
I will no more enforce mine office on you.
Humbly entreating from your royal thoughts
A modest one, to bear me back a again.

KING

I cannot give thee less, to be call'd grateful:
Thou thought'st to help me; and such thanks I give
As one near death to those that wish him live:
But what at full I know, thou know'st no part,
I knowing all my peril, thou no art.

HELENA

What I can do can do no hurt to try,
Since you set up your rest 'gainst remedy.
He that of greatest works is finisher
Oft does them by the weakest minister:
So holy writ in babes hath judgment shown,
When judges have been babes; great floods have flown
From simple sources, and great seas have dried
When miracles have by the greatest been denied.
Oft expectation fails and most oft there
Where most it promises, and oft it hits
Where hope is coldest and despair most fits.

KING

I must not hear thee; fare thee well, kind maid;
Thy pains not used must by thyself be paid:
Proffers not took reap thanks for their reward.

HELENA

Inspired merit so by breath is barr'd:
It is not so with Him that all things knows
As 'tis with us that square our guess by shows;
But most it is presumption in us when
The help of heaven we count the act of men.
Dear sir, to my endeavours give consent;
Of heaven, not me, make an experiment.

I am not an impostor that proclaim
Myself against the level of mine aim;
But know I think and think I know most sure
My art is not past power nor you past cure.

KING

Are thou so confident? within what space
Hopedst thou my cure?

HELENA

The great'st grace lending grace
Ere twice the horses of the sun shall bring
Their fiery torcher his diurnal ring,
Ere twice in murk and occidental damp
Moist Hesperus hath quench'd his sleepy lamp,
Or four and twenty times the pilot's glass
Hath told the thievish minutes how they pass,
What is infirm from your sound parts shall fly,
Health shall live free and sickness freely die.

KING

Upon thy certainty and confidence
What darest thou venture?

HELENA

Tax of impudence,
A strumpet's boldness, a divulged shame
Traduced by odious ballads: my maiden's name
Sear'd otherwise; nay, worse—if worse—extended
With vilest torture let my life be ended.

KING

Methinks in thee some blessed spirit doth speak
His powerful sound within an organ weak:
And what impossibility would slay
In common sense, sense saves another way.
Thy life is dear; for all that life can rate
Worth name of life in thee hath estimate,
Youth, beauty, wisdom, courage, all
That happiness and prime can happy call:
Thou this to hazard needs must intimate
Skill infinite or monstrous desperate.

Sweet practiser, thy physic I will try,
That ministers thine own death if I die.

HELENA

If I break time, or flinch in property
Of what I spoke, unpitied let me die,
And well deserved: not helping, death's my fee;
But, if I help, what do you promise me?

KING

Make thy demand.

HELENA

But will you make it even?

KING

Ay, by my sceptre and my hopes of heaven.

HELENA

Then shalt thou give me with thy kingly hand
What husband in thy power I will command:
Exempted be from me the arrogance
To choose from forth the royal blood of France,
My low and humble name to propagate
With any branch or image of thy state;
But such a one, thy vassal, whom I know
Is free for me to ask, thee to bestow.

KING

Here is my hand; the premises observed,
Thy will by my performance shall be served:
So make the choice of thy own time, for I,
Thy resolved patient, on thee still rely.
More should I question thee, and more I must,
Though more to know could not be more to trust,
From whence thou camest, how tended on: but rest
Unquestion'd welcome and undoubted blest.
Give me some help here, ho! If thou proceed
As high as word, my deed shall match thy need.

Flourish. Exeunt

SCENE II. Rousillon. The COUNT's palace.

Enter COUNTESS and Clown

COUNTESS

Come on, sir; I shall now put you to the height of your breeding.

Clown

I will show myself highly fed and lowly taught: I know my business is but to the court.

COUNTESS

To the court! why, what place make you special, when you put off that with such contempt? But to the court!

Clown

Truly, madam, if God have lent a man any manners, he may easily put it off at court: he that cannot make a leg, put off's cap, kiss his hand and say nothing, has neither leg, hands, lip, nor cap; and indeed such a fellow, to say precisely, were not for the court; but for me, I have an answer will serve all men.

COUNTESS

Marry, that's a bountiful answer that fits all questions.

Clown

It is like a barber's chair that fits all buttocks, the pin-buttock, the quatch-buttock, the brawn buttock, or any buttock.

COUNTESS

Will your answer serve fit to all questions?

Clown

As fit as ten groats is for the hand of an attorney,

as your French crown for your taffeta punk, as Tib's
rush for Tom's forefinger, as a pancake for Shrove
Tuesday, a morris for May-day, as the nail to his
hole, the cuckold to his horn, as a scolding queen
to a wrangling knave, as the nun's lip to the
friar's mouth, nay, as the pudding to his skin.

COUNTESS

Have you, I say, an answer of such fitness for all
questions?

Clown

From below your duke to beneath your constable, it
will fit any question.

COUNTESS

It must be an answer of most monstrous size that
must fit all demands.

Clown

But a trifle neither, in good faith, if the learned
should speak truth of it: here it is, and all that
belongs to't. Ask me if I am a courtier: it shall
do you no harm to learn.

COUNTESS

To be young again, if we could: I will be a fool in
question, hoping to be the wiser by your answer. I
pray you, sir, are you a courtier?

Clown

O Lord, sir! There's a simple putting off. More,
more, a hundred of them.

COUNTESS

Sir, I am a poor friend of yours, that loves you.

Clown

O Lord, sir! Thick, thick, spare not me.

COUNTESS

I think, sir, you can eat none of this homely meat.

Clown

O Lord, sir! Nay, put me to't, I warrant you.

COUNTESS

You were lately whipped, sir, as I think.

Clown

O Lord, sir! spare not me.

COUNTESS

Do you cry, 'O Lord, sir!' at your whipping, and 'spare not me?' Indeed your 'O Lord, sir!' is very sequent to your whipping: you would answer very well to a whipping, if you were but bound to't.

Clown

I ne'er had worse luck in my life in my 'O Lord, sir!' I see things may serve long, but not serve ever.

COUNTESS

I play the noble housewife with the time
To entertain't so merrily with a fool.

Clown

O Lord, sir! why, there't serves well again.

COUNTESS

An end, sir; to your business. Give Helen this,
And urge her to a present answer back:
Commend me to my kinsmen and my son:
This is not much.

Clown

Not much commendation to them.

COUNTESS

Not much employment for you: you understand me?

Clown

Most fruitfully: I am there before my legs.

COUNTESS

Haste you again.

Exeunt severally

SCENE III. Paris. The KING's palace.

Enter BERTRAM, LAFEU, and PAROLLES

LAFEU

They say miracles are past; and we have our philosophical persons, to make modern and familiar, things supernatural and causeless. Hence is it that we make trifles of terrors, ensconcing ourselves into seeming knowledge, when we should submit ourselves to an unknown fear.

PAROLLES

Why, 'tis the rarest argument of wonder that hath shot out in our latter times.

BERTRAM

And so 'tis.

LAFEU

To be relinquish'd of the artists,—

PAROLLES

So I say.

LAFEU

Both of Galen and Paracelsus.

PAROLLES

So I say.

LAFEU

Of all the learned and authentic fellows,—

PAROLLES

Right; so I say.

LAFEU

That gave him out incurable,—

PAROLLES

Why, there 'tis; so say I too.

LAFEU

Not to be helped,—

PAROLLES

Right; as 'twere, a man assured of a—

LAFEU

Uncertain life, and sure death.

PAROLLES

Just, you say well; so would I have said.

LAFEU

I may truly say, it is a novelty to the world.

PAROLLES

It is, indeed: if you will have it in showing, you shall read it in—what do you call there?

LAFEU

A showing of a heavenly effect in an earthly actor.

PAROLLES

That's it; I would have said the very same.

LAFEU

Why, your dolphin is not lustier: 'fore me,
I speak in respect—

PAROLLES

Nay, 'tis strange, 'tis very strange, that is the
brief and the tedious of it; and he's of a most
facinerious spirit that will not acknowledge it to be the—

LAFEU

Very hand of heaven.

PAROLLES

Ay, so I say.

LAFEU

In a most weak—

pausing

and debile minister, great power, great
transcendence: which should, indeed, give us a
further use to be made than alone the recovery of
the king, as to be—

pausing

generally thankful.

PAROLLES

I would have said it; you say well. Here comes the king.

Enter KING, HELENA, and Attendants. LAFEU and PAROLLES retire

LAFEU

Lustig, as the Dutchman says: I'll like a maid the
better, whilst I have a tooth in my head: why, he's
able to lead her a coranto.

PAROLLES

Mort du vinaigre! is not this Helen?

LAFEU

'Fore God, I think so.

KING

Go, call before me all the lords in court.
Sit, my preserver, by thy patient's side;
And with this healthful hand, whose banish'd sense
Thou hast repeal'd, a second time receive
The confirmation of my promised gift,
Which but attends thy naming.

Enter three or four Lords

Fair maid, send forth thine eye: this youthful parcel
Of noble bachelors stand at my bestowing,
O'er whom both sovereign power and father's voice
I have to use: thy frank election make;
Thou hast power to choose, and they none to forsake.

HELENA

To each of you one fair and virtuous mistress
Fall, when Love please! marry, to each, but one!

LAFEU

I'd give bay Curtal and his furniture,
My mouth no more were broken than these boys',
And writ as little beard.

KING

Peruse them well:
Not one of those but had a noble father.

HELENA

Gentlemen,
Heaven hath through me restored the king to health.

All

We understand it, and thank heaven for you.

HELENA

I am a simple maid, and therein wealthiest,
That I protest I simply am a maid.
Please it your majesty, I have done already:
The blushes in my cheeks thus whisper me,
'We blush that thou shouldst choose; but, be refused,
Let the white death sit on thy cheek for ever;
We'll ne'er come there again.'

KING

Make choice; and, see,
Who shuns thy love shuns all his love in me.

HELENA

Now, Dian, from thy altar do I fly,
And to imperial Love, that god most high,
Do my sighs stream. Sir, will you hear my suit?

First Lord

And grant it.

HELENA

Thanks, sir; all the rest is mute.

LAFEU

I had rather be in this choice than throw ames-ace
for my life.

HELENA

The honour, sir, that flames in your fair eyes,
Before I speak, too threateningly replies:
Love make your fortunes twenty times above
Her that so wishes and her humble love!

Second Lord

No better, if you please.

HELENA

My wish receive,
Which great Love grant! and so, I take my leave.

LAFEU

Do all they deny her? An they were sons of mine,
I'd have them whipped; or I would send them to the
Turk, to make eunuchs of.

HELENA

Be not afraid that I your hand should take;
I'll never do you wrong for your own sake:
Blessing upon your vows! and in your bed
Find fairer fortune, if you ever wed!

LAFEU

These boys are boys of ice, they'll none have her:
sure, they are bastards to the English; the French
ne'er got 'em.

HELENA

You are too young, too happy, and too good,
To make yourself a son out of my blood.

Fourth Lord

Fair one, I think not so.

LAFEU

There's one grape yet; I am sure thy father drunk
wine: but if thou be'st not an ass, I am a youth
of fourteen; I have known thee already.

HELENA

[To BERTRAM] I dare not say I take you; but I give
Me and my service, ever whilst I live,
Into your guiding power. This is the man.

KING

Why, then, young Bertram, take her; she's thy wife.

BERTRAM

My wife, my liege! I shall beseech your highness,
In such a business give me leave to use
The help of mine own eyes.

KING

Know'st thou not, Bertram,
What she has done for me?

BERTRAM

Yes, my good lord;
But never hope to know why I should marry her.

KING

Thou know'st she has raised me from my sickly bed.

BERTRAM

But follows it, my lord, to bring me down
Must answer for your raising? I know her well:
She had her breeding at my father's charge.
A poor physician's daughter my wife! Disdain
Rather corrupt me ever!

KING

'Tis only title thou disdain'st in her, the which
I can build up. Strange is it that our bloods,
Of colour, weight, and heat, pour'd all together,
Would quite confound distinction, yet stand off
In differences so mighty. If she be
All that is virtuous, save what thou dislikest,
A poor physician's daughter, thou dislikest
Of virtue for the name: but do not so:
From lowest place when virtuous things proceed,
The place is dignified by the doer's deed:
Where great additions swell's, and virtue none,
It is a dropsied honour. Good alone
Is good without a name. Vileness is so:
The property by what it is should go,
Not by the title. She is young, wise, fair;
In these to nature she's immediate heir,
And these breed honour: that is honour's scorn,
Which challenges itself as honour's born
And is not like the sire: honours thrive,
When rather from our acts we them derive
Than our foregoers: the mere word's a slave
Debosh'd on every tomb, on every grave
A lying trophy, and as oft is dumb
Where dust and damn'd oblivion is the tomb
Of honour'd bones indeed. What should be said?
If thou canst like this creature as a maid,
I can create the rest: virtue and she
Is her own dower; honour and wealth from me.

BERTRAM

I cannot love her, nor will strive to do't.

KING

Thou wrong'st thyself, if thou shouldst strive to choose.

HELENA

That you are well restored, my lord, I'm glad:
Let the rest go.

KING

My honour's at the stake; which to defeat,
I must produce my power. Here, take her hand,
Proud scornful boy, unworthy this good gift;
That dost in vile misprision shackle up
My love and her desert; that canst not dream,
We, poisoning us in her defective scale,
Shall weigh thee to the beam; that wilt not know,
It is in us to plant thine honour where
We please to have it grow. Cheque thy contempt:
Obey our will, which travails in thy good:
Believe not thy disdain, but presently
Do thine own fortunes that obedient right
Which both thy duty owes and our power claims;
Or I will throw thee from my care for ever
Into the staggers and the careless lapse
Of youth and ignorance; both my revenge and hate
Loosing upon thee, in the name of justice,
Without all terms of pity. Speak; thine answer.

BERTRAM

Pardon, my gracious lord; for I submit
My fancy to your eyes: when I consider
What great creation and what dole of honour
Flies where you bid it, I find that she, which late
Was in my nobler thoughts most base, is now
The praised of the king; who, so ennobled,
Is as 'twere born so.

KING

Take her by the hand,
And tell her she is thine: to whom I promise
A counterpoise, if not to thy estate
A balance more replete.

BERTRAM

I take her hand.

KING

Good fortune and the favour of the king
Smile upon this contract; whose ceremony
Shall seem expedient on the now-born brief,
And be perform'd to-night: the solemn feast
Shall more attend upon the coming space,
Expecting absent friends. As thou lovest her,
Thy love's to me religious; else, does err.

Exeunt all but LAFEU and PAROLLES

LAFEU

[Advancing] Do you hear, monsieur? a word with you.

PAROLLES

Your pleasure, sir?

LAFEU

Your lord and master did well to make his
recantation.

PAROLLES

Recantation! My lord! my master!

LAFEU

Ay; is it not a language I speak?

PAROLLES

A most harsh one, and not to be understood without
bloody succeeding. My master!

LAFEU

Are you companion to the Count Rousillon?

PAROLLES

To any count, to all counts, to what is man.

LAFEU

To what is count's man: count's master is of

another style.

PAROLLES

You are too old, sir; let it satisfy you, you are too old.

LAFEU

I must tell thee, sirrah, I write man; to which title age cannot bring thee.

PAROLLES

What I dare too well do, I dare not do.

LAFEU

I did think thee, for two ordinaries, to be a pretty wise fellow; thou didst make tolerable vent of thy travel; it might pass: yet the scarfs and the bannerets about thee did manifoldly dissuade me from believing thee a vessel of too great a burthen. I have now found thee; when I lose thee again, I care not: yet art thou good for nothing but taking up; and that thou't scarce worth.

PAROLLES

Hadst thou not the privilege of antiquity upon thee,—

LAFEU

Do not plunge thyself too far in anger, lest thou hasten thy trial; which if—Lord have mercy on thee for a hen! So, my good window of lattice, fare thee well: thy casement I need not open, for I look through thee. Give me thy hand.

PAROLLES

My lord, you give me most egregious indignity.

LAFEU

Ay, with all my heart; and thou art worthy of it.

PAROLLES

I have not, my lord, deserved it.

LAFEU

Yes, good faith, every dram of it; and I will not
bate thee a scruple.

PAROLLES

Well, I shall be wiser.

LAFEU

Even as soon as thou canst, for thou hast to pull at
a smack o' the contrary. If ever thou be'st bound
in thy scarf and beaten, thou shalt find what it is
to be proud of thy bondage. I have a desire to hold
my acquaintance with thee, or rather my knowledge,
that I may say in the default, he is a man I know.

PAROLLES

My lord, you do me most insupportable vexation.

LAFEU

I would it were hell-pains for thy sake, and my poor
doing eternal: for doing I am past: as I will by
thee, in what motion age will give me leave.

Exit

PAROLLES

Well, thou hast a son shall take this disgrace off
me; scurvy, old, filthy, scurvy lord! Well, I must
be patient; there is no fettering of authority.
I'll beat him, by my life, if I can meet him with
any convenience, an he were double and double a
lord. I'll have no more pity of his age than I
would of—I'll beat him, an if I could but meet him again.

Re-enter LAFEU

LAFEU

Sirrah, your lord and master's married; there's news
for you: you have a new mistress.

PAROLLES

I most unfeignedly beseech your lordship to make some reservation of your wrongs: he is my good lord: whom I serve above is my master.

LAFEU

Who? God?

PAROLLES

Ay, sir.

LAFEU

The devil it is that's thy master. Why dost thou garter up thy arms o' this fashion? dost make hose of sleeves? do other servants so? Thou wert best set thy lower part where thy nose stands. By mine honour, if I were but two hours younger, I'd beat thee: methinks, thou art a general offence, and every man should beat thee: I think thou wast created for men to breathe themselves upon thee.

PAROLLES

This is hard and undeserved measure, my lord.

LAFEU

Go to, sir; you were beaten in Italy for picking a kernel out of a pomegranate; you are a vagabond and no true traveller: you are more saucy with lords and honourable personages than the commission of your birth and virtue gives you heraldry. You are not worth another word, else I'd call you knave. I leave you.

Exit

PAROLLES

Good, very good; it is so then: good, very good; let it be concealed awhile.

Re-enter BERTRAM

BERTRAM

Undone, and forfeited to cares for ever!

PAROLLES

What's the matter, sweet-heart?

BERTRAM

Although before the solemn priest I have sworn,
I will not bed her.

PAROLLES

What, what, sweet-heart?

BERTRAM

O my Parolles, they have married me!
I'll to the Tuscan wars, and never bed her.

PAROLLES

France is a dog-hole, and it no more merits
The tread of a man's foot: to the wars!

BERTRAM

There's letters from my mother: what the import is,
I know not yet.

PAROLLES

Ay, that would be known. To the wars, my boy, to the wars!
He wears his honour in a box unseen,
That hugs his kicky-wicky here at home,
Spending his manly marrow in her arms,
Which should sustain the bound and high curvet
Of Mars's fiery steed. To other regions
France is a stable; we that dwell in't jades;
Therefore, to the war!

BERTRAM

It shall be so: I'll send her to my house,
Acquaint my mother with my hate to her,
And wherefore I am fled; write to the king
That which I durst not speak; his present gift
Shall furnish me to those Italian fields,

Where noble fellows strike: war is no strife
To the dark house and the detested wife.

PAROLLES

Will this capriccio hold in thee? art sure?

BERTRAM

Go with me to my chamber, and advise me.
I'll send her straight away: to-morrow
I'll to the wars, she to her single sorrow.

PAROLLES

Why, these balls bound; there's noise in it. 'Tis hard:
A young man married is a man that's marr'd:
Therefore away, and leave her bravely; go:
The king has done you wrong: but, hush, 'tis so.

Exeunt

SCENE IV. Paris. The KING's palace.

Enter HELENA and Clown

HELENA

My mother greets me kindly; is she well?

Clown

She is not well; but yet she has her health: she's very merry; but yet she is not well: but thanks be given, she's very well and wants nothing i', the world; but yet she is not well.

HELENA

If she be very well, what does she ail, that she's not very well?

Clown

Truly, she's very well indeed, but for two things.

HELENA

What two things?

Clown

One, that she's not in heaven, whither God send her quickly! the other that she's in earth, from whence God send her quickly!

Enter PAROLLES

PAROLLES

Bless you, my fortunate lady!

HELENA

I hope, sir, I have your good will to have mine own good fortunes.

PAROLLES

You had my prayers to lead them on; and to keep them

on, have them still. O, my knave, how does my old lady?

Clown

So that you had her wrinkles and I her money,
I would she did as you say.

PAROLLES

Why, I say nothing.

Clown

Marry, you are the wiser man; for many a man's
tongue shakes out his master's undoing: to say
nothing, to do nothing, to know nothing, and to have
nothing, is to be a great part of your title; which
is within a very little of nothing.

PAROLLES

Away! thou'rt a knave.

Clown

You should have said, sir, before a knave thou'rt a
knave; that's, before me thou'rt a knave: this had
been truth, sir.

PAROLLES

Go to, thou art a witty fool; I have found thee.

Clown

Did you find me in yourself, sir? or were you
taught to find me? The search, sir, was profitable;
and much fool may you find in you, even to the
world's pleasure and the increase of laughter.

PAROLLES

A good knave, i' faith, and well fed.
Madam, my lord will go away to-night;
A very serious business calls on him.
The great prerogative and rite of love,
Which, as your due, time claims, he does acknowledge;
But puts it off to a compell'd restraint;

Whose want, and whose delay, is strew'd with sweets,
Which they distil now in the curbed time,
To make the coming hour o'erflow with joy
And pleasure drown the brim.

HELENA

What's his will else?

PAROLLES

That you will take your instant leave o' the king
And make this haste as your own good proceeding,
Strengthen'd with what apology you think
May make it probable need.

HELENA

What more commands he?

PAROLLES

That, having this obtain'd, you presently
Attend his further pleasure.

HELENA

In every thing I wait upon his will.

PAROLLES

I shall report it so.

HELENA

I pray you.

Exit PAROLLES

Come, sirrah.

Exeunt

SCENE V. Paris. The KING's palace.

Enter LAFEU and BERTRAM

LAFEU

But I hope your lordship thinks not him a soldier.

BERTRAM

Yes, my lord, and of very valiant approval.

LAFEU

You have it from his own deliverance.

BERTRAM

And by other warranted testimony.

LAFEU

Then my dial goes not true: I took this lark for a bunting.

BERTRAM

I do assure you, my lord, he is very great in knowledge and accordingly valiant.

LAFEU

I have then sinned against his experience and transgressed against his valour; and my state that way is dangerous, since I cannot yet find in my heart to repent. Here he comes: I pray you, make us friends; I will pursue the amity.

Enter PAROLLES

PAROLLES

[To BERTRAM] These things shall be done, sir.

LAFEU

Pray you, sir, who's his tailor?

PAROLLES

Sir?

LAFEU

O, I know him well, I, sir; he, sir, 's a good workman, a very good tailor.

BERTRAM

[Aside to PAROLLES] Is she gone to the king?

PAROLLES

She is.

BERTRAM

Will she away to-night?

PAROLLES

As you'll have her.

BERTRAM

I have writ my letters, casketed my treasure,
Given order for our horses; and to-night,
When I should take possession of the bride,
End ere I do begin.

LAFEU

A good traveller is something at the latter end of a dinner; but one that lies three thirds and uses a known truth to pass a thousand nothings with, should be once heard and thrice beaten. God save you, captain.

BERTRAM

Is there any unkindness between my lord and you, monsieur?

PAROLLES

I know not how I have deserved to run into my lord's displeasure.

LAFEU

You have made shift to run into 't, boots and spurs

and all, like him that leaped into the custard; and out of it you'll run again, rather than suffer question for your residence.

BERTRAM

It may be you have mistaken him, my lord.

LAFEU

And shall do so ever, though I took him at 's prayers. Fare you well, my lord; and believe this of me, there can be no kernel in this light nut; the soul of this man is his clothes. Trust him not in matter of heavy consequence; I have kept of them tame, and know their natures. Farewell, monsieur: I have spoken better of you than you have or will to deserve at my hand; but we must do good against evil.

Exit

PAROLLES

An idle lord. I swear.

BERTRAM

I think so.

PAROLLES

Why, do you not know him?

BERTRAM

Yes, I do know him well, and common speech Gives him a worthy pass. Here comes my clog.

Enter HELENA

HELENA

I have, sir, as I was commanded from you,
Spoke with the king and have procured his leave
For present parting; only he desires
Some private speech with you.

BERTRAM

I shall obey his will.
You must not marvel, Helen, at my course,
Which holds not colour with the time, nor does
The ministration and required office
On my particular. Prepared I was not
For such a business; therefore am I found
So much unsettled: this drives me to entreat you
That presently you take our way for home;
And rather muse than ask why I entreat you,
For my respects are better than they seem
And my appointments have in them a need
Greater than shows itself at the first view
To you that know them not. This to my mother:

Giving a letter

'Twill be two days ere I shall see you, so
I leave you to your wisdom.

HELENA

Sir, I can nothing say,
But that I am your most obedient servant.

BERTRAM

Come, come, no more of that.

HELENA

And ever shall
With true observance seek to eke out that
Wherein toward me my homely stars have fail'd
To equal my great fortune.

BERTRAM

Let that go:
My haste is very great: farewell; hie home.

HELENA

Pray, sir, your pardon.

BERTRAM

Well, what would you say?

HELENA

I am not worthy of the wealth I owe,
Nor dare I say 'tis mine, and yet it is;
But, like a timorous thief, most fain would steal
What law does vouch mine own.

BERTRAM

What would you have?

HELENA

Something; and scarce so much: nothing, indeed.
I would not tell you what I would, my lord:
Faith yes;
Strangers and foes do sunder, and not kiss.

BERTRAM

I pray you, stay not, but in haste to horse.

HELENA

I shall not break your bidding, good my lord.

BERTRAM

Where are my other men, monsieur? Farewell.

Exit HELENA

Go thou toward home; where I will never come
Whilst I can shake my sword or hear the drum.
Away, and for our flight.

PAROLLES

Bravely, coragio!

Exeunt

Act III

SCENE I. Florence. The DUKE's palace.

Flourish. Enter the DUKE of Florence attended; the two Frenchmen, with a troop of soldiers.

DUKE

So that from point to point now have you heard
The fundamental reasons of this war,
Whose great decision hath much blood let forth
And more thirsts after.

First Lord

Holy seems the quarrel
Upon your grace's part; black and fearful
On the opposer.

DUKE

Therefore we marvel much our cousin France
Would in so just a business shut his bosom
Against our borrowing prayers.

Second Lord

Good my lord,
The reasons of our state I cannot yield,
But like a common and an outward man,
That the great figure of a council frames
By self-unable motion: therefore dare not
Say what I think of it, since I have found
Myself in my incertain grounds to fail
As often as I guess'd.

DUKE

Be it his pleasure.

First Lord

But I am sure the younger of our nature,
That surfeit on their ease, will day by day
Come here for physic.

DUKE

Welcome shall they be;
And all the honours that can fly from us
Shall on them settle. You know your places well;
When better fall, for your avails they fell:
To-morrow to the field.

Flourish. Exeunt

SCENE II. Rousillon. The COUNT's palace.

Enter COUNTESS and Clown

COUNTESS

It hath happened all as I would have had it, save that he comes not along with her.

Clown

By my troth, I take my young lord to be a very melancholy man.

COUNTESS

By what observance, I pray you?

Clown

Why, he will look upon his boot and sing; mend the ruff and sing; ask questions and sing; pick his teeth and sing. I know a man that had this trick of melancholy sold a goodly manor for a song.

COUNTESS

Let me see what he writes, and when he means to come.

Opening a letter

Clown

I have no mind to Isbel since I was at court: our old ling and our Isbels o' the country are nothing like your old ling and your Isbels o' the court: the brains of my Cupid's knocked out, and I begin to love, as an old man loves money, with no stomach.

COUNTESS

What have we here?

Clown

E'en that you have there.

Exit

COUNTESS

[Reads] I have sent you a daughter-in-law: she hath recovered the king, and undone me. I have wedded her, not bedded her; and sworn to make the 'not' eternal. You shall hear I am run away: know it before the report come. If there be breadth enough in the world, I will hold a long distance. My duty to you. Your unfortunate son,
BERTRAM.

This is not well, rash and unbridled boy.
To fly the favours of so good a king;
To pluck his indignation on thy head
By the misprising of a maid too virtuous
For the contempt of empire.

Re-enter Clown

Clown

O madam, yonder is heavy news within between two soldiers and my young lady!

COUNTESS

What is the matter?

Clown

Nay, there is some comfort in the news, some comfort; your son will not be killed so soon as I thought he would.

COUNTESS

Why should he be killed?

Clown

So say I, madam, if he run away, as I hear he does: the danger is in standing to't; that's the loss of men, though it be the getting of children. Here they come will tell you more: for my part, I only hear your son was run away.

Exit

Enter HELENA, and two Gentlemen

First Gentleman

Save you, good madam.

HELENA

Madam, my lord is gone, for ever gone.

Second Gentleman

Do not say so.

COUNTESS

Think upon patience. Pray you, gentlemen,
I have felt so many quirks of joy and grief,
That the first face of neither, on the start,
Can woman me unto't: where is my son, I pray you?

Second Gentleman

Madam, he's gone to serve the duke of Florence:
We met him thitherward; for thence we came,
And, after some dispatch in hand at court,
Thither we bend again.

HELENA

Look on his letter, madam; here's my passport.

Reads

When thou canst get the ring upon my finger which
never shall come off, and show me a child begotten
of thy body that I am father to, then call me
husband: but in such a 'then' I write a 'never.'
This is a dreadful sentence.

COUNTESS

Brought you this letter, gentlemen?

First Gentleman

Ay, madam;
And for the contents' sake are sorry for our pain.

COUNTESS

I prithee, lady, have a better cheer;
If thou engrossest all the griefs are thine,
Thou robb'st me of a moiety: he was my son;
But I do wash his name out of my blood,
And thou art all my child. Towards Florence is he?

Second Gentleman

Ay, madam.

COUNTESS

And to be a soldier?

Second Gentleman

Such is his noble purpose; and believe 't,
The duke will lay upon him all the honour
That good convenience claims.

COUNTESS

Return you thither?

First Gentleman

Ay, madam, with the swiftest wing of speed.

HELENA

[Reads] Till I have no wife I have nothing in France.
'Tis bitter.

COUNTESS

Find you that there?

HELENA

Ay, madam.

First Gentleman

'Tis but the boldness of his hand, haply, which his
heart was not consenting to.

COUNTESS

Nothing in France, until he have no wife!

There's nothing here that is too good for him
But only she; and she deserves a lord
That twenty such rude boys might tend upon
And call her hourly mistress. Who was with him?

First Gentleman

A servant only, and a gentleman
Which I have sometime known.

COUNTESS

Parolles, was it not?

First Gentleman

Ay, my good lady, he.

COUNTESS

A very tainted fellow, and full of wickedness.
My son corrupts a well-derived nature
With his inducement.

First Gentleman

Indeed, good lady,
The fellow has a deal of that too much,
Which holds him much to have.

COUNTESS

You're welcome, gentlemen.
I will entreat you, when you see my son,
To tell him that his sword can never win
The honour that he loses: more I'll entreat you
Written to bear along.

Second Gentleman

We serve you, madam,
In that and all your worthiest affairs.

COUNTESS

Not so, but as we change our courtesies.
Will you draw near!

Exeunt COUNTESS and Gentlemen

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.

Exit

SCENE III. Florence. Before the DUKE's palace.

Flourish. Enter the DUKE of Florence, BERTRAM, PAROLLES, Soldiers, Drum, and Trumpets

DUKE

The general of our horse thou art; and we,
Great in our hope, lay our best love and credence
Upon thy promising fortune.

BERTRAM

Sir, it is
A charge too heavy for my strength, but yet
We'll strive to bear it for your worthy sake
To the extreme edge of hazard.

DUKE

Then go thou forth;
And fortune play upon thy prosperous helm,
As thy auspicious mistress!

BERTRAM

This very day,
Great Mars, I put myself into thy file:
Make me but like my thoughts, and I shall prove
A lover of thy drum, hater of love.

Exeunt

SCENE IV. Rousillon. The COUNT's palace.

Enter COUNTESS and Steward

COUNTESS

Alas! and would you take the letter of her?
Might you not know she would do as she has done,
By sending me a letter? Read it again.

Steward

[Reads]

I am Saint Jaques' pilgrim, thither gone:
Ambitious love hath so in me offended,
That barefoot plod I the cold ground upon,
With sainted vow my faults to have amended.
Write, write, that from the bloody course of war
My dearest master, your dear son, may hie:
Bless him at home in peace, whilst I from far
His name with zealous fervor sanctify:
His taken labours bid him me forgive;
I, his despiteful Juno, sent him forth
From courtly friends, with camping foes to live,
Where death and danger dogs the heels of worth:
He is too good and fair for death and me:
Whom I myself embrace, to set him free.

COUNTESS

Ah, what sharp stings are in her mildest words!
Rinaldo, you did never lack advice so much,
As letting her pass so: had I spoke with her,
I could have well diverted her intents,
Which thus she hath prevented.

Steward

Pardon me, madam:
If I had given you this at over-night,
She might have been o'erta'en; and yet she writes,
Pursuit would be but vain.

COUNTESS

What angel shall

Bless this unworthy husband? he cannot thrive,
Unless her prayers, whom heaven delights to hear
And loves to grant, reprieve him from the wrath
Of greatest justice. Write, write, Rinaldo,
To this unworthy husband of his wife;
Let every word weigh heavy of her worth
That he does weigh too light: my greatest grief.
Though little he do feel it, set down sharply.
Dispatch the most convenient messenger:
When haply he shall hear that she is gone,
He will return; and hope I may that she,
Hearing so much, will speed her foot again,
Led hither by pure love: which of them both
Is dearest to me. I have no skill in sense
To make distinction: provide this messenger:
My heart is heavy and mine age is weak;
Grief would have tears, and sorrow bids me speak.

Exeunt

SCENE V. Florence. Without the walls. A tucket afar off.

Enter an old Widow of Florence, DIANA, VIOLENTA, and MARIANA, with other Citizens

Widow

Nay, come; for if they do approach the city, we shall lose all the sight.

DIANA

They say the French count has done most honourable service.

Widow

It is reported that he has taken their greatest commander; and that with his own hand he slew the duke's brother.

Tucket

We have lost our labour; they are gone a contrary way: hark! you may know by their trumpets.

MARIANA

Come, let's return again, and suffice ourselves with the report of it. Well, Diana, take heed of this French earl: the honour of a maid is her name; and no legacy is so rich as honesty.

Widow

I have told my neighbour how you have been solicited by a gentleman his companion.

MARIANA

I know that knave; hang him! one Parolles: a filthy officer he is in those suggestions for the young earl. Beware of them, Diana; their promises, enticements, oaths, tokens, and all these engines of lust, are not the things they go under: many a maid hath been seduced by them; and the misery is, example, that so terrible shows in the wreck of maidenhood, cannot for all that dissuade succession, but that they are limed with the twigs that threaten

them. I hope I need not to advise you further; but I hope your own grace will keep you where you are, though there were no further danger known but the modesty which is so lost.

DIANA

You shall not need to fear me.

Widow

I hope so.

Enter HELENA, disguised like a Pilgrim

Look, here comes a pilgrim: I know she will lie at my house; thither they send one another: I'll question her. God save you, pilgrim! whither are you bound?

HELENA

To Saint Jaques le Grand.
Where do the palmers lodge, I do beseech you?

Widow

At the Saint Francis here beside the port.

HELENA

Is this the way?

Widow

Ay, marry, is't.

A march afar

Hark you! they come this way.
If you will tarry, holy pilgrim,
But till the troops come by,
I will conduct you where you shall be lodged;
The rather, for I think I know your hostess
As ample as myself.

HELENA

Is it yourself?

Widow

If you shall please so, pilgrim.

HELENA

I thank you, and will stay upon your leisure.

Widow

You came, I think, from France?

HELENA

I did so.

Widow

Here you shall see a countryman of yours
That has done worthy service.

HELENA

His name, I pray you.

DIANA

The Count Rousillon: know you such a one?

HELENA

But by the ear, that hears most nobly of him:
His face I know not.

DIANA

Whatsome'er he is,
He's bravely taken here. He stole from France,
As 'tis reported, for the king had married him
Against his liking: think you it is so?

HELENA

Ay, surely, mere the truth: I know his lady.

DIANA

There is a gentleman that serves the count
Reports but coarsely of her.

HELENA

What's his name?

DIANA

Monsieur Parolles.

HELENA

O, I believe with him,
In argument of praise, or to the worth
Of the great count himself, she is too mean
To have her name repeated: all her deserving
Is a reserved honesty, and that
I have not heard examined.

DIANA

Alas, poor lady!
'Tis a hard bondage to become the wife
Of a detesting lord.

Widow

I warrant, good creature, wheresoe'er she is,
Her heart weighs sadly: this young maid might do her
A shrewd turn, if she pleased.

HELENA

How do you mean?
May be the amorous count solicits her
In the unlawful purpose.

Widow

He does indeed;
And brokes with all that can in such a suit
Corrupt the tender honour of a maid:
But she is arm'd for him and keeps her guard
In honestest defence.

MARIANA

The gods forbid else!

Widow

So, now they come:

Drum and Colours

Enter BERTRAM, PAROLLES, and the whole army

That is Antonio, the duke's eldest son;
That, Escalus.

HELENA

Which is the Frenchman?

DIANA

He;
That with the plume: 'tis a most gallant fellow.
I would he loved his wife: if he were honester
He were much goodlier: is't not a handsome gentleman?

HELENA

I like him well.

DIANA

'Tis pity he is not honest: yond's that same knave
That leads him to these places: were I his lady,
I would Poison that vile rascal.

HELENA

Which is he?

DIANA

That jack-an-apes with scarfs: why is he melancholy?

HELENA

Perchance he's hurt i' the battle.

PAROLLES

Lose our drum! well.

MARIANA

He's shrewdly vexed at something: look, he has spied us.

Widow

Marry, hang you!

MARIANA

And your courtesy, for a ring-carrier!

Exeunt BERTRAM, PAROLLES, and army

Widow

The troop is past. Come, pilgrim, I will bring you
Where you shall host: of enjoin'd penitents
There's four or five, to great Saint Jaques bound,
Already at my house.

HELENA

I humbly thank you:
Please it this matron and this gentle maid
To eat with us to-night, the charge and thanking
Shall be for me; and, to requite you further,
I will bestow some precepts of this virgin
Worthy the note.

BOTH

We'll take your offer kindly.

Exeunt

SCENE VI. Camp before Florence.

Enter BERTRAM and the two French Lords

Second Lord

Nay, good my lord, put him to't; let him have his way.

First Lord

If your lordship find him not a hilding, hold me no more in your respect.

Second Lord

On my life, my lord, a bubble.

BERTRAM

Do you think I am so far deceived in him?

Second Lord

Believe it, my lord, in mine own direct knowledge, without any malice, but to speak of him as my kinsman, he's a most notable coward, an infinite and endless liar, an hourly promise-breaker, the owner of no one good quality worthy your lordship's entertainment.

First Lord

It were fit you knew him; lest, reposing too far in his virtue, which he hath not, he might at some great and trusty business in a main danger fail you.

BERTRAM

I would I knew in what particular action to try him.

First Lord

None better than to let him fetch off his drum, which you hear him so confidently undertake to do.

Second Lord

I, with a troop of Florentines, will suddenly surprise him; such I will have, whom I am sure he knows not from the enemy: we will bind and hoodwink him so, that he shall suppose no other but that he is carried into the leaguer of the adversaries, when we bring him to our own tents. Be but your lordship present at his examination: if he do not, for the promise of his life and in the highest compulsion of base fear, offer to betray you and deliver all the intelligence in his power against you, and that with the divine forfeit of his soul upon oath, never trust my judgment in any thing.

First Lord

O, for the love of laughter, let him fetch his drum; he says he has a stratagem for't: when your lordship sees the bottom of his success in't, and to what metal this counterfeit lump of ore will be melted, if you give him not John Drum's entertainment, your inclining cannot be removed. Here he comes.

Enter PAROLLES

Second Lord

[Aside to BERTRAM] O, for the love of laughter, hinder not the honour of his design: let him fetch off his drum in any hand.

BERTRAM

How now, monsieur! this drum sticks sorely in your disposition.

First Lord

A pox on't, let it go; 'tis but a drum.

PAROLLES

'But a drum'! is't 'but a drum'? A drum so lost! There was excellent command,—to charge in with our horse upon our own wings, and to rend our own soldiers!

First Lord

That was not to be blamed in the command of the service: it was a disaster of war that Caesar himself could not have prevented, if he had been there to command.

BERTRAM

Well, we cannot greatly condemn our success: some dishonour we had in the loss of that drum; but it is not to be recovered.

PAROLLES

It might have been recovered.

BERTRAM

It might; but it is not now.

PAROLLES

It is to be recovered: but that the merit of service is seldom attributed to the true and exact performer, I would have that drum or another, or 'hic jacet.'

BERTRAM

Why, if you have a stomach, to't, monsieur: if you think your mystery in stratagem can bring this instrument of honour again into his native quarter, be magnanimous in the enterprise and go on; I will grace the attempt for a worthy exploit: if you speed well in it, the duke shall both speak of it. and extend to you what further becomes his greatness, even to the utmost syllable of your worthiness.

PAROLLES

By the hand of a soldier, I will undertake it.

BERTRAM

But you must not now slumber in it.

PAROLLES

I'll about it this evening: and I will presently pen down my dilemmas, encourage myself in my certainty, put myself into my mortal preparation; and by midnight look to hear further from me.

BERTRAM

May I be bold to acquaint his grace you are gone about it?

PAROLLES

I know not what the success will be, my lord; but the attempt I vow.

BERTRAM

I know thou'rt valiant; and, to the possibility of thy soldiership, will subscribe for thee. Farewell.

PAROLLES

I love not many words.

Exit

Second Lord

No more than a fish loves water. Is not this a strange fellow, my lord, that so confidently seems to undertake this business, which he knows is not to be done; damns himself to do and dares better be damned than to do't?

First Lord

You do not know him, my lord, as we do: certain it is that he will steal himself into a man's favour and for a week escape a great deal of discoveries; but when you find him out, you have him ever after.

BERTRAM

Why, do you think he will make no deed at all of this that so seriously he does address himself unto?

Second Lord

None in the world; but return with an invention and clap upon you two or three probable lies: but we

have almost embossed him; you shall see his fall
to-night; for indeed he is not for your lordship's respect.

First Lord

We'll make you some sport with the fox ere we case
him. He was first smoked by the old lord Lafeu:
when his disguise and he is parted, tell me what a
sprat you shall find him; which you shall see this
very night.

Second Lord

I must go look my twigs: he shall be caught.

BERTRAM

Your brother he shall go along with me.

Second Lord

As't please your lordship: I'll leave you.

Exit

BERTRAM

Now will I lead you to the house, and show you
The lass I spoke of.

First Lord

But you say she's honest.

BERTRAM

That's all the fault: I spoke with her but once
And found her wondrous cold; but I sent to her,
By this same coxcomb that we have i' the wind,
Tokens and letters which she did re-send;
And this is all I have done. She's a fair creature:
Will you go see her?

First Lord

With all my heart, my lord.

Exeunt

SCENE VII. Florence. The Widow's house.

Enter HELENA and Widow

HELENA

If you misdoubt me that I am not she,
I know not how I shall assure you further,
But I shall lose the grounds I work upon.

Widow

Though my estate be fallen, I was well born,
Nothing acquainted with these businesses;
And would not put my reputation now
In any staining act.

HELENA

Nor would I wish you.
First, give me trust, the count he is my husband,
And what to your sworn counsel I have spoken
Is so from word to word; and then you cannot,
By the good aid that I of you shall borrow,
Err in bestowing it.

Widow

I should believe you:
For you have show'd me that which well approves
You're great in fortune.

HELENA

Take this purse of gold,
And let me buy your friendly help thus far,
Which I will over-pay and pay again
When I have found it. The count he woos your daughter,
Lays down his wanton siege before her beauty,
Resolved to carry her: let her in fine consent,
As we'll direct her how 'tis best to bear it.
Now his important blood will nought deny
That she'll demand: a ring the county wears,
That downward hath succeeded in his house
From son to son, some four or five descents
Since the first father wore it: this ring he holds

In most rich choice; yet in his idle fire,
To buy his will, it would not seem too dear,
Howe'er repented after.

Widow

Now I see
The bottom of your purpose.

HELENA

You see it lawful, then: it is no more,
But that your daughter, ere she seems as won,
Desires this ring; appoints him an encounter;
In fine, delivers me to fill the time,
Herself most chastely absent: after this,
To marry her, I'll add three thousand crowns
To what is passed already.

Widow

I have yielded:
Instruct my daughter how she shall persevere,
That time and place with this deceit so lawful
May prove coherent. Every night he comes
With musics of all sorts and songs composed
To her unworthiness: it nothing steads us
To chide him from our eaves; for he persists
As if his life lay on't.

HELENA

Why then to-night
Let us assay our plot; which, if it speed,
Is wicked meaning in a lawful deed
And lawful meaning in a lawful act,
Where both not sin, and yet a sinful fact:
But let's about it.

Exeunt

Act IV

SCENE I. Without the Florentine camp.

Enter Second French Lord, with five or six other Soldiers in ambush

Second Lord

He can come no other way but by this hedge-corner.
When you sally upon him, speak what terrible
language you will: though you understand it not
yourselves, no matter; for we must not seem to
understand him, unless some one among us whom we
must produce for an interpreter.

First Soldier

Good captain, let me be the interpreter.

Second Lord

Art not acquainted with him? knows he not thy voice?

First Soldier

No, sir, I warrant you.

Second Lord

But what linsey-woolsey hast thou to speak to us again?

First Soldier

E'en such as you speak to me.

Second Lord

He must think us some band of strangers i' the
adversary's entertainment. Now he hath a smack of
all neighbouring languages; therefore we must every
one be a man of his own fancy, not to know what we
speak one to another; so we seem to know, is to
know straight our purpose: choughs' language,
gabble enough, and good enough. As for you,
interpreter, you must seem very politic. But couch,
ho! here he comes, to beguile two hours in a sleep,
and then to return and swear the lies he forges.

Enter PAROLLES

PAROLLES

Ten o'clock: within these three hours 'twill be time enough to go home. What shall I say I have done? It must be a very plausible invention that carries it: they begin to smoke me; and disgraces have of late knocked too often at my door. I find my tongue is too foolhardy; but my heart hath the fear of Mars before it and of his creatures, not daring the reports of my tongue.

Second Lord

This is the first truth that e'er thine own tongue was guilty of.

PAROLLES

What the devil should move me to undertake the recovery of this drum, being not ignorant of the impossibility, and knowing I had no such purpose? I must give myself some hurts, and say I got them in exploit: yet slight ones will not carry it; they will say, 'Came you off with so little?' and great ones I dare not give. Wherefore, what's the instance? Tongue, I must put you into a butter-woman's mouth and buy myself another of Bajazet's mule, if you prattle me into these perils.

Second Lord

Is it possible he should know what he is, and be that he is?

PAROLLES

I would the cutting of my garments would serve the turn, or the breaking of my Spanish sword.

Second Lord

We cannot afford you so.

PAROLLES

Or the baring of my beard; and to say it was in

stratagem.

Second Lord

'Twould not do.

PAROLLES

Or to drown my clothes, and say I was stripped.

Second Lord

Hardly serve.

PAROLLES

Though I swore I leaped from the window of the citadel.

Second Lord

How deep?

PAROLLES

Thirty fathom.

Second Lord

Three great oaths would scarce make that be believed.

PAROLLES

I would I had any drum of the enemy's: I would swear
I recovered it.

Second Lord

You shall hear one anon.

PAROLLES

A drum now of the enemy's,—

Alarum within

Second Lord

Throca movousus, cargo, cargo, cargo.

All

Cargo, cargo, cargo, villiando par corbo, cargo.

PAROLLES

O, ransom, ransom! do not hide mine eyes.

They seize and blindfold him

First Soldier

Boskos thromuldo boskos.

PAROLLES

I know you are the Muskos' regiment:
And I shall lose my life for want of language;
If there be here German, or Dane, low Dutch,
Italian, or French, let him speak to me; I'll
Discover that which shall undo the Florentine.

First Soldier

Boskos vauvado: I understand thee, and can speak
thy tongue. Kerely bonto, sir, betake thee to thy
faith, for seventeen poniards are at thy bosom.

PAROLLES

O!

First Soldier

O, pray, pray, pray! Manka revania dulce.

Second Lord

Oscorbidulchos volivorco.

First Soldier

The general is content to spare thee yet;
And, hoodwink'd as thou art, will lead thee on
To gather from thee: haply thou mayst inform
Something to save thy life.

PAROLLES

O, let me live!
And all the secrets of our camp I'll show,

Their force, their purposes; nay, I'll speak that
Which you will wonder at.

First Soldier

But wilt thou faithfully?

PAROLLES

If I do not, damn me.

First Soldier

Acordo linta.

Come on; thou art granted space.

Exit, with PAROLLES guarded. A short alarum within

Second Lord

Go, tell the Count Rousillon, and my brother,
We have caught the woodcock, and will keep him muffled
Till we do hear from them.

Second Soldier

Captain, I will.

Second Lord

A' will betray us all unto ourselves:
Inform on that.

Second Soldier

So I will, sir.

Second Lord

Till then I'll keep him dark and safely lock'd.

Exeunt

SCENE II. Florence. The Widow's house.

Enter BERTRAM and DIANA

BERTRAM

They told me that your name was Fontibell.

DIANA

No, my good lord, Diana.

BERTRAM

Titled goddess;
And worth it, with addition! But, fair soul,
In your fine frame hath love no quality?
If quick fire of youth light not your mind,
You are no maiden, but a monument:
When you are dead, you should be such a one
As you are now, for you are cold and stem;
And now you should be as your mother was
When your sweet self was got.

DIANA

She then was honest.

BERTRAM

So should you be.

DIANA

No:
My mother did but duty; such, my lord,
As you owe to your wife.

BERTRAM

No more o' that;
I prithee, do not strive against my vows:
I was compell'd to her; but I love thee
By love's own sweet constraint, and will for ever
Do thee all rights of service.

DIANA

Ay, so you serve us
Till we serve you; but when you have our roses,
You barely leave our thorns to prick ourselves
And mock us with our bareness.

BERTRAM

How have I sworn!

DIANA

'Tis not the many oaths that makes the truth,
But the plain single vow that is vow'd true.
What is not holy, that we swear not by,
But take the High'st to witness: then, pray you, tell me,
If I should swear by God's great attributes,
I loved you dearly, would you believe my oaths,
When I did love you ill? This has no holding,
To swear by him whom I protest to love,
That I will work against him: therefore your oaths
Are words and poor conditions, but unseal'd,
At least in my opinion.

BERTRAM

Change it, change it;
Be not so holy-cruel: love is holy;
And my integrity ne'er knew the crafts
That you do charge men with. Stand no more off,
But give thyself unto my sick desires,
Who then recover: say thou art mine, and ever
My love as it begins shall so persever.

DIANA

I see that men make ropes in such a scarre
That we'll forsake ourselves. Give me that ring.

BERTRAM

I'll lend it thee, my dear; but have no power
To give it from me.

DIANA

Will you not, my lord?

BERTRAM

It is an honour 'longing to our house,
Bequeathed down from many ancestors;
Which were the greatest obloquy i' the world
In me to lose.

DIANA

Mine honour's such a ring:
My chastity's the jewel of our house,
Bequeathed down from many ancestors;
Which were the greatest obloquy i' the world
In me to lose: thus your own proper wisdom
Brings in the champion Honour on my part,
Against your vain assault.

BERTRAM

Here, take my ring:
My house, mine honour, yea, my life, be thine,
And I'll be bid by thee.

DIANA

When midnight comes, knock at my chamber-window:
I'll order take my mother shall not hear.
Now will I charge you in the band of truth,
When you have conquer'd my yet maiden bed,
Remain there but an hour, nor speak to me:
My reasons are most strong; and you shall know them
When back again this ring shall be deliver'd:
And on your finger in the night I'll put
Another ring, that what in time proceeds
May token to the future our past deeds.
Adieu, till then; then, fail not. You have won
A wife of me, though there my hope be done.

BERTRAM

A heaven on earth I have won by wooing thee.

Exit

DIANA

For which live long to thank both heaven and me!
You may so in the end.
My mother told me just how he would woo,
As if she sat in 's heart; she says all men

Have the like oaths: he had sworn to marry me
When his wife's dead; therefore I'll lie with him
When I am buried. Since Frenchmen are so braid,
Marry that will, I live and die a maid:
Only in this disguise I think't no sin
To cozen him that would unjustly win.

Exit

SCENE III. The Florentine camp.

Enter the two French Lords and some two or three Soldiers

First Lord

You have not given him his mother's letter?

Second Lord

I have delivered it an hour since: there is something in't that stings his nature; for on the reading it he changed almost into another man.

First Lord

He has much worthy blame laid upon him for shaking off so good a wife and so sweet a lady.

Second Lord

Especially he hath incurred the everlasting displeasure of the king, who had even tuned his bounty to sing happiness to him. I will tell you a thing, but you shall let it dwell darkly with you.

First Lord

When you have spoken it, 'tis dead, and I am the grave of it.

Second Lord

He hath perverted a young gentlewoman here in Florence, of a most chaste renown; and this night he fleshes his will in the spoil of her honour: he hath given her his monumental ring, and thinks himself made in the unchaste composition.

First Lord

Now, God delay our rebellion! as we are ourselves, what things are we!

Second Lord

Merely our own traitors. And as in the common course

of all treasons, we still see them reveal themselves, till they attain to their abhorred ends, so he that in this action contrives against his own nobility, in his proper stream o'erflows himself.

First Lord

Is it not meant damnable in us, to be trumpeters of our unlawful intents? We shall not then have his company to-night?

Second Lord

Not till after midnight; for he is dieted to his hour.

First Lord

That approaches apace; I would gladly have him see his company anatomized, that he might take a measure of his own judgments, wherein so curiously he had set this counterfeit.

Second Lord

We will not meddle with him till he come; for his presence must be the whip of the other.

First Lord

In the mean time, what hear you of these wars?

Second Lord

I hear there is an overture of peace.

First Lord

Nay, I assure you, a peace concluded.

Second Lord

What will Count Rousillon do then? will he travel higher, or return again into France?

First Lord

I perceive, by this demand, you are not altogether of his council.

Second Lord

Let it be forbid, sir; so should I be a great deal of his act.

First Lord

Sir, his wife some two months since fled from his house: her pretence is a pilgrimage to Saint Jaques le Grand; which holy undertaking with most austere sanctimony she accomplished; and, there residing the tenderness of her nature became as a prey to her grief; in fine, made a groan of her last breath, and now she sings in heaven.

Second Lord

How is this justified?

First Lord

The stronger part of it by her own letters, which makes her story true, even to the point of her death: her death itself, which could not be her office to say is come, was faithfully confirmed by the rector of the place.

Second Lord

Hath the count all this intelligence?

First Lord

Ay, and the particular confirmations, point from point, so to the full arming of the verity.

Second Lord

I am heartily sorry that he'll be glad of this.

First Lord

How mightily sometimes we make us comforts of our losses!

Second Lord

And how mightily some other times we drown our gain in tears! The great dignity that his valour hath

here acquired for him shall at home be encountered with a shame as ample.

First Lord

The web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together: our virtues would be proud, if our faults whipped them not; and our crimes would despair, if they were not cherished by our virtues.

Enter a Messenger

How now! where's your master?

Servant

He met the duke in the street, sir, of whom he hath taken a solemn leave: his lordship will next morning for France. The duke hath offered him letters of commendations to the king.

Second Lord

They shall be no more than needful there, if they were more than they can commend.

First Lord

They cannot be too sweet for the king's tartness. Here's his lordship now.

Enter BERTRAM

How now, my lord! is't not after midnight?

BERTRAM

I have to-night dispatched sixteen businesses, a month's length a-piece, by an abstract of success: I have congied with the duke, done my adieu with his nearest; buried a wife, mourned for her; writ to my lady mother I am returning; entertained my convoy; and between these main parcels of dispatch effected many nicer needs; the last was the greatest, but that I have not ended yet.

Second Lord

If the business be of any difficulty, and this morning your departure hence, it requires haste of

your lordship.

BERTRAM

I mean, the business is not ended, as fearing to hear of it hereafter. But shall we have this dialogue between the fool and the soldier? Come, bring forth this counterfeit module, he has deceived me, like a double-meaning prophesier.

Second Lord

Bring him forth: has sat i' the stocks all night,
poor gallant knave.

BERTRAM

No matter: his heels have deserved it, in usurping his spurs so long. How does he carry himself?

Second Lord

I have told your lordship already, the stocks carry him. But to answer you as you would be understood; he weeps like a wench that had shed her milk: he hath confessed himself to Morgan, whom he supposes to be a friar, from the time of his remembrance to this very instant disaster of his setting i' the stocks: and what think you he hath confessed?

BERTRAM

Nothing of me, has a'?

Second Lord

His confession is taken, and it shall be read to his face: if your lordship be in't, as I believe you are, you must have the patience to hear it.

Enter PAROLLES guarded, and First Soldier

BERTRAM

A plague upon him! muffled! he can say nothing of me: hush, hush!

First Lord

Hoodman comes! Portotartarosa

First Soldier

He calls for the tortures: what will you say
without 'em?

PAROLLES

I will confess what I know without constraint: if
ye pinch me like a pasty, I can say no more.

First Soldier

Bosko chimurcho.

First Lord

Boblibindo chicurmurco.

First Soldier

You are a merciful general. Our general bids you
answer to what I shall ask you out of a note.

PAROLLES

And truly, as I hope to live.

First Soldier

[Reads] 'First demand of him how many horse the
duke is strong.' What say you to that?

PAROLLES

Five or six thousand; but very weak and
unservicable: the troops are all scattered, and
the commanders very poor rogues, upon my reputation
and credit and as I hope to live.

First Soldier

Shall I set down your answer so?

PAROLLES

Do: I'll take the sacrament on't, how and which way you will.

BERTRAM

All's one to him. What a past-saving slave is this!

First Lord

You're deceived, my lord: this is Monsieur Parolles, the gallant militarist,—that was his own phrase,—that had the whole theoric of war in the knot of his scarf, and the practise in the chape of his dagger.

Second Lord

I will never trust a man again for keeping his sword clean. nor believe he can have every thing in him by wearing his apparel neatly.

First Soldier

Well, that's set down.

PAROLLES

Five or six thousand horse, I said,— I will say true,—or thereabouts, set down, for I'll speak truth.

First Lord

He's very near the truth in this.

BERTRAM

But I con him no thanks for't, in the nature he delivers it.

PAROLLES

Poor rogues, I pray you, say.

First Soldier

Well, that's set down.

PAROLLES

I humbly thank you, sir: a truth's a truth, the rogues are marvellous poor.

First Soldier

[Reads] 'Demand of him, of what strength they are a-foot.' What say you to that?

PAROLLES

By my troth, sir, if I were to live this present hour, I will tell true. Let me see: Spurio, a hundred and fifty; Sebastian, so many; Corambus, so many; Jaques, so many; Gultian, Cosmo, Lodowick, and Gratii, two hundred and fifty each; mine own company, Chitopher, Vaumond, Bentii, two hundred and fifty each: so that the muster-file, rotten and sound, upon my life, amounts not to fifteen thousand poll; half of the which dare not shake snow from off their cassocks, lest they shake themselves to pieces.

BERTRAM

What shall be done to him?

First Lord

Nothing, but let him have thanks. Demand of him my condition, and what credit I have with the duke.

First Soldier

Well, that's set down.

Reads

'You shall demand of him, whether one Captain Dumain be i' the camp, a Frenchman; what his reputation is with the duke; what his valour, honesty, and expertness in wars; or whether he thinks it were not possible, with well-weighing sums of gold, to corrupt him to revolt.' What say you to this? what do you know of it?

PAROLLES

I beseech you, let me answer to the particular of the inter'gatories: demand them singly.

First Soldier

Do you know this Captain Dumain?

PAROLLES

I know him: a' was a botcher's 'prentice in Paris, from whence he was whipped for getting the shrieve's fool with child,—a dumb innocent, that could not say him nay.

BERTRAM

Nay, by your leave, hold your hands; though I know his brains are forfeit to the next tile that falls.

First Soldier

Well, is this captain in the duke of Florence's camp?

PAROLLES

Upon my knowledge, he is, and lousy.

First Lord

Nay look not so upon me; we shall hear of your lordship anon.

First Soldier

What is his reputation with the duke?

PAROLLES

The duke knows him for no other but a poor officer of mine; and writ to me this other day to turn him out o' the band: I think I have his letter in my pocket.

First Soldier

Marry, we'll search.

PAROLLES

In good sadness, I do not know; either it is there, or it is upon a file with the duke's other letters in my tent.

First Soldier

Here 'tis; here's a paper: shall I read it to you?

PAROLLES

I do not know if it be it or no.

BERTRAM

Our interpreter does it well.

First Lord

Excellently.

First Soldier

[Reads] 'Dian, the count's a fool, and full of gold,'—

PAROLLES

That is not the duke's letter, sir; that is an advertisement to a proper maid in Florence, one Diana, to take heed of the allurements of one Count Rousillon, a foolish idle boy, but for all that very ruttish: I pray you, sir, put it up again.

First Soldier

Nay, I'll read it first, by your favour.

PAROLLES

My meaning in't, I protest, was very honest in the behalf of the maid; for I knew the young count to be a dangerous and lascivious boy, who is a whale to virginity and devours up all the fry it finds.

BERTRAM

Damnably both-sides rogue!

First Soldier

[Reads] 'When he swears oaths, bid him drop gold, and take it;
After he scores, he never pays the score:
Half won is match well made; match, and well make it;
He ne'er pays after-debts, take it before;
And say a soldier, Dian, told thee this,
Men are to mell with, boys are not to kiss:
For count of this, the count's a fool, I know it,

Who pays before, but not when he does owe it.
Thine, as he vowed to thee in thine ear,
PAROLLES.'

BERTRAM

He shall be whipped through the army with this rhyme
in's forehead.

Second Lord

This is your devoted friend, sir, the manifold
linguist and the armipotent soldier.

BERTRAM

I could endure any thing before but a cat, and now
he's a cat to me.

First Soldier

I perceive, sir, by the general's looks, we shall be
fain to hang you.

PAROLLES

My life, sir, in any case: not that I am afraid to
die; but that, my offences being many, I would
repent out the remainder of nature: let me live,
sir, in a dungeon, i' the stocks, or any where, so I may live.

First Soldier

We'll see what may be done, so you confess freely;
therefore, once more to this Captain Dumain: you
have answered to his reputation with the duke and to
his valour: what is his honesty?

PAROLLES

He will steal, sir, an egg out of a cloister: for
rapes and ravishments he parallels Nessus: he
professes not keeping of oaths; in breaking 'em he
is stronger than Hercules: he will lie, sir, with
such volubility, that you would think truth were a
fool: drunkenness is his best virtue, for he will
be swine-drunk; and in his sleep he does little
harm, save to his bed-clothes about him; but they

know his conditions and lay him in straw. I have but little more to say, sir, of his honesty: he has every thing that an honest man should not have; what an honest man should have, he has nothing.

First Lord

I begin to love him for this.

BERTRAM

For this description of thine honesty? A pox upon him for me, he's more and more a cat.

First Soldier

What say you to his expertness in war?

PAROLLES

Faith, sir, he has led the drum before the English tragedians; to belie him, I will not, and more of his soldiership I know not; except, in that country he had the honour to be the officer at a place there called Mile-end, to instruct for the doubling of files: I would do the man what honour I can, but of this I am not certain.

First Lord

He hath out-villained villany so far, that the rarity redeems him.

BERTRAM

A pox on him, he's a cat still.

First Soldier

His qualities being at this poor price, I need not to ask you if gold will corrupt him to revolt.

PAROLLES

Sir, for a quart d'ecu he will sell the fee-simple of his salvation, the inheritance of it; and cut the entail from all remainders, and a perpetual succession for it perpetually.

First Soldier

What's his brother, the other Captain Dumain?

Second Lord

Why does he ask him of me?

First Soldier

What's he?

PAROLLES

E'en a crow o' the same nest; not altogether so great as the first in goodness, but greater a great deal in evil: he excels his brother for a coward, yet his brother is reputed one of the best that is: in a retreat he outruns any lackey; marry, in coming on he has the cramp.

First Soldier

If your life be saved, will you undertake to betray the Florentine?

PAROLLES

Ay, and the captain of his horse, Count Rousillon.

First Soldier

I'll whisper with the general, and know his pleasure.

PAROLLES

[Aside] I'll no more drumming; a plague of all drums! Only to seem to deserve well, and to beguile the supposition of that lascivious young boy the count, have I run into this danger. Yet who would have suspected an ambush where I was taken?

First Soldier

There is no remedy, sir, but you must die: the general says, you that have so traitorously discovered the secrets of your army and made such pestiferous reports of men very nobly held, can

serve the world for no honest use; therefore you must die. Come, headsman, off with his head.

PAROLLES

O Lord, sir, let me live, or let me see my death!

First Lord

That shall you, and take your leave of all your friends.

Unblinding him

So, look about you: know you any here?

BERTRAM

Good morrow, noble captain.

Second Lord

God bless you, Captain Parolles.

First Lord

God save you, noble captain.

Second Lord

Captain, what greeting will you to my Lord Lafeu?
I am for France.

First Lord

Good captain, will you give me a copy of the sonnet
you writ to Diana in behalf of the Count Rousillon?
an I were not a very coward, I'd compel it of you:
but fare you well.

Exeunt BERTRAM and Lords

First Soldier

You are undone, captain, all but your scarf; that
has a knot on't yet

PAROLLES

Who cannot be crushed with a plot?

First Soldier

If you could find out a country where but women were that had received so much shame, you might begin an impudent nation. Fare ye well, sir; I am for France too: we shall speak of you there.

Exit with Soldiers

PAROLLES

Yet am I thankful: if my heart were great,
'Twould burst at this. Captain I'll be no more;
But I will eat and drink, and sleep as soft
As captain shall: simply the thing I am
Shall make me live. Who knows himself a braggart,
Let him fear this, for it will come to pass
that every braggart shall be found an ass.
Rust, sword? cool, blushes! and, Parolles, live
Safest in shame! being fool'd, by foolery thrive!
There's place and means for every man alive.
I'll after them.

Exit

SCENE IV. Florence. The Widow's house.

Enter HELENA, Widow, and DIANA

HELENA

That you may well perceive I have not wrong'd you,
One of the greatest in the Christian world
Shall be my surety; 'fore whose throne 'tis needful,
Ere I can perfect mine intents, to kneel:
Time was, I did him a desired office,
Dear almost as his life; which gratitude
Through flinty Tartar's bosom would peep forth,
And answer, thanks: I duly am inform'd
His grace is at Marseilles; to which place
We have convenient convoy. You must know
I am supposed dead: the army breaking,
My husband hies him home; where, heaven aiding,
And by the leave of my good lord the king,
We'll be before our welcome.

Widow

Gentle madam,
You never had a servant to whose trust
Your business was more welcome.

HELENA

Nor you, mistress,
Ever a friend whose thoughts more truly labour
To recompense your love: doubt not but heaven
Hath brought me up to be your daughter's dower,
As it hath fated her to be my motive
And helper to a husband. But, O strange men!
That can such sweet use make of what they hate,
When saucy trusting of the cozen'd thoughts
Defiles the pitchy night: so lust doth play
With what it loathes for that which is away.
But more of this hereafter. You, Diana,
Under my poor instructions yet must suffer
Something in my behalf.

DIANA

Let death and honesty

Go with your impositions, I am yours
Upon your will to suffer.

HELENA

Yet, I pray you:
But with the word the time will bring on summer,
When briers shall have leaves as well as thorns,
And be as sweet as sharp. We must away;
Our wagon is prepared, and time revives us:
All's well that ends well; still the fine's the crown;
Whate'er the course, the end is the renown.

Exeunt

SCENE V. Rousillon. The COUNT's palace.

Enter COUNTESS, LAFEU, and Clown

LAFEU

No, no, no, your son was misled with a snipt-taffeta fellow there, whose villanous saffron would have made all the unbaked and doughy youth of a nation in his colour: your daughter-in-law had been alive at this hour, and your son here at home, more advanced by the king than by that red-tailed humble-bee I speak of.

COUNTESS

I would I had not known him; it was the death of the most virtuous gentlewoman that ever nature had praise for creating. If she had partaken of my flesh, and cost me the dearest groans of a mother, I could not have owed her a more rooted love.

LAFEU

'Twas a good lady, 'twas a good lady: we may pick a thousand salads ere we light on such another herb.

Clown

Indeed, sir, she was the sweet marjoram of the salad, or rather, the herb of grace.

LAFEU

They are not herbs, you knave; they are nose-herbs.

Clown

I am no great Nebuchadnezzar, sir; I have not much skill in grass.

LAFEU

Whether dost thou profess thyself, a knave or a fool?

Clown

A fool, sir, at a woman's service, and a knave at a man's.

LAFEU

Your distinction?

Clown

I would cozen the man of his wife and do his service.

LAFEU

So you were a knave at his service, indeed.

Clown

And I would give his wife my bauble, sir, to do her service.

LAFEU

I will subscribe for thee, thou art both knave and fool.

Clown

At your service.

LAFEU

No, no, no.

Clown

Why, sir, if I cannot serve you, I can serve as great a prince as you are.

LAFEU

Who's that? a Frenchman?

Clown

Faith, sir, a' has an English name; but his fisnomy is more hotter in France than there.

LAFEU

What prince is that?

Clown

The black prince, sir; alias, the prince of

darkness; alias, the devil.

LAFEU

Hold thee, there's my purse: I give thee not this to suggest thee from thy master thou talkest of; serve him still.

Clown

I am a woodland fellow, sir, that always loved a great fire; and the master I speak of ever keeps a good fire. But, sure, he is the prince of the world; let his nobility remain in's court. I am for the house with the narrow gate, which I take to be too little for pomp to enter: some that humble themselves may; but the many will be too chill and tender, and they'll be for the flowery way that leads to the broad gate and the great fire.

LAFEU

Go thy ways, I begin to be aweary of thee; and I tell thee so before, because I would not fall out with thee. Go thy ways: let my horses be well looked to, without any tricks.

Clown

If I put any tricks upon 'em, sir, they shall be jades' tricks; which are their own right by the law of nature.

Exit

LAFEU

A shrewd knave and an unhappy.

COUNTESS

So he is. My lord that's gone made himself much sport out of him: by his authority he remains here, which he thinks is a patent for his sauciness; and, indeed, he has no pace, but runs where he will.

LAFEU

I like him well; 'tis not amiss. And I was about to

tell you, since I heard of the good lady's death and that my lord your son was upon his return home, I moved the king my master to speak in the behalf of my daughter; which, in the minority of them both, his majesty, out of a self-gracious remembrance, did first propose: his highness hath promised me to do it: and, to stop up the displeasure he hath conceived against your son, there is no fitter matter. How does your ladyship like it?

COUNTESS

With very much content, my lord; and I wish it happily effected.

LAFEU

His highness comes post from Marseilles, of as able body as when he numbered thirty: he will be here to-morrow, or I am deceived by him that in such intelligence hath seldom failed.

COUNTESS

It rejoices me, that I hope I shall see him ere I die. I have letters that my son will be here to-night: I shall beseech your lordship to remain with me till they meet together.

LAFEU

Madam, I was thinking with what manners I might safely be admitted.

COUNTESS

You need but plead your honourable privilege.

LAFEU

Lady, of that I have made a bold charter; but I thank my God it holds yet.

Re-enter Clown

Clown

O madam, yonder's my lord your son with a patch of

velvet on's face: whether there be a scar under't
or no, the velvet knows; but 'tis a goodly patch of
velvet: his left cheek is a cheek of two pile and a
half, but his right cheek is worn bare.

LAFEU

A scar nobly got, or a noble scar, is a good livery
of honour; so belike is that.

Clown

But it is your carbonadoed face.

LAFEU

Let us go see your son, I pray you: I long to talk
with the young noble soldier.

Clown

Faith there's a dozen of 'em, with delicate fine
hats and most courteous feathers, which bow the head
and nod at every man.

Exeunt

Act V

SCENE I. Marseilles. A street.

Enter HELENA, Widow, and DIANA, with two Attendants

HELENA

But this exceeding posting day and night
Must wear your spirits low; we cannot help it:
But since you have made the days and nights as one,
To wear your gentle limbs in my affairs,
Be bold you do so grow in my requital
As nothing can unroot you. In happy time;

Enter a Gentleman

This man may help me to his majesty's ear,
If he would spend his power. God save you, sir.

Gentleman

And you.

HELENA

Sir, I have seen you in the court of France.

Gentleman

I have been sometimes there.

HELENA

I do presume, sir, that you are not fallen
From the report that goes upon your goodness;
An therefore, goaded with most sharp occasions,
Which lay nice manners by, I put you to
The use of your own virtues, for the which
I shall continue thankful.

Gentleman

What's your will?

HELENA

That it will please you

To give this poor petition to the king,
And aid me with that store of power you have
To come into his presence.

Gentleman

The king's not here.

HELENA

Not here, sir!

Gentleman

Not, indeed:
He hence removed last night and with more haste
Than is his use.

Widow

Lord, how we lose our pains!

HELENA

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL yet,
Though time seem so adverse and means unfit.
I do beseech you, whither is he gone?

Gentleman

Marry, as I take it, to Rousillon;
Whither I am going.

HELENA

I do beseech you, sir,
Since you are like to see the king before me,
Commend the paper to his gracious hand,
Which I presume shall render you no blame
But rather make you thank your pains for it.
I will come after you with what good speed
Our means will make us means.

Gentleman

This I'll do for you.

HELENA

And you shall find yourself to be well thank'd,
Whate'er falls more. We must to horse again.
Go, go, provide.

Exeunt

SCENE II. Rousillon. Before the COUNT's palace.

Enter Clown, and PAROLLES, following

PAROLLES

Good Monsieur Lavache, give my Lord Lafeu this letter: I have ere now, sir, been better known to you, when I have held familiarity with fresher clothes; but I am now, sir, muddied in fortune's mood, and smell somewhat strong of her strong displeasure.

Clown

Truly, fortune's displeasure is but sluttish, if it smell so strongly as thou speakest of: I will henceforth eat no fish of fortune's buttering. Prithee, allow the wind.

PAROLLES

Nay, you need not to stop your nose, sir; I spake but by a metaphor.

Clown

Indeed, sir, if your metaphor stink, I will stop my nose; or against any man's metaphor. Prithee, get thee further.

PAROLLES

Pray you, sir, deliver me this paper.

Clown

Foh! prithee, stand away: a paper from fortune's close-stool to give to a nobleman! Look, here he comes himself.

Enter LAFEU

Here is a purr of fortune's, sir, or of fortune's cat,—but not a musk-cat,—that has fallen into the unclean fishpond of her displeasure, and, as he says, is muddied withal: pray you, sir, use the carp as you may; for he looks like a poor, decayed,

ingenious, foolish, rascally knave. I do pity his distress in my similes of comfort and leave him to your lordship.

Exit

PAROLLES

My lord, I am a man whom fortune hath cruelly scratched.

LAFEU

And what would you have me to do? 'Tis too late to pare her nails now. Wherein have you played the knave with fortune, that she should scratch you, who of herself is a good lady and would not have knaves thrive long under her? There's a quart d'ecu for you: let the justices make you and fortune friends: I am for other business.

PAROLLES

I beseech your honour to hear me one single word.

LAFEU

You beg a single penny more: come, you shall ha't; save your word.

PAROLLES

My name, my good lord, is Parolles.

LAFEU

You beg more than 'word,' then. Cox my passion! give me your hand. How does your drum?

PAROLLES

O my good lord, you were the first that found me!

LAFEU

Was I, in sooth? and I was the first that lost thee.

PAROLLES

It lies in you, my lord, to bring me in some grace,
for you did bring me out.

LAFEU

Out upon thee, knave! dost thou put upon me at once
both the office of God and the devil? One brings
thee in grace and the other brings thee out.

Trumpets sound

The king's coming; I know by his trumpets. Sirrah,
inquire further after me; I had talk of you last
night: though you are a fool and a knave, you shall
eat; go to, follow.

PAROLLES

I praise God for you.

Exeunt

SCENE III. Rousillon. The COUNT's palace.

Flourish. Enter KING, COUNTESS, LAFEU, the two French Lords, with Attendants

KING

We lost a jewel of her; and our esteem
Was made much poorer by it: but your son,
As mad in folly, lack'd the sense to know
Her estimation home.

COUNTESS

'Tis past, my liege;
And I beseech your majesty to make it
Natural rebellion, done i' the blaze of youth;
When oil and fire, too strong for reason's force,
O'erbears it and burns on.

KING

My honour'd lady,
I have forgiven and forgotten all;
Though my revenges were high bent upon him,
And watch'd the time to shoot.

LAFEU

This I must say,
But first I beg my pardon, the young lord
Did to his majesty, his mother and his lady
Offence of mighty note; but to himself
The greatest wrong of all. He lost a wife
Whose beauty did astonish the survey
Of richest eyes, whose words all ears took captive,
Whose dear perfection hearts that scorn'd to serve
Humbly call'd mistress.

KING

Praising what is lost
Makes the remembrance dear. Well, call him hither;
We are reconciled, and the first view shall kill
All repetition: let him not ask our pardon;

The nature of his great offence is dead,
And deeper than oblivion we do bury
The incensing relics of it: let him approach,
A stranger, no offender; and inform him
So 'tis our will he should.

Gentleman

I shall, my liege.

Exit

KING

What says he to your daughter? have you spoke?

LAFEU

All that he is hath reference to your highness.

KING

Then shall we have a match. I have letters sent me
That set him high in fame.

Enter BERTRAM

LAFEU

He looks well on't.

KING

I am not a day of season,
For thou mayst see a sunshine and a hail
In me at once: but to the brightest beams
Distracted clouds give way; so stand thou forth;
The time is fair again.

BERTRAM

My high-repenting blames,
Dear sovereign, pardon to me.

KING

All is whole;
Not one word more of the consumed time.
Let's take the instant by the forward top;

For we are old, and on our quick'st decrees
The inaudible and noiseless foot of Time
Steals ere we can effect them. You remember
The daughter of this lord?

BERTRAM

Admiringly, my liege, at first
I stuck my choice upon her, ere my heart
Durst make too bold a herald of my tongue
Where the impression of mine eye infixing,
Contempt his scornful perspective did lend me,
Which warp'd the line of every other favour;
Scorn'd a fair colour, or express'd it stolen;
Extended or contracted all proportions
To a most hideous object: thence it came
That she whom all men praised and whom myself,
Since I have lost, have loved, was in mine eye
The dust that did offend it.

KING

Well excused:
That thou didst love her, strikes some scores away
From the great compt: but love that comes too late,
Like a remorseful pardon slowly carried,
To the great sender turns a sour offence,
Crying, 'That's good that's gone.' Our rash faults
Make trivial price of serious things we have,
Not knowing them until we know their grave:
Oft our displeasures, to ourselves unjust,
Destroy our friends and after weep their dust
Our own love waking cries to see what's done,
While shame full late sleeps out the afternoon.
Be this sweet Helen's knell, and now forget her.
Send forth your amorous token for fair Maudlin:
The main consents are had; and here we'll stay
To see our widower's second marriage-day.

COUNTESS

Which better than the first, O dear heaven, bless!
Or, ere they meet, in me, O nature, cesse!

LAFEU

Come on, my son, in whom my house's name

Must be digested, give a favour from you
To sparkle in the spirits of my daughter,
That she may quickly come.

BERTRAM gives a ring

By my old beard,
And every hair that's on't, Helen, that's dead,
Was a sweet creature: such a ring as this,
The last that e'er I took her at court,
I saw upon her finger.

BERTRAM

Hers it was not.

KING

Now, pray you, let me see it; for mine eye,
While I was speaking, oft was fasten'd to't.
This ring was mine; and, when I gave it Helen,
I bade her, if her fortunes ever stood
Necessitated to help, that by this token
I would relieve her. Had you that craft, to reave
her
Of what should stead her most?

BERTRAM

My gracious sovereign,
Howe'er it pleases you to take it so,
The ring was never hers.

COUNTESS

Son, on my life,
I have seen her wear it; and she reckon'd it
At her life's rate.

LAFEU

I am sure I saw her wear it.

BERTRAM

You are deceived, my lord; she never saw it:
In Florence was it from a casement thrown me,
Wrapp'd in a paper, which contain'd the name
Of her that threw it: noble she was, and thought

I stood engaged: but when I had subscribed
To mine own fortune and inform'd her fully
I could not answer in that course of honour
As she had made the overture, she ceased
In heavy satisfaction and would never
Receive the ring again.

KING

Plutus himself,
That knows the tinct and multiplying medicine,
Hath not in nature's mystery more science
Than I have in this ring: 'twas mine, 'twas Helen's,
Whoever gave it you. Then, if you know
That you are well acquainted with yourself,
Confess 'twas hers, and by what rough enforcement
You got it from her: she call'd the saints to surety
That she would never put it from her finger,
Unless she gave it to yourself in bed,
Where you have never come, or sent it us
Upon her great disaster.

BERTRAM

She never saw it.

KING

Thou speak'st it falsely, as I love mine honour;
And makest conjectural fears to come into me
Which I would fain shut out. If it should prove
That thou art so inhuman,—'twill not prove so;—
And yet I know not: thou didst hate her deadly,
And she is dead; which nothing, but to close
Her eyes myself, could win me to believe,
More than to see this ring. Take him away.

Guards seize BERTRAM

My fore-past proofs, howe'er the matter fall,
Shall tax my fears of little vanity,
Having vainly fear'd too little. Away with him!
We'll sift this matter further.

BERTRAM

If you shall prove
This ring was ever hers, you shall as easy

Prove that I husbanded her bed in Florence,
Where yet she never was.

Exit, guarded

KING

I am wrapp'd in dismal thinkings.

Enter a Gentleman

Gentleman

Gracious sovereign,
Whether I have been to blame or no, I know not:
Here's a petition from a Florentine,
Who hath for four or five removes come short
To tender it herself. I undertook it,
Vanquish'd thereto by the fair grace and speech
Of the poor suppliant, who by this I know
Is here attending: her business looks in her
With an importing visage; and she told me,
In a sweet verbal brief, it did concern
Your highness with herself.

KING

[Reads] Upon his many protestations to marry me
when his wife was dead, I blush to say it, he won
me. Now is the Count Rousillon a widower: his vows
are forfeited to me, and my honour's paid to him. He
stole from Florence, taking no leave, and I follow
him to his country for justice: grant it me, O
king! in you it best lies; otherwise a seducer
flourishes, and a poor maid is undone.
DIANA CAPILET.

LAFEU

I will buy me a son-in-law in a fair, and toll for
this: I'll none of him.

KING

The heavens have thought well on thee Lafeu,
To bring forth this discovery. Seek these suitors:
Go speedily and bring again the count.
I am afeard the life of Helen, lady,
Was foully snatch'd.

COUNTESS

Now, justice on the doers!

Re-enter BERTRAM, guarded

KING

I wonder, sir, sith wives are monsters to you,
And that you fly them as you swear them lordship,
Yet you desire to marry.

Enter Widow and DIANA

What woman's that?

DIANA

I am, my lord, a wretched Florentine,
Derived from the ancient Capilet:
My suit, as I do understand, you know,
And therefore know how far I may be pitied.

Widow

I am her mother, sir, whose age and honour
Both suffer under this complaint we bring,
And both shall cease, without your remedy.

KING

Come hither, count; do you know these women?

BERTRAM

My lord, I neither can nor will deny
But that I know them: do they charge me further?

DIANA

Why do you look so strange upon your wife?

BERTRAM

She's none of mine, my lord.

DIANA

If you shall marry,

You give away this hand, and that is mine;
You give away heaven's vows, and those are mine;
You give away myself, which is known mine;
For I by vow am so embodied yours,
That she which marries you must marry me,
Either both or none.

LAFEU

Your reputation comes too short for my daughter; you
are no husband for her.

BERTRAM

My lord, this is a fond and desperate creature,
Whom sometime I have laugh'd with: let your highness
Lay a more noble thought upon mine honour
Than for to think that I would sink it here.

KING

Sir, for my thoughts, you have them ill to friend
Till your deeds gain them: fairer prove your honour
Than in my thought it lies.

DIANA

Good my lord,
Ask him upon his oath, if he does think
He had not my virginity.

KING

What say'st thou to her?

BERTRAM

She's impudent, my lord,
And was a common gamester to the camp.

DIANA

He does me wrong, my lord; if I were so,
He might have bought me at a common price:
Do not believe him. O, behold this ring,
Whose high respect and rich validity
Did lack a parallel; yet for all that
He gave it to a commoner o' the camp,

If I be one.

COUNTESS

He blushes, and 'tis it:
Of six preceding ancestors, that gem,
Conferr'd by testament to the sequent issue,
Hath it been owed and worn. This is his wife;
That ring's a thousand proofs.

KING

Methought you said
You saw one here in court could witness it.

DIANA

I did, my lord, but loath am to produce
So bad an instrument: his name's Parolles.

LAFEU

I saw the man to-day, if man he be.

KING

Find him, and bring him hither.

Exit an Attendant

BERTRAM

What of him?
He's quoted for a most perfidious slave,
With all the spots o' the world tax'd and debosh'd;
Whose nature sickens but to speak a truth.
Am I or that or this for what he'll utter,
That will speak any thing?

KING

She hath that ring of yours.

BERTRAM

I think she has: certain it is I liked her,
And boarded her i' the wanton way of youth:
She knew her distance and did angle for me,
Madding my eagerness with her restraint,

As all impediments in fancy's course
Are motives of more fancy; and, in fine,
Her infinite cunning, with her modern grace,
Subdued me to her rate: she got the ring;
And I had that which any inferior might
At market-price have bought.

DIANA

I must be patient:
You, that have turn'd off a first so noble wife,
May justly diet me. I pray you yet;
Since you lack virtue, I will lose a husband;
Send for your ring, I will return it home,
And give me mine again.

BERTRAM

I have it not.

KING

What ring was yours, I pray you?

DIANA

Sir, much like
The same upon your finger.

KING

Know you this ring? this ring was his of late.

DIANA

And this was it I gave him, being abed.

KING

The story then goes false, you threw it him
Out of a casement.

DIANA

I have spoke the truth.

Enter PAROLLES

BERTRAM

My lord, I do confess the ring was hers.

KING

You boggle shrewdly, every feather stars you.
Is this the man you speak of?

DIANA

Ay, my lord.

KING

Tell me, sirrah, but tell me true, I charge you,
Not fearing the displeasure of your master,
Which on your just proceeding I'll keep off,
By him and by this woman here what know you?

PAROLLES

So please your majesty, my master hath been an
honourable gentleman: tricks he hath had in him,
which gentlemen have.

KING

Come, come, to the purpose: did he love this woman?

PAROLLES

Faith, sir, he did love her; but how?

KING

How, I pray you?

PAROLLES

He did love her, sir, as a gentleman loves a woman.

KING

How is that?

PAROLLES

He loved her, sir, and loved her not.

KING

As thou art a knave, and no knave. What an equivocal companion is this!

PAROLLES

I am a poor man, and at your majesty's command.

LAFEU

He's a good drum, my lord, but a naughty orator.

DIANA

Do you know he promised me marriage?

PAROLLES

Faith, I know more than I'll speak.

KING

But wilt thou not speak all thou knowest?

PAROLLES

Yes, so please your majesty. I did go between them, as I said; but more than that, he loved her: for indeed he was mad for her, and talked of Satan and of Limbo and of Furies and I know not what: yet I was in that credit with them at that time that I knew of their going to bed, and of other motions, as promising her marriage, and things which would derive me ill will to speak of; therefore I will not speak what I know.

KING

Thou hast spoken all already, unless thou canst say they are married: but thou art too fine in thy evidence; therefore stand aside.
This ring, you say, was yours?

DIANA

Ay, my good lord.

KING

Where did you buy it? or who gave it you?

DIANA

It was not given me, nor I did not buy it.

KING

Who lent it you?

DIANA

It was not lent me neither.

KING

Where did you find it, then?

DIANA

I found it not.

KING

If it were yours by none of all these ways,
How could you give it him?

DIANA

I never gave it him.

LAFEU

This woman's an easy glove, my lord; she goes off
and on at pleasure.

KING

This ring was mine; I gave it his first wife.

DIANA

It might be yours or hers, for aught I know.

KING

Take her away; I do not like her now;
To prison with her: and away with him.
Unless thou tell'st me where thou hadst this ring,

Thou diest within this hour.

DIANA

I'll never tell you.

KING

Take her away.

DIANA

I'll put in bail, my liege.

KING

I think thee now some common customer.

DIANA

By Jove, if ever I knew man, 'twas you.

KING

Wherefore hast thou accused him all this while?

DIANA

Because he's guilty, and he is not guilty:
He knows I am no maid, and he'll swear to't;
I'll swear I am a maid, and he knows not.
Great king, I am no strumpet, by my life;
I am either maid, or else this old man's wife.

KING

She does abuse our ears: to prison with her.

DIANA

Good mother, fetch my bail. Stay, royal sir:

Exit Widow

The jeweller that owes the ring is sent for,
And he shall surety me. But for this lord,
Who hath abused me, as he knows himself,
Though yet he never harm'd me, here I quit him:
He knows himself my bed he hath defiled;
And at that time he got his wife with child:

Dead though she be, she feels her young one kick:
So there's my riddle: one that's dead is quick:
And now behold the meaning.

Re-enter Widow, with HELENA

KING

Is there no exorcist
Beguiles the truer office of mine eyes?
Is't real that I see?

HELENA

No, my good lord;
'Tis but the shadow of a wife you see,
The name and not the thing.

BERTRAM

Both, both. O, pardon!

HELENA

O my good lord, when I was like this maid,
I found you wondrous kind. There is your ring;
And, look you, here's your letter; this it says:
'When from my finger you can get this ring
And are by me with child,' & c. This is done:
Will you be mine, now you are doubly won?

BERTRAM

If she, my liege, can make me know this clearly,
I'll love her dearly, ever, ever dearly.

HELENA

If it appear not plain and prove untrue,
Deadly divorce step between me and you!
O my dear mother, do I see you living?

LAFEU

Mine eyes smell onions; I shall weep anon:

To PAROLLES

Good Tom Drum, lend me a handkercher: so,
I thank thee: wait on me home, I'll make sport with thee:

Let thy courtesies alone, they are scurvy ones.

KING

Let us from point to point this story know,
To make the even truth in pleasure flow.

To DIANA

If thou be'st yet a fresh uncropped flower,
Choose thou thy husband, and I'll pay thy dower;
For I can guess that by thy honest aid
Thou keep'st a wife herself, thyself a maid.
Of that and all the progress, more or less,
Resolvedly more leisure shall express:
All yet seems well; and if it end so meet,
The bitter past, more welcome is the sweet.

Flourish

EPILOGUE

KING

The king's a beggar, now the play is done:
All is well ended, if this suit be won,
That you express content; which we will pay,
With strife to please you, day exceeding day:
Ours be your patience then, and yours our parts;
Your gentle hands lend us, and take our hearts.

Exeunt