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*All's Well  
That  
Ends Well*

BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

WITH DETAILED NOTES  
FROM THE WORLD'S  
LEADING CENTER FOR  
SHAKESPEARE STUDIES

EDITED BY BARBARA A. MOWAT  
AND PAUL WERSTINE

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The RSC Shakespeare

William Shakespeare

**ALL'S WELL  
THAT ENDS  
WELL**

Edited by Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen

Introduction by Jonathan Bate



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## INTRODUCTION

“HE WEARS HIS HONOUR IN A BOX UNSEEN”

*All's Well That Ends Well* is one of Shakespeare's least performed and least loved comedies. It is also one of his most fascinating and intriguingly modern works. The play presents a battlefield of opposing value systems: abstract codes jostle against material commodities, words are undermined by actions, generation argues with generation, and a sex war rages.

The language of sexual relations is persistently intermingled with that of warfare. The key word, deployed with equal force in conversations about the bedroom, the court, and the battlefield, is “honour.” The atmosphere feels very different from that of Shakespeare's comic green world. *All's Well* shares the darker view of human nature and the more troubling preoccupations of three other plays written at the end of Queen Elizabeth I's reign and the beginning of James I's: *Troilus and Cressida*, *Othello*, and *Measure for Measure*.

In the very first scene, virginity is described by Parolles as woman's weapon of resistance. But man will besiege it, “undermine” it, and “blow up” his foe—make her pregnant. Like honor, virginity may variously be seen as a mystical treasure, a mark of integrity, a marketable commodity, and a kind of nothing. Traditional wisdom suggests that it is something a girl must preserve with care. But the play is full of proverbs and moral maxims that are found wanting, “undermined” by the demands of the body. Lavatch, Shakespeare's most cynical and lascivious fool, is on hand to remind us of this. “I am driven on by the flesh,” he remarks, suggesting that the story of the sexes boils down to “Tib's rush for Tom's forefinger.” “Tib” was a generic name for a whore; the “rush” is a rudimentary wedding



ring fashioned from reeds, but a woman's "ring" is also the place where she is penetrated by a man's nether finger.

"War," says Bertram, "is no strife / To the dark house and the detested wife." For a young man in search of action, a wife is but a "clog," a block of wood tied to an animal to prevent it from escaping. Parolles voices the same sentiment in the tumble of language that is his hallmark:

... To th'wars, my boy, to th'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' fiery steed. To other regions,  
France is a stable, we that dwell in't jades:  
Therefore, to th'war!

"Kicky-wicky" is an abusive term for a wife, the "box unseen" is the vagina, and "marrow" is the essence of manliness (according to ancient physiology, semen was distilled from the marrow in the backbone). A proper man, Parolles suggests, should be off riding a "fiery steed" into battle, in the spirit of Mars, god of war; those who stay at home are no better than female horses, good only for breeding and sexual indulgence ("jade" was another slang term for whore).

*All's Well* is in the mainstream of comedy insofar as it is about young people and the process of growing up. Bertram is like most young men of every era: he wants to be one of the boys, to prove his manhood. Enlistment in the army provides the ideal opportunity. He wants to sow some wild oats along the way, but is not ready for marriage. Critics hate him for not loving the lovely humble Helen from the start. "I cannot reconcile my heart to Bertram," wrote Dr. Johnson with characteristic candor and forthrightness, "a man noble without generosity, and young without truth; who marries Helen as

a coward, and leaves her as a profligate: when she is dead by his unkindness, sneaks home to a second marriage, is accused by a woman whom he has wronged, defends himself by falsehood, and is dismissed to happiness.”<sup>1</sup> Of course there is something obnoxious in the snobbery with which Bertram first dismisses Helen on the grounds of her low status, but when he goes on to say that he is simply not in love with her, he reveals a kind of integrity. He bows to the King’s will and marries her, but since his heart does not belong to her he refuses to give her his body. If a woman were forced to marry in this way, we would rather admire her for withholding sexual favors from her husband.

#### THE NEW CODE OF THE SELF

Bertram represents modernity in that he acts according to an existential principle: he follows his own self, not some preexistent code of duty, service to his monarch, or obligation to the older generation. One word for this code is indeed integrity. Another is selfishness. It is the prerogative of the old, especially mothers, to know, to suffer, and still to forgive the selfishness of their young. Bertram’s mother, the widowed Countess of Rossillion, who treats the orphaned Helen like a daughter and is only too happy to accept her as a daughter-in-law, regardless of her lowly background, was described by George Bernard Shaw as “the most beautiful old woman’s part ever written” (though she could perfectly well be in her forties). Since female parts were written for young male actors, strong maternal roles such as this are exceptional in Shakespeare. The only analogous parts are the more overbearing figures of Queen Margaret in the *Henry VI* plays, Tamora in *Titus Andronicus*, and Volumnia in *Coriolanus*. The serenity of the Countess has meant that the principal reason for modern revivals of *All’s Well* has been the opportunity to showcase actresses such as Edith Evans, Peggy Ashcroft, and Judi Dench in their later years.

One of the key debates in the play is that between nature and nurture. The Countess of Rossillion believes that her son is a fundamentally good boy who has fallen into bad company, as

embodied by the worthless Parolles. Helen, meanwhile, has strong natural qualities (the “dispositions she inherits”) reinforced by a loving and responsible upbringing (the “education” she has received first from her doctor father, then in the household of the Countess).

Parallel to the question of nature and nurture is that of divine providence and individual responsibility. Helen believes that “Our remedies oft in ourselves do lie, / Which we ascribe to heaven”: like Bertram, she is a voice of modernity in her belief that individuals can carve their own destiny. She does so by means of disguise and bold solo travel: from Rossillion in southwest France to Paris, where she gains access to the King, then to Florence in the dress of a pilgrim en route to Compostela. Like Julia in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Rosalind in *As You Like It*, and Viola in *Twelfth Night*, she uses her disguised self as an opportunity to talk about her true feelings. The part is the longest in the play and it gives an actor great opportunities for the portrayal of an isolated young woman’s self-exploration through both soliloquy and dialogue in lucid and serpentine verse, not to mention passages of prose banter and some piercing asides.

As Dr. Johnson dryly noted, the geography seems somewhat awry when Helen undertakes her pilgrimage: in going from France to Spain via Italy, she is “somewhat out of the road.” Such details did not matter to Shakespeare. For him, the pilgrim motif—taken over from the story in Boccaccio that was his source for the main plot of the play—had symbolic importance in that it associated Helen with an older value structure of reverence and self-sacrifice even as she asserts her own will. Pilgrims are people who believe in miracles, so Helen’s adoption of the role allies her with the worldview voiced by the old courtier Lafew after she has cured the King: “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.”

Yet Helen is only a pretended pilgrim and the King has been cured not by a miracle but by the medical knowledge she has inherited from her father. Again and again the play takes a fairy-tale motif

and turns it into something tougher, more earthly and open to philosophical debate. Lafew's generalization sets up the key scene in which Bertram rejects Helen. The idea of unquestioning obedience to the King's will is itself a thing "supernatural and causeless." It depends upon an "unknown fear," the mystique of monarchy, the idea that the King is God's representative on earth and that to challenge him will cause the entire fabric of the natural order to collapse. In a crucial rhyming couplet near the end of the play—often editorially reassigned to the Countess of Rossillion for no good textual reason—the King says that, since he has failed in his management of Bertram's first marriage, the second had better be a success, otherwise "nature" may as well "cesse" (cease).

Shakespeare's instinctive conservatism tips the balance in favor of the old order. The King, the Countess, and the old courtier are generous and ethically admirable, much more obviously sympathetic than Bertram, Parolles, and Lavatch. Bertram has to be tricked out of his sexual selfishness and Parolles out of his vainglory, but still Shakespeare the role-player and wordsmith invests huge dramatic energy in the darker characters. He uses them to open cracks in the established order. The King tells Bertram that Helen should be viewed for what she is within, not by way of the superficial trappings of wealth and rank: "The property by what it is should go, / Not by the title." Yet his own authority depends on his title, and the "go by what it is" argument might be turned to say that if Bertram does not love Helen he should not marry her. The King moves swiftly from reasoning to the assertion of raw authority: "My honour's at the stake, which to defeat, / I must produce my power." Shakespeare's intensely compacted writing style makes the point. By "which to defeat," the King means "in order to defeat the threat to my honour," but ironically the very need to produce his "power" itself defeats the code of honor. As so often in Shakespeare's darker plays, the figure of Niccolò Machiavelli lurks in the shadows, whispering that fine old codes such as honor and duty can only be underwritten by raw power.

He who asserts the new code of the self must live by that code. Both Bertram and Parolles are found out. The two lords Dumaine

are not only mechanics in the double plot of ambush and bed trick, but also commentators upon how their victims are brought to self-knowledge: “As we are ourselves, what things are we! / Merely our own traitors.” The Dumaines too are young and modern in their recognition that we cannot simply sort our kind into sheep and goats in the manner of authoritarian religious dispensations. They propose instead that human life is shaded gray: “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.” This could be the epigraph for Shakespeare’s dramatically mingled yarn of tragicomedy.

Parolles comes to acknowledge his boastful tongue. “Simply the thing I am / Shall make me live,” he vows. What, though, can this mean, given that—as his name indicates—he is made of nothing but words? Bertram, meanwhile, only comes to realize how much Helen is to be valued when she has been lost. The fiction of comedy gives him a second chance to love her. But in the modern world where there are no miracles, “all’s well that ends well” is a fiction. Along the way we have been promised on more than one occasion that all will end well, but when it comes to the climax the King says that “all yet *seems* well” and that “if it end so meet” then all bitterness will be past. Those little conditional qualifiers leave open the door to the tragic world.

## THE CRITICS DEBATE

Early critics regarded *All’s Well* as a farce, then as a romance, then largely as a failure in psychological realism. In the nineteenth century, commentators highlighted a lack of poetry in the drama: “The style of the whole is more sententious than imaginative: the glowing colours of fancy could not with propriety have been employed on such a subject.”<sup>2</sup>

At the turn of the nineteenth century into the twentieth, George Bernard Shaw suggested that the problem of the play was its modernity: a part such as that of Helen was “too genuine and

beautiful and modern for the public.”<sup>3</sup> In Shaw’s view, Helen’s independence of mind made her into a proto-feminist heroine, an anticipation of the female characters in the plays of Henrik Ibsen who sought to escape the doll’s house. Shaw was reacting to the very mixed reception that had long been accorded to Helen, the fact that some had idealized her and others demonized her. Samuel Taylor Coleridge did both: on one occasion he described her as Shakespeare’s “loveliest character,”<sup>4</sup> while on another he suggested that “Bertram had surely good reason to look upon the King’s forcing him to marry Helena as a very tyrannical act. Indeed, it must be confessed that her character is not very delicate, and it required all Shakespeare’s consummate skill to interest us for her.”<sup>5</sup>

For Anna Jameson, writing in the 1830s as the first female critic to reflect at length upon Shakespeare’s women, Helen exemplified the virtue of patience in the face of adversity and male infidelity: “There never was, perhaps, a more beautiful picture of a woman’s love, cherished in secret, not self-consuming in silent languishment ... but patient and hopeful, strong in its own intensity, and sustained by its own fond faith.”<sup>6</sup> A couple of generations later, the great actress Ellen Terry begged to disagree, describing Helen as belonging to the “doormat” type: “They bear any amount of humiliation from the men they love, seem almost to enjoy being maltreated and scorned by them, and hunt them down in the most undignified way when they are trying to escape. The fraud with which Helena captures Bertram, who has left his home and country to get away from her, is really despicable.”<sup>7</sup>

Bertram, by contrast to Helen, has always been roundly condemned by the great majority of critics. As already noted, Dr. Johnson set the tone of the debate with his remark that he could not reconcile his heart to Bertram. Coleridge tried to mount a defense, but resorted to special pleading on the grounds of status and alleged partial knowledge:

I cannot agree with the solemn abuse which the critics have poured out upon Bertram ... He was a young nobleman in feudal times, just bursting into manhood,

with all the feelings of pride of birth, and appetite for pleasure and liberty, natural to such a character so circumstanced. Of course, he had never regarded Helena otherwise than as a dependant in the family; and of all that which she possessed of goodness and fidelity and courage, which might atone for her inferiority in other respects, Bertram was necessarily in a great measure ignorant.<sup>8</sup>

For twentieth-century critics, the main problem with the play was more a matter of genre and tone than of the morality of the central characters. It was suggested that there was an incongruity between the realistic characterization and the folktale or even fairy-tale plot:

Shakespeare transferred the *Decameron* story [the main source of his plot] from sunlight into shadow, not abandoning Boccaccio's naturalism, but making it problematic, turning its social and sexual givens into occasions for moral reflection and private anguish. As a result, character and motive become contradictory, and standards of judgement other than the right and natural claims of love make ironic and questionable the implications of the original.<sup>9</sup>

The plot contains strong folktale motifs, such as those that have been described as the Healing of the King, the Fulfillment of Tasks, and the Clever Wench. Some critics have accordingly suggested that this gives primacy to structure and plot over psychology and interior life. The play can be read as a "romantic fable" in which

the intrigues and deceptions of the plot are stressed. In order to bring out the traditional basis for the story, the movement of the play builds to three peaks, the cure of the King, the use of the bed-trick, and the redemption of Bertram. Each is accentuated as the fulfilment of a task which will lead to the resolution of the dilemma ... Since

psychological motivation is relatively unimportant, the other characters fill out the play as stock figures.<sup>10</sup>

Yet at the same time, a much more hard-edged reading is possible:

Considered as the basis for a serious play, the plot may expose the moral problem of birth versus merit, the social problem which explores the legitimacy of female aggression, or the domestic problems of the unwanted wife ... If the play is regarded as satire, then cynicism infects the realism. The dark mood is established in the first scene by the stress on disease, old age and death.<sup>11</sup>

So it is that “the characterization of the major dramatic persons is at odds with the final tendency of the action, in which a tone of irony and often satire conflicts with the ‘all’s well’ complacency implied by the fairy-tale elements, and in which a concrete, realistic presentation works at cross purposes with the romantic image of experience which the play seems trying to project.”<sup>12</sup>

Such difficulties and variation in interpretation, and the perceived contradictions within both the action and the characterization, resulted in twentieth-century critics’ identifying *All’s Well* as one of Shakespeare’s “problem” plays. This term was first used to describe the realistic dramas of the nineteenth century, those of Ibsen especially, that confronted controversial social issues by means of onstage debate, often with characters representing conflicting attitudes and points of view. The critic F. S. Boas, writing under the influence of Shaw, applied the term to *All’s Well*, *Measure for Measure*, and *Troilus and Cressida*, three sex-charged plays that he thought shared an interest in social problems. Subsequent criticism applied the term more loosely, and corralled more Shakespearean plays within it, often emphasizing problems of form as well as content. *All’s Well* and *Measure for Measure* in particular were seen as “problem comedies” because they did not conform to the supposed comic norm of a light touch and a happy ending. The related term “dark comedies” has also been used. So, for example,



the ending was seen as a special problem. What *were* Shakespeare's intentions? Critics have fiercely debated "whether he meant Helena to be regarded as noble and admirable, or as a schemer and a harpy, why he blackened the character of Bertram and yet rewarded him at the end, and whether he meant the final reconciliation of Bertram and Helena to be taken as a prelude to future bliss, or ironically, as a union which must ultimately result in disaster."<sup>13</sup>

More recent criticism has continued to emphasize "problems" even as the terms of the debate have been converted into those of modern gender politics. The play has been especially amenable to analysis on these lines because it inverts the literary and dramatic norm whereby it is customarily the man who pursues the woman:

Helena has been a puzzle and provocation to critics because she occupies the masculine position of desiring subject, even as she apologises fulsomely for her unfeminine forwardness and works desperately to situate herself within the feminine position of desired object. Bertram, too, poses problems because he occupies the feminine space of the Other, even as he struggles to define himself as a man by becoming a military and sexual conqueror. He is the desired object, the end of the hero's—or in this case heroine's—gendered journey of self-fulfilment.<sup>14</sup>

By this account, Helen becomes one of Shakespeare's most interesting comic heroines, not least because she is given genuinely introspective soliloquies:

The intensity and extremity which have come to her from folktale ... combine with the quality of female self-containedness with which Shakespeare seems to have been more and more concerned in the mature comedies. And from the fusion of these two things there emerges a radically new comic heroine. For Helena is *inward* ... She is much given to secrecies and reticences.<sup>15</sup>

The richness of her interior life makes it surprising that the role has not been taken on by more of the major female actors of modern times.

It has long been recognized that the parallel between Bertram and Parolles is central to the structure of the play:

Both are “seemers.” Grant this, and the whole sub-plot of the exposure of “Mr Words” has its place and point: Parolles is there to be stripped; and stripped at just the very moment when Bertram’s fortunes reach their apogee (in his suppositious conquest of Diana) and begin to turn retrograde—towards his own exposure.<sup>16</sup>

With the advent of explicit feminism and the late twentieth-century war between the sexes, it became easier for critics and audiences to see not just the shadowing of Bertram in Parolles but also the broader parallelism between the sex plot and the war plot:

The shaming of Parolles runs counterpoint, in carefully matched scenes, to Bertram’s attempt to seduce Diana and his own deception by the bed-trick ... Bertram is trying to satisfy sexual relations impersonally in terms of war, translating male aggression into promiscuity, in which sex is treated as the taking and possessing of a woman’s “spoil,” repudiating responsibility and abandoning the woman as soon as she has surrendered.<sup>17</sup>

The play’s explicit concern with social mobility seems equally modern in its application. Northrop Frye, one of the great twentieth-century critics, argued that *All’s Well* is almost the only Shakespearean play in which there is an explicit social promotion in the foreground of the action: “It is emphasized that Helena is below Bertram in social status, and that it takes direct intervention of the king to make her marriage possible. Such a theme introduces the conception of one’s ‘natural place’ in society, the position for which one is fitted by one’s talents and social function.”<sup>18</sup> Shakespeare

perennially pitted old values and structures against new, perhaps especially so in the changed world of the first years of King James' reign, after old Queen Elizabeth's death in 1603. Northrop Frye again:

*All's Well* has a ... restless feeling of social change about it, with Bertram being pulled out of the clichés of family pride in the direction of Helena's still mysterious capacities, Helena herself advancing from the background of the Roussillon household to a primary place in it, the clown Lavache turning philosophical, and the captain Parolles becoming a licensed fool in Lafeu's train ... especially in Lavache's oracular speech, there is a faint whisper of the vision of social reversal ... The king remains the king, of course, but when the actor playing him goes out to ask for the audience's applause, his opening line is "The king's a beggar, now the play is done."<sup>19</sup>

The secular social and political order jostles against an ancient, more magical and providential, way of thinking, embodied by the virtues of the older generation, who constitute Shakespeare's most striking addition to his source in Boccaccio: "The character and moral weight Shakespeare gives [the King] strengthen the effects of the Countess and Lafeu as types of old nobility: surviving exemplars of a generation, or a world, which is passing away. He is a sadly nostalgic figure."<sup>20</sup>

The sense of a transitional moment between two worlds helps to explain the puzzling tone of the ending. Beside the tragic potential there are elements of magical restitution and regeneration akin to those in Shakespeare's late romances such as *The Winter's Tale* and *Pericles*. There is a progression from Helen's miraculous cure of the King to her own "resurrection" and the (apparent?) moral regeneration of Bertram. As the King comes close to death and Helen is supposed to have died but returns home to become a wife, so "Parolles, who blindfolded has heard the order for his own

execution, discovers when his blindfold is removed—symbolically as well as actually—that he is not really going to be killed. Bertram, too ... is recalled from death in the course of the play.”<sup>21</sup> *All's Well* is a complex drama of both death and new life:

There is the current of self-wasting energy ... symbolized by Bertram's self-will, Parolles' lack of heroism, and Lavache's vision of the great mass of people drifting to the “broad gate and the great fire.” There is also the reversal of this current of energy backward into a renewed and creative life. The play opens with older characters “all in black,” talking mainly about the dead; it proceeds through the healing of an impotent king ... Helena rejuvenates the family, the king, and may even rejuvenate Bertram's fixated notions of family honour and tradition.<sup>22</sup>

Certainly the play offers an explicit challenge to its own title, the old comic idea of all's well that ends well:

From a “universal” point of view, we may see the dramatic world thrown into disorder and confusion by Helena's elaborate introduction of half-truths and then miraculously restored to order and sanity when Helena herself comes forward, returned from the dead, to dispense a spirit of love and charity. But even so, there is Bertram—deceitful, vindictive, petty—a very real and unpleasant fly in the ointment of universal forgiveness.<sup>23</sup>

But ultimately, in the words of John Barton, among the most critically astute of modern Shakespearean directors, “‘cynical’ isn't quite the right word for the ending: the tone is more one of a worldly tolerance of people.”<sup>24</sup>

## ABOUT THE TEXT

Shakespeare endures through history. He illuminates later times as well as his own. He helps us to understand the human condition. But he cannot do this without a good text of the plays. Without editions there would be no Shakespeare. That is why every twenty years or so throughout the last three centuries there has been a major new edition of his complete works. One aspect of editing is the process of keeping the texts up to date—modernizing the spelling, punctuation, and typography (though not, of course, the actual words), providing explanatory notes in the light of changing educational practices (a generation ago, most of Shakespeare’s classical and biblical allusions could be assumed to be generally understood, but now they can’t).

Because Shakespeare did not personally oversee the publication of his plays, with some plays there are major editorial difficulties. Decisions have to be made as to the relative authority of the early printed editions, the pocket format “Quartos” published in Shakespeare’s lifetime and the elaborately produced “First Folio” text of 1623, the original “Complete Works” prepared for the press after his death by Shakespeare’s fellow actors, the people who knew the plays better than anyone else. *All’s Well That Ends Well* exists only in a Folio text that is problematic in some aspects and suggests a rather difficult-to-read manuscript was used as printer’s copy (see “Key Facts”).

The following notes highlight various aspects of the editorial process and indicate conventions used in the text of this edition:

**Lists of Parts** are supplied in the First Folio for only six plays, not including *All’s Well That Ends Well*, so the list here is editorially

supplied. Capitals indicate that part of the name used for speech headings in the script (thus “BERTRAM, Count of Rossillion”).

**Locations** are provided by Folio for only two plays, of which *All's Well That Ends Well* is not one. Eighteenth-century editors, working in an age of elaborately realistic stage sets, were the first to provide detailed locations (“***another part of the city***”). Given that Shakespeare wrote for a bare stage and often an imprecise sense of place, we have relegated locations to the explanatory notes, where they are given at the beginning of each scene where the imaginary location is different from the one before.

**Act and Scene Divisions** were provided in the Folio in a much more thoroughgoing way than in the Quartos. Sometimes, however, they were erroneous or omitted; corrections and additions supplied by editorial tradition are indicated by square brackets. Five-act division is based on a classical model, and act breaks provided the opportunity to replace the candles in the indoor Blackfriars playhouse which the King’s Men used after 1608, but Shakespeare did not necessarily think in terms of a five-part structure of dramatic composition. The Folio convention is that a scene ends when the stage is empty. Nowadays, partly under the influence of film, we tend to consider a scene to be a dramatic unit that ends with either a change of imaginary location or a significant passage of time within the narrative. Shakespeare’s fluidity of composition accords well with this convention, so in addition to act and scene numbers we provide a ***running scene*** count in the right margin at the beginning of each new scene, in the typeface used for editorial directions. Where there is a scene break caused by a momentary bare stage, but the location does not change and extra time does not pass, we use the convention ***running scene continues***. There is inevitably a degree of editorial judgment in making such calls, but the system is very valuable in suggesting the pace of the plays.

**Speakers’ Names** are often inconsistent in Folio. We have regularized speech headings, but retained an element of deliberate

inconsistency in entry directions, in order to give the flavor of Folio. Thus BERTRAM is always so-called in his speech headings, but is often referred to as “Count of Rossillion,” “Count Rossillion,” or “Count” in entry directions.

**Verse** is indicated by lines that do not run to the right margin and by capitalization of each line. The Folio printers sometimes set verse as prose, and vice versa (either out of misunderstanding or for reasons of space). We have silently corrected in such cases, although in some instances there is ambiguity, in which case we have leaned toward the preservation of Folio layout. Folio sometimes uses contraction (“turnd” rather than “turned”) to indicate whether or not the final “-ed” of a past participle is sounded, an area where there is variation for the sake of the five-beat iambic pentameter rhythm. We use the convention of a grave accent to indicate sounding (thus “turnèd” would be two syllables), but would urge actors not to overstress. In cases where one speaker ends with a verse half line and the next begins with the other half of the pentameter, editors since the late eighteenth century have indented the second line. We have abandoned this convention, since the Folio does not use it, nor did actors’ cues in the Shakespearean theater. An exception is made when the second speaker actively interrupts or completes the first speaker’s sentence.

**Spelling** is modernized, but older forms are very occasionally maintained where necessary for rhythm or aural effect.

**Punctuation** in Shakespeare’s time was as much rhetorical as grammatical. “Colon” was originally a term for a unit of thought in an argument. The semicolon was a new unit of punctuation (some of the Quartos lack them altogether). We have modernized punctuation throughout, but have given more weight to Folio punctuation than many editors, since, though not Shakespearean, it reflects the usage of his period. In particular, we have used the colon far more than many editors: it is exceptionally useful as a way of indicating how many Shakespearean speeches unfold clause by clause in a

developing argument that gives the illusion of enacting the process of thinking in the moment. We have also kept in mind the origin of punctuation in classical times as a way of assisting the actor and orator: the comma suggests the briefest of pauses for breath, the colon a middling one, and a full stop or period a longer pause. Semicolons, by contrast, belong to an era of punctuation that was only just coming in during Shakespeare's time and that is coming to an end now: we have accordingly only used them where they occur in our copy texts (and not always then). Dashes are sometimes used for parenthetical interjections where the Folio has brackets. They are also used for interruptions and changes in train of thought. Where a change of addressee occurs within a speech, we have used a dash preceded by a period (or occasionally another form of punctuation). Often the identity of the respective addressees is obvious from the context. When it is not, this has been indicated in a marginal stage direction.

**Entrances and Exits** are fairly thorough in Folio, which has accordingly been followed as faithfully as possible. Where characters are omitted or corrections are necessary, this is indicated by square brackets (e.g. “[*and Attendants*]”). *Exit* is sometimes silently normalized to *Exeunt* and *Manet* anglicized to “remains.” We trust Folio positioning of entrances and exits to a greater degree than most editors.

**Editorial Stage Directions** such as stage business, asides, indications of addressee and of characters' position on the gallery stage are only used sparingly in Folio. Other editions mingle directions of this kind with original Folio and Quarto directions, sometimes marking them by means of square brackets. We have sought to distinguish what could be described as *director*ial interventions of this kind from Folio-style directions (either original or supplied) by placing them in the right margin in a smaller typeface. There is a degree of subjectivity about which directions are of which kind, but the procedure is intended as a reminder to the reader and the actor that Shakespearean stage directions are



often dependent upon editorial inference alone and are not set in stone. We also depart from editorial tradition in sometimes admitting uncertainty and thus printing permissive stage directions, such as an *Aside?* (often a line may be equally effective as an aside or as a direct address—it is for each production or reading to make its own decision) or a *may exit* or a piece of business placed between arrows to indicate that it may occur at various different moments within a scene.

**Line Numbers** are editorial, for reference and to key the explanatory and textual notes.

**Explanatory Notes** explain allusions and gloss obsolete and difficult words, confusing phraseology, occasional major textual cruces, and so on. Particular attention is given to nonstandard usage, bawdy innuendo, and technical terms (e.g. legal and military language). Where more than one sense is given, commas indicate shades of related meaning, slashes alternative or double meanings.

**Textual Notes** at the end of the play indicate major departures from the Folio. They take the following form: the reading of our text is given in bold and its source given after an equals sign with “F2” indicating a correction that derives from the Second Folio of 1632, “F3” a correction from the Third Folio of 1663—64, “F4” one from the Fourth Folio of 1685, and “Ed” one that derives from the subsequent editorial tradition. The rejected Folio (“F”) reading is then given. Thus for Act 2 Scene 5 line 30: “**2.5.30 heard** = F2. F = hard” means we have adopted F2’s “heard” instead of Folio’s “hard” in the phrase “should be once heard and thrice beaten,” judging that it makes better sense of the line and that “hard” was either a scribal or compositorial error.

## KEY FACTS

**MAJOR PARTS:** (*with percentages of lines/number of speeches/scenes onstage*) Helen (16%/109/12), Parolles (13%/141/11), King of France (13%/87/4), Countess (10%/86/7), Bertram (9%/102/10), Lafew (9%/97/7), Lavatch (7%/58/6), First Lord Dumaine (5%/70/7), Second Lord Dumaine (4%/47/6), Diana (4%/44/4), First Soldier/Interpreter (3%/37/2), Widow (2%/21/5).

**LINGUISTIC MEDIUM:** 55% verse, 45% prose.

**DATE:** No external evidence to indicate when written or first performed; usually dated to early Jacobean years (1603—06) on stylistic grounds and because of similarity to *Measure for Measure*. Moments of anti-puritan satire do not help in determining a specific date.

**SOURCES:** Main plot derived from Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron* (Italian, fourteenth century) by way of William Painter's English translation, *The Palace of Pleasure* (1566); Countess and Lafew are Shakespeare's invention, as is Parolles, who is in the tradition of the braggart soldier of classical comedy—a character type of which the greatest Elizabethan examples were Falstaff in *Henry IV* and Captain Bobadil in Ben Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour*.

**TEXT:** First Folio of 1623 is only early printed text. Many features such as misassigned speeches, repeated speech headings, inconsistent naming, and probably misplaced lines suggest that the manuscript was not neatly prepared and that it caused confusion to the printers. Apparent authorial first thoughts suggest influence of Shakespeare's working manuscript, while music cues suggest that of the theatrical promptbook. Of the many textual problems, the most

frustrating concerns the two lords/brothers Dumaine: they have several different designations, variants on “1 Lord G.” and “2 Lord E.,” “French E.” and “French G.,” “Captain G.” and “Captain E.” The initials are sometimes supposed to refer to actors’ names. Shakespeare sometimes seems to forget whether “G.” is “1” and “E.” is “2” or vice versa. This means, for instance, that there is confusion over which brother leads the ambush of Parolles and which accompanies Bertram as he sets off to seduce Diana. We have adopted a solution that is dramatically consistent while requiring only minimal alteration of Folio’s speech ascriptions.

**ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL**

## **LIST OF PARTS**

BERTRAM, Count of Rossillion

COUNTESS of Rossillion, his mother

ELEN (occasionally known as Helena), an orphan in the protection of the countess

EYNALDO, steward to the countess

AVATCH, clown in the countess' household

AROLLES, a boastful follower of Bertram

KING of France

LAFEW, an old French lord

KNIGHTS of the French court including an Astringer

Brothers who become captains in the Florentine army

FIRST LORD Dumaine

SECOND LORD Dumaine

FIRST SOLDIER, who plays role of interpreter

DUKE of Florence

WIDOW, Capilet of Florence

CLAIRIANA, her daughter

CLAIRIANA, her friend

Knights, Attendants including a Page, Soldiers, people of Florence

## **Act 1 Scene 1**

*Enter young Bertram, [the] Count of Rossillion, his mother [the Countess], and Helena, Lord Lafew, all in black*

COUNTESS In [delivering](#)<sup>1</sup> my son from me, I bury a second husband.

BERTRAM And I in going, madam, weep o'er my father's death new; but I must [attend](#)<sup>4</sup> his majesty's command, to whom I am now [in ward](#), evermore in [subjection](#).<sup>5</sup>

LAFEW You shall find [of](#) the king a [husband](#)<sup>6</sup>, madam, you, sir, a father. He that so [generally](#)<sup>7</sup> is at all times good must of necessity [hold](#) his [virtue](#) to you, [whose](#) worthiness would [stir](#)<sup>8</sup> up where it wanted rather than lack it [where there is such](#)<sup>9</sup> abundance.

COUNTESS What hope is there of his majesty's [amendment](#)?<sup>11</sup>

LAFEW He hath abandoned his physicians, madam, under whose [practices](#) he hath [persecuted time](#)<sup>13</sup> 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 madam! How sad a [passage](#)<sup>17</sup> 'tis! — whose skill was almost as great as his [honesty](#)<sup>18</sup>, had it stretched so far, would have made nature immortal, and death should have play for lack of work. [Would](#)<sup>20</sup> for the king's sake he were living! I think it would be the death of the king's disease.

LAFEW 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](#).<sup>24</sup>

LAFEW He was excellent indeed, madam. The king very

itely spoke of him admiringly and mourningly: he was  
ciful enough to have lived [still](#)<sup>27</sup>, if knowledge could be set up  
gainst mortality.

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

A FEW A [fistula](#)<sup>30</sup>, my lord.

ERTRAM I heard not of it before.

A FEW I would it were not [notorious](#).<sup>32</sup> Was this  
entlewoman the daughter of Gerard de Narbon?

OUNTESS His sole child, my lord, and bequeathed to my  
[verlooking](#). I have those [hopes of her good](#)<sup>35</sup> that her  
[ducation](#) promises her [dispositions](#)<sup>36</sup> she inherits, which  
akes fair gifts fairer. For where an [unclean](#)<sup>37</sup> mind carries  
[irtuous qualities](#), there commendations [go with pity](#)<sup>38</sup>, they  
re virtues and traitors too. In her they are the better for  
eir [simpleness](#); she [derives](#)<sup>40</sup> her honesty and achieves her  
oodness.

A FEW Your commendations, madam, get from her tears.

OUNTESS 'Tis the best brine a maiden can [season](#)<sup>43</sup> her praise  
n. The remembrance of her father never approaches her  
heart but the tyranny of her sorrows takes all [liveliness](#)<sup>45</sup>  
om her cheek. No more of this, Helena. [Go to](#)<sup>46</sup>, no more, lest  
be rather thought you [affect](#) a sorrow [than to have](#).<sup>47</sup>

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

A FEW Moderate lamentation is the right [of](#)<sup>49</sup> the dead,  
xcessive grief the enemy to the living.

OUNTESS [If the living be enemy to the grief, the excess makes](#)<sup>51</sup>  
soon mortal.

ERTRAM Madam, I desire your [holy](#)<sup>53</sup> wishes.

LAFEW    How understand we that?<sup>54</sup>

COUNTESS    Be thou blest, Bertram, and succeed thy father  
in **manners** as in **shape**. Thy **blood**<sup>56</sup> and virtue  
contend for **empire**<sup>57</sup> in thee, and thy goodness  
share with thy **birthright**.<sup>58</sup> Love all, trust a few,  
do wrong to none. Be **able**<sup>59</sup> for thine enemy  
rather in **power** than use, and **keep thy friend**<sup>60</sup>  
under thy own life's key. Be **checked**<sup>61</sup> for silence,  
but never **taxed** for speech. **What** heaven **more will**<sup>62</sup>,  
that thee may furnish and my prayers **pluck**<sup>63</sup> down,

*To Lafew*

all on thy head! Farewell.— My lord,  
'tis an **unseasoned**<sup>65</sup> courtier. Good my lord,  
advise him.

LAFEW    He cannot **want** the **best**<sup>67</sup>  
that shall attend **his love**.<sup>68</sup>

COUNTESS    Heaven bless him.— Farewell, Bertram.

*[Exit]*

*To Helen*

BERTRAM    The best wishes that can be **forged**<sup>70</sup> in your  
thoughts be servants to you! Be **comfortable**<sup>71</sup> to my mother,  
our mistress, and **make much of**<sup>72</sup> her.

LAFEW    Farewell, pretty lady. You must **hold** the **credit**<sup>73</sup> of  
our father.

*[Exeunt Bertram and Lafew]*

ELEN    O, were that all! I think not on my father,  
and **these great tears grace his remembrance more**<sup>76</sup>  
than those I shed for him. What was he like?



have forgot him. My imagination  
carries no **favour**<sup>79</sup> in't but Bertram's.  
am **undone**.<sup>80</sup> There is no living, none,  
'Bertram be away. 'Twere all one<sup>81</sup>  
that I should love a bright particular star  
and think to wed it, he is so above me.  
In his bright radiance and **collateral**<sup>84</sup> light  
must I be comforted, not in his **sphere**<sup>85</sup>;  
his ambition in my love thus plagues itself:  
the **hind**<sup>87</sup> that would be mated by the lion  
must die for love. 'Twas **pretty**<sup>88</sup>, though a plague,  
to see him every hour, to sit and draw  
his archèd brows, his **hawking**<sup>90</sup> eye, his curls  
in our heart's **table** — heart too **capable**<sup>91</sup>  
of every line and **trick** of his sweet **favour**<sup>92</sup>:  
but now he's gone, and my idolatrous **fancy**<sup>93</sup>  
must sanctify his **relics**.<sup>94</sup> Who comes here?

*Enter Parolles*

*Aside*

One that goes with him: I love him for **his**<sup>95</sup> sake,  
and yet I know him a notorious liar,  
think him a **great way** fool, **solely**<sup>97</sup> a coward.  
Yet these **fixed** evils sit so **fit**<sup>98</sup> in him  
that they **take place** when virtue's **steely**<sup>99</sup> bones  
**look bleak** i'th' cold wind. Withal, **full oft**<sup>100</sup> we see  
old wisdom **waiting on superfluous**<sup>101</sup> folly.

PAROLLES Save you, fair **queen!**<sup>102</sup>

ELEN And you, monarch!

AROLLES No.

ELEN And no.

AROLLES Are you meditating on virginity?

ELEN Ay. You have some [stain](#)<sup>107</sup> of soldier in you. Let me ask you a question. Man is enemy to virginity: how may we [arricado](#)<sup>109</sup> it against him?

AROLLES [Keep](#)<sup>110</sup> him out.

ELEN But he assails, and our virginity, though valiant, in the defence yet is weak. [Unfold](#)<sup>112</sup> to us some warlike resistance.

AROLLES There is none. Man [setting down before you](#)<sup>113</sup> will [undermine](#) you and [blow you up](#).<sup>114</sup>

ELEN [Bless](#)<sup>115</sup> our poor virginity from underminers and lowers up! Is there no military [policy](#)<sup>116</sup> how virgins might blow up men?

AROLLES Virginity being blown down, man will quicklier [be](#)<sup>118</sup> blown up. [Marry](#), in [blowing him down](#)<sup>119</sup> again, with the [reach](#) yourselves made, you lose your [city](#). It is not [politic](#)<sup>120</sup> in the commonwealth of nature to preserve virginity. Loss of virginity is [rational increase](#), and there was never virgin [got](#)<sup>122</sup> till virginity was first lost. [That](#) you were made of is [mettle](#)<sup>123</sup> to make virgins. Virginity by being once lost may be ten times [found](#). By being ever kept, it is ever lost. 'Tis too [cold](#)<sup>125</sup> a companion. Away with't!

ELEN I will [stand for't](#)<sup>127</sup> a little, though therefore I die a virgin.

AROLLES There's little can be said [in't](#)<sup>129</sup>, 'tis against the rule of nature. To speak on the [part](#)<sup>130</sup> of virginity is to accuse your mothers, which is most [infallible](#) disobedience. [He that](#)<sup>131</sup>

hangs himself is a virgin: virginity murders itself and should  
be buried in [highways out of all sanctified limit](#)<sup>133</sup>, as a  
[desperate offendress](#)<sup>134</sup> against nature. Virginity breeds mites,  
such like a cheese, consumes itself to the very [paring](#)<sup>135</sup>, and  
dies with feeding [his](#) own [stomach](#).<sup>136</sup> Besides, virginity is  
[sneevish](#)<sup>137</sup>, proud, idle, made of self-love, which is the most  
[prohibited](#) sin in the [canon](#).<sup>138</sup> Keep it not, you cannot choose  
but [lose](#) by't. [Out with't!](#) Within ten year it will [make itself](#)<sup>139</sup>  
two, which is a goodly increase, and the [principal](#)<sup>140</sup> itself not  
much the worse. Away with't!

ELEN [How](#)<sup>142</sup> might one do, sir, to lose it to her own liking?

AROLLES Let me see. Marry, ill, to like him that ne'er [it](#)<sup>143</sup> likes.

'Tis a commodity will lose the [gloss](#) with [lying](#)<sup>144</sup>: the longer  
kept, the less worth. Off with't while 'tis [vendible](#). [Answer](#)<sup>145</sup>  
the time of request. Virginity, like an old courtier, wears her  
fap out of fashion: richly [suited](#) but [unsuitable](#)<sup>147</sup>, just like the  
brooch and the [toothpick](#), which [wear not](#) now. Your [date](#)<sup>148</sup> is  
better in your [pie](#) and your [porridge](#) than [in your cheek](#).<sup>149</sup> And  
your virginity, your old virginity, is like one of our French  
withered [pears](#): it looks ill, it [eats dryly](#).<sup>151</sup> Marry, 'tis a withered  
pear: it was formerly better: marry, yet 'tis a withered pear.

Will you anything with it?

ELEN Not my virginity yet —

[here](#)<sup>155</sup> shall your master have a thousand loves,  
[mother](#)<sup>156</sup> and a mistress and a friend,  
[phoenix](#)<sup>157</sup>, captain and an enemy,  
guide, a goddess, and a sovereign,  
counsellor, a traitress, and a dear.

is humble ambition, proud humility,  
is jarring **concord**, and his discord **dulcet**<sup>161</sup>,  
is faith, his sweet **disaster**.<sup>162</sup> With a world  
of pretty, **fond**, **adoption christendoms**<sup>163</sup>  
that **blinking** Cupid **gossips**.<sup>164</sup> Now shall he —  
know not what he shall. God send him **well!**<sup>165</sup>  
he court's a learning place, and he is one—

AROLLES What one, i'faith?

ELEN That I wish well. 'Tis pity—

AROLLES What's pity?

ELEN That wishing well had not a **body**<sup>170</sup> in't,  
which might be felt, that we, the poorer born,  
whose **baser stars** do **shut us up in**<sup>172</sup> wishes,  
light with **effects of them**<sup>173</sup> follow our friends,  
and show what we **alone must think**<sup>174</sup>, which never  
**returns us thanks**.<sup>175</sup>

*Enter Page*

AGE Monsieur Parolles, my lord calls for you.

[Exit]

AROLLES Little Helen, farewell. If I can remember thee, I will  
think of thee at court.

ELEN Monsieur Parolles, you were born under a charitable star.

AROLLES Under **Mars**, ay.<sup>180</sup>

ELEN I especially think, under Mars.

AROLLES Why under Mars?

ELEN The wars hath so kept you **under**<sup>183</sup> that you must  
needs be born under Mars.

AROLLES When he was **predominant**.<sup>185</sup>

ELEN When he was [retrograde](#)<sup>186</sup>, I think rather.

AROLLES Why think you so?

ELEN You go so much [backward](#)<sup>188</sup> when you fight.

AROLLES That's for [advantage](#).<sup>189</sup>

ELEN So is running away, when fear proposes the safety.  
ut the [composition](#)<sup>191</sup> that your valour and fear makes in you  
a virtue of a good [wing](#), and I like the [wear](#)<sup>192</sup> well.

AROLLES I am so full of businesses, I cannot answer thee  
cutely. I will return [perfect](#) courtier [in the which](#)<sup>194</sup>, my  
instruction shall serve to [naturalize](#)<sup>195</sup> thee, so thou wilt  
e [capable of](#)<sup>196</sup> a courtier's counsel and understand what  
dvice shall [thrust](#)<sup>197</sup> upon thee. Else thou diest in thine  
nthankfulness, and thine ignorance [makes thee away](#).<sup>198</sup>  
arewell. When thou hast [leisure](#)<sup>199</sup>, say thy prayers. When  
ou hast none, remember thy friends. Get thee a good  
usband, and [use](#)<sup>201</sup> him as he uses thee. So, farewell.

[Exit]

ELEN Our remedies oft in ourselves do lie,  
/hich we ascribe to heaven. The [fated](#)<sup>203</sup> sky  
ives us free scope, only doth backward pull  
ur slow [designs](#) when we ourselves are [dull](#).<sup>205</sup>  
/hat power is it which mounts my love so high,  
hat makes me see, and cannot [feed](#)<sup>207</sup> mine eye?  
[he](#) mightiest [space in fortune](#)<sup>208</sup> nature brings  
o join [like likes](#) and kiss like [native](#)<sup>209</sup> things.  
npossible be [strange attempts](#)<sup>210</sup> to those  
hat [weigh their pains in sense](#)<sup>211</sup> and do suppose  
/hat hath been cannot be. Who ever strove

o show her merit that did [miss](#)<sup>213</sup> her love?  
he king's disease — my project may deceive me,  
ut my intents are fixed and will not leave me.  
*xit*

## [Act 1 Scene 2]

*running scene 2*

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*Flourish* cornets. *Enter the King of France, with letters, and [divers](#) Attendants*

ING The [Florentines](#) and [Senoys](#) are [by th'ears](#)<sup>1</sup>,  
ave fought with equal fortune and continue  
[braving](#)<sup>3</sup> war.

RST LORD So 'tis reported, sir.

ING Nay, 'tis most credible. We here receive it  
certainty, vouched from our [cousin](#)<sup>6</sup> Austria,  
with caution that the Florentine will [move](#)<sup>7</sup> us  
or speedy aid, wherein our [dearest friend](#)<sup>8</sup>  
[rejudicates](#)<sup>9</sup> the business and would seem  
o have us [make denial](#).<sup>10</sup>

RST LORD His love and wisdom,  
[pproved](#)<sup>12</sup> so to your majesty, may plead  
or amplest [credence](#).<sup>13</sup>

ING He hath [armed](#)<sup>14</sup> our answer,  
nd [Florence](#)<sup>15</sup> is denied before he comes:  
et, [for](#) our gentlemen that mean to [see](#)<sup>16</sup>  
he Tuscan [service](#)<sup>17</sup>, freely have they leave  
o [stand](#) on either [part](#).<sup>18</sup>

COND LORD It well may serve

nursery to our gentry, who are sick<sup>20</sup>  
or breathing and exploit.<sup>21</sup>

ING What's he comes here?

*Enter Bertram, Lafew and Parolles*

FIRST LORD It is the Count Rossillion, my good lord,  
young Bertram.

*To Bertram*

ING Youth, thou bear'st thy father's face.  
rank nature, rather curious than in haste<sup>26</sup>,  
with well composed thee. Thy father's moral parts<sup>27</sup>  
mayst thou inherit too! Welcome to Paris.

BERTRAM My thanks and duty are your majesty's.

ING I would I had that corporal soundness<sup>30</sup> now,  
as when thy father and myself in friendship  
first tried our soldiership. He did look far<sup>32</sup>  
into the service of the time and was<sup>33</sup>  
disciplined of the bravest.<sup>34</sup> He lasted long,  
but on us both did haggish<sup>35</sup> age steal on  
and wore us out of act. It much repairs<sup>36</sup> me  
to talk of your good father; in his youth  
he had the wit which I can well observe  
today in our young lords. But they may jest  
till their own scorn return to them unnoted<sup>40</sup>  
before they can hide their levity in honour.<sup>41</sup>  
So like a courtier, contempt<sup>42</sup> nor bitterness  
were in his pride or sharpness; if they were,  
his equal had awaked<sup>44</sup> them, and his honour,  
locked to itself, knew the true<sup>45</sup> minute when

exception<sup>46</sup> bid him speak, and at this time  
his tongue obeyed his hand. Who<sup>47</sup> were below him  
he used as creatures of another place<sup>48</sup>  
and bowed his eminent top<sup>49</sup> to their low ranks,  
making them proud of his humility,  
in their poor praise he humbled.<sup>51</sup> Such a man  
might be a copy<sup>52</sup> to these younger times;  
which, followed well, would demonstrate them now<sup>53</sup>  
but goes backward.

ENTERHAM His good remembrance, sir,  
lies richer in your thoughts than on his tomb,  
so in approval<sup>57</sup> lives not his epitaph  
as in your royal speech.

ENTERHAM Would I were with him! He would always say —  
I think I hear him now. His plausible<sup>60</sup> words  
are scattered not in ears, but grafted<sup>61</sup> them,  
to grow there and to bear<sup>62</sup> — ‘Let me not live’ —  
his his good melancholy oft began  
in the catastrophe and heel of pastime<sup>64</sup>,  
when it was out<sup>65</sup> — ‘Let me not live,’ quoth he,  
after my flame lacks oil, to be the snuff<sup>66</sup>  
of younger spirits, whose apprehensive<sup>67</sup> senses  
all but new things disdain; whose judgements are  
here fathers of their garments, whose constancies<sup>69</sup>  
expire before their fashions.’ This he wished.  
after him, do after him wish too<sup>71</sup>,  
since I nor<sup>72</sup> wax nor honey can bring home,  
quickly were dissolved<sup>73</sup> from my hive



o give some labourers<sup>74</sup> room.

SECOND LORD You're loved, sir.

hey that least lend it you shall lack<sup>76</sup> you first.

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

ERTRAM Some six months since, my lord.

ING If he were living, I would try him yet.  
end me an arm: the rest<sup>82</sup> have worn me out  
with several applications.<sup>83</sup> Nature and sickness  
ebate it<sup>84</sup> at their leisure. Welcome, count.  
ly son's no dearer.

ERTRAM Thank your majesty.

*Exeunt. Flourish*

### [Act 1 Scene 3]

*running scene 3*

*Enter Countess, Steward [Reynaldo] and Clown [Lavatch]*

COUNTESS I will now hear; what say you of this gentlewoman?<sup>1</sup>

EYNALDO Madam, the care I have had to even your content<sup>2</sup>, I  
ish might be found in the calendar<sup>3</sup> of my past endeavours,  
or then we wound our modesty, and make foul the clearness<sup>4</sup>  
f our deservings<sup>5</sup>, when of ourselves we publish them.

COUNTESS What does this knave here? Get you gone, sirrah.<sup>6</sup>  
he complaints I have heard of you I do not all believe. 'Tis  
ly slowness that I do not, for I know you lack not folly to  
ommit them, and have ability enough to make such  
naveries yours.

AVATCH 'Tis not unknown to you, madam, I am a **poor**<sup>11</sup> fellow.

OUNTESS **Well**<sup>12</sup>, sir.

AVATCH 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**<sup>15</sup> and will **do**<sup>16</sup> as we may.

OUNTESS Wilt thou **needs**<sup>17</sup> be a beggar?

AVATCH I do beg your good will in this case.

OUNTESS In what case?

AVATCH In Isbel's **case** and mine own. **Service** is no **heritage**<sup>20</sup>: and I think I shall never have the blessing of God till I have **sue o'my body**, for they say **bairns**<sup>22</sup> are blessings.

OUNTESS Tell me thy reason why thou wilt marry.

AVATCH My poor body, madam, requires it. I am driven on by the flesh, and he must needs **go**<sup>25</sup> that the devil drives.

OUNTESS Is this all **your worship's**<sup>26</sup> reason?

AVATCH Faith, madam, I have other **holy**<sup>27</sup> reasons, such as they are.

OUNTESS May the **world**<sup>29</sup> know them?

AVATCH I have been, madam, a wicked creature, as you and all flesh and blood are, and indeed I do marry that I may **repent**.<sup>32</sup>

OUNTESS Thy marriage, sooner than thy wickedness.

AVATCH I am out o' friends, madam, and I hope to have friends **for my wife's sake**.<sup>35</sup>

OUNTESS Such friends are thine enemies, knave.

AVATCH You're **shallow**, madam, **in**<sup>37</sup> great friends, for the knaves come to **do**<sup>38</sup> that for me which I am weary of. He that

ars my land spares my team and gives me leave to in<sup>39</sup> the  
rop. If I be his cuckold, he's my drudge; he that comforts<sup>40</sup> my  
wife is the cherisher<sup>41</sup> 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<sup>43</sup>, he that kisses my wife is my  
friend. If men could be contented to be what they are<sup>44</sup>, there  
were no fear in marriage, for young Charbon the Puritan<sup>45</sup>  
and old Poysam the Papist, howsome'er<sup>46</sup> their hearts are  
diverred in religion, their heads are both one. They may jowl<sup>47</sup>  
horns together, like any deer i'th'herd.

DUNTESS Wilt thou ever be a foul-mouthed and calumnious<sup>49</sup>  
knave?

LAVATCH A prophet I, madam, and I speak the truth the  
best<sup>52</sup> way.

*Sings*

For I the ballad will repeat,  
Which men full true shall find:  
Your marriage comes by destiny,  
Your cuckoo sings by kind.<sup>56</sup>

DUNTESS Get you gone, sir. I'll talk with you more anon.<sup>57</sup>

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

*To Lavatch*

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

*Sings*

LAVATCH 'Was this fair face the cause,' quoth she<sup>62</sup>,  
'Why the Grecians sackèd Troy?<sup>63</sup>

Fond<sup>64</sup> done, done fond,  
Was this King Priam's<sup>65</sup> joy?'  
With that she sighèd as she stood,  
With that she sighèd as she stood,  
And gave this sentence<sup>68</sup> then:  
'Among<sup>69</sup> 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<sup>72</sup>,  
rrah.

AVATCH One good woman in ten, madam; which is a  
urifying o'th'song. Would God would serve the world<sup>75</sup> so all  
ie year! We'd find no fault with the tithe-woman<sup>76</sup>, if I were  
ie parson. One in ten, quoth a? An<sup>77</sup> we might have a good  
oman born but ere every blazing star<sup>78</sup>, or at an earthquake,  
would mend the lottery well. A man may draw<sup>79</sup> his heart  
ut ere a pluck one.<sup>80</sup>

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

AVATCH That<sup>82</sup> man should be at woman's command, and yet  
o hurt done! Though honesty<sup>83</sup> be no puritan, yet it will do  
o hurt. It will wear the surplice of humility over the black<sup>84</sup>  
own of a big heart. I am going, forsooth.<sup>85</sup> The business is for  
elen to come hither.

*Exit*

COUNTESS Well, now.

EYNALDO I know, madam, you love your gentlewoman entirely.

COUNTESS Faith, I do. Her father bequeathed<sup>89</sup> her to me, and  
ie herself, without other advantage, may lawfully make<sup>90</sup>

tle to as much love as she finds. There is more owing her  
ian is paid and more shall be paid her than she'll demand.  
EYNALDO Madam, I was very late<sup>93</sup> more near her than I think  
ie wished me. Alone she was, and did communicate to  
erself her own words to her own ears. She thought, I dare  
ow for her, they touched not any stranger sense. Her matter<sup>96</sup>  
as, she loved your son. Fortune, she said, was no goddess,  
iat had put such difference betwixt their two estates.<sup>98</sup> Love  
o god, that would not extend his might only where qualities<sup>99</sup>  
ere level. Dian no queen of virgins, that would suffer<sup>100</sup> her  
oor knight surprised<sup>101</sup> without rescue in the first assault or  
nsom afterward. This she delivered in the most bitter touch<sup>102</sup>  
f sorrow that e'er I heard virgin exclaim in, which I held my  
uty speedily to acquaint you withal, sithence, in the loss<sup>104</sup>  
iat may happen, it concerns you something<sup>105</sup> to know it.  
OUNTESS You have discharged<sup>106</sup> this honestly. Keep it to  
ourself. Many likelihoods<sup>107</sup> informed me of this before, which  
ung so tott'ring in the balance that I could neither believe  
or misdoubt. Pray you leave me. Stall<sup>109</sup> this in your bosom,  
nd I thank you for your honest care. I will speak with you  
rther anon.

*Exit Steward [Reynaldo]*

*Enter Helen*

*Aside*

ven so it was with me when I was young.  
'ever we are nature's, these<sup>113</sup> are ours. This thorn  
oth to our rose of youth rightly belong.  
ur blood<sup>115</sup> to us, this to our blood is born:

is the [show](#) and [seal](#)<sup>116</sup> of nature's truth,  
/here love's strong passion is [impressed](#)<sup>117</sup> in youth.  
y our remembrances of days foregone,  
uch were our faults, [or](#)<sup>119</sup> then we thought them none.  
er eye is sick on't. I [observe](#)<sup>120</sup> her now.

ELEN What is your pleasure, madam?

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

ELEN Mine honourable mistress.

OUNTESS Nay, a mother. Why not a mother? When I said 'a mother',  
[I thought](#)<sup>125</sup> you saw a serpent. What's in 'mother'  
hat you [start](#)<sup>126</sup> at it? I say I am your mother,  
nd put you in the catalogue of those  
hat were [enwombèd mine](#).<sup>128</sup> 'Tis often seen  
[doption strives](#) with [nature](#), and [choice breeds](#)<sup>129</sup>  
native slip to us from foreign seeds.

ou ne'er oppressed me with a [mother's groan](#)<sup>131</sup>,  
et I express to you a mother's care.

od's mercy, maiden! Does it [curd](#)<sup>133</sup> thy blood  
o say I am thy mother? What's the matter,  
hat this [distempered](#)<sup>135</sup> messenger of wet,  
he many-coloured [Iris](#), [rounds](#)<sup>136</sup> thine eye?

- Why? That you are my daughter?

ELEN That I am [not](#).<sup>138</sup>

OUNTESS I say I am your mother.

ELEN Pardon, madam.

he Count Rossillion cannot be my brother:  
am from humble, he from honoured name,  
o [note](#) upon my [parents](#)<sup>143</sup>, his all noble.

ly master, my dear lord he is, and I  
his servant live, and will his [vassal](#)<sup>145</sup> die.  
e must not be my brother.

COUNTESS Nor I your mother.

ELEN You are my mother, madam, would you were —  
[o](#)<sup>149</sup> that my lord your son were not my brother —  
indeed my mother! Or were you [both our mothers](#)<sup>150</sup>,  
care [no more for than](#)<sup>151</sup> I do for heaven,  
[o](#) I were not his sister. [Can't no other](#)<sup>152</sup>  
ut, I your daughter, he must be my brother?

COUNTESS Yes, Helen, you might be my daughter-in-law.  
od [shield](#)<sup>155</sup> you mean it not! Daughter and mother  
[o](#) strive upon your pulse. What, pale again?  
ly fear hath [caught](#) your [fondness](#).<sup>157</sup> Now I see  
he mystery of your [loveliness](#)<sup>158</sup>, and find  
our salt tears' [head](#). Now to all [sense](#) 'tis [gross](#)<sup>159</sup>:  
ou love my son. [Invention](#)<sup>160</sup> is ashamed  
[gainst](#)<sup>161</sup> the proclamation of thy passion  
o say thou dost not: therefore tell me true.  
ut tell me then 'tis so, for look, thy cheeks  
onfess it, t'one to th'other, and thine eyes  
ee it so grossly shown in thy behaviours  
hat in their [kind](#)<sup>166</sup> they speak it. Only sin  
nd hellish obstinacy tie thy tongue,  
[hat truth should be suspected](#).<sup>168</sup> Speak, is't so?  
'it be so, you have wound a goodly [clew](#).<sup>169</sup>  
'it be not, [forswear't: howe'er](#), I [charge](#)<sup>170</sup> thee,  
s heaven shall work in me for thine [avail](#)<sup>171</sup>,

o tell me truly.

ELEN Good madam, pardon me.

COUNTESS Do you love my son?

ELEN Your pardon, noble mistress.

COUNTESS Love you my son?

ELEN Do not you love him, madam?

COUNTESS Go not about; my love hath in't a bond<sup>178</sup>  
/hereof the world takes note.<sup>179</sup> Come, come, disclose  
he state of your affection, for your passions  
have to the full appeached.<sup>181</sup>

ELEN Then I confess,

↑Kneels↑

ere on my knee, before high heaven and you,  
hat before<sup>184</sup> you, and next unto high heaven,  
love your son.

ly friends<sup>186</sup> were poor but honest, so's my love.

e not offended, for it hurts not him

hat he is loved of me; I follow him not

y any token of presumptuous suit<sup>189</sup>,

or would I have him till I do deserve him,

et never know how that desert should be.

know I love in vain, strive against hope.

et in this captious and intenable<sup>193</sup> sieve

still<sup>194</sup> pour in the waters of my love

nd lack not to lose still<sup>195</sup>; thus, Indian-like,

eligious<sup>196</sup> in mine error, I adore

he sun that looks upon his worshipper

ut knows of him no more.<sup>198</sup> My dearest madam,



et not your hate [encounter with](#)<sup>199</sup> my love,  
or loving where you do; but if yourself,  
/hose agèd honour [cites](#)<sup>201</sup> a virtuous youth,  
id ever in so true a flame of liking  
/ish chastely and love dearly, that your Dian  
/as both [herself](#)<sup>204</sup> and love — O, then, give pity  
o her whose state is such that cannot choose  
ut [lend and give where she is sure to lose](#)<sup>206</sup>;  
[hat](#) seeks not to find that her search [implies](#)<sup>207</sup>,  
ut riddle-like [lives sweetly where she dies.](#)<sup>208</sup>

OUNTESS Had you not lately an intent — speak truly —  
o go to Paris?

ELEN Madam, I had.

OUNTESS [Wherefore?](#)<sup>212</sup> Tell true.

ELEN I will tell truth, by [grace](#)<sup>213</sup> itself I swear.  
ou know my father left me some [prescriptions](#)<sup>214</sup>  
f rare and proved effects, such as his reading  
nd [manifest](#)<sup>216</sup> experience had collected  
or general [sovereignty](#)<sup>217</sup>, and that he willed me  
i [heedfull'st reservation to bestow them](#)<sup>218</sup>,  
s [notes](#) whose [faculties inclusive](#)<sup>219</sup> were  
lore than they were [in note.](#)<sup>220</sup> Amongst the rest,  
here is a remedy, [approved](#)<sup>221</sup>, set down,  
o cure the [desp'rate](#)<sup>222</sup> languishings whereof  
he king is [rendered lost.](#)<sup>223</sup>

OUNTESS This was your motive for Paris, was it? Speak.

ELEN My lord your son made me to think of this;  
lse Paris and the medicine and the king

ad from the [conversation](#)<sup>227</sup> of my thoughts  
[aply](#)<sup>228</sup> been absent then.

COUNTESS But think you, Helen,  
you should [tender](#)<sup>230</sup> your supposed aid,  
he would receive it? He and his physicians  
re of [a mind](#).<sup>232</sup> He, that they cannot help him,  
hey, that they cannot help. How shall they [credit](#)<sup>233</sup>  
poor unlearnèd virgin, when the [schools](#)<sup>234</sup>,  
[mbowelled](#) of their [doctrine](#), have [left off](#)<sup>235</sup>  
he danger to itself?

ELEN There's something in't  
lore than my father's skill, which was the great'st  
f his profession, that his good [receipt](#)<sup>239</sup>  
hall for my legacy be [sanctified](#)<sup>240</sup>  
y th'luckiest stars in heaven, and would your honour  
ut give me leave to [try success](#), I'd [venture](#)<sup>242</sup>  
he [well-lost](#)<sup>243</sup> life of mine on his grace's cure  
y [such a](#)<sup>244</sup> day and hour.

COUNTESS Dost thou believe't?

ELEN Ay, madam, [knowingly](#).<sup>246</sup>

COUNTESS Why, Helen, thou shalt have my [leave](#)<sup>247</sup> and love,  
leans and attendants and my loving greetings  
o those of mine in court. I'll stay at home  
nd pray God's blessing [into](#)<sup>250</sup> thy attempt.  
e gone tomorrow. And be sure of this:  
/hat I can help thee to thou shalt not [miss](#).<sup>252</sup>

*Exeunt*

## Act 2 [Scene 1]

*running scene 4*

*Enter the King [carried in a chair] with divers young Lords taking leave for the Florentine war, Count Rossillion [Bertram] and Parolles. Flourish cornets*

ING Farewell, young lords. These warlike principles<sup>1</sup>  
o not throw from you.<sup>2</sup> And you, my lords, farewell.  
hare the advice betwixt you. If both gain, all  
he gift<sup>4</sup> doth stretch itself as 'tis received,  
nd is enough for both.

RST LORD 'Tis our hope, sir,  
fter well-entered<sup>7</sup> soldiers, to return  
nd find your grace in health.

ING No, no, it cannot be; and yet my heart  
/ill not confess he owes<sup>10</sup> the malady  
hat doth my life besiege. Farewell, young lords.  
/hether I live or die, be you the sons  
f worthy Frenchmen. Let higher Italy<sup>13</sup> —  
hose bated that inherit but the fall<sup>14</sup>  
f the last monarchy — see that you come  
ot to woo honour, but to wed<sup>16</sup> it, when  
he bravest questant shrinks.<sup>17</sup> Find what you seek,  
hat fame may cry<sup>18</sup> you loud. I say, farewell.  
ECOND LORD Health at your bidding serve your majesty!  
ING Those girls of Italy, take heed of them:  
hey say our French lack language to deny<sup>21</sup>  
'they demand. Beware of being captives<sup>22</sup>

efore you [serve](#).<sup>23</sup>

OTH Our hearts receive your warnings.

*King steps aside with some lords*

ING Farewell.— Come hither to me.

*To Bertram*

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

PAROLLES 'Tis not his fault, the [spark](#).<sup>27</sup>

SECOND LORD O, 'tis [brave](#)<sup>28</sup> wars!

PAROLLES Most admirable. I have seen those wars.

BERTRAM I am commanded [here](#), and [kept a coil](#)<sup>30</sup> with  
'oo young' and 'the next year' and 'tis too early'.

PAROLLES An thy mind stand to't, boy, steal away [bravely](#).<sup>32</sup>

BERTRAM I shall stay here the [forehorse to a smock](#)<sup>33</sup>,  
reaking my shoes on the plain [masonry](#)<sup>34</sup>,  
ill honour be [bought up](#)<sup>35</sup> and no sword worn  
ut [one to dance with](#). By heaven, I'll [steal](#)<sup>36</sup> 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](#).<sup>40</sup>

FIRST LORD Farewell, captain.

SECOND LORD Sweet Monsieur Parolles!

PAROLLES Noble heroes, my sword and yours are kin. Good  
arks and lustrous, [a word](#), good [metals](#).<sup>44</sup> You shall find in  
ie regiment of the Spinii one Captain [Spurio](#)<sup>45</sup>, with his  
[catrice](#), an emblem of war, here on his [sinister](#)<sup>46</sup> cheek; it was  
his very sword [entrenched](#)<sup>47</sup> it. Say to him I live, and observe  
is [reports](#)<sup>48</sup> for me.

FIRST LORD We shall, noble captain.

PAROLLES Mars dote on you for his novices!<sup>50</sup>—

*[Exeunt Lords]*

*To Bertram*

What will ye do?

*Bertram and Parolles stand aside*

BERTRAM Stay<sup>52</sup> the king.

*To Bertram*

PAROLLES Use a more spacious ceremony<sup>53</sup> to the noble lords. You have restrained yourself within the list<sup>54</sup> of so cold an adieu. Be more expressive to them, for they wear<sup>55</sup> themselves in the cap of the time, there do muster true<sup>56</sup> wait, eat, speak, and move under the influence of the most deceived star. And though the devil lead the measure<sup>58</sup>, such are to be followed. After them, and take a more dilated<sup>59</sup> farewell.

BERTRAM And I will do so.

*The King comes forward*

PAROLLES Worthy fellows, and like<sup>62</sup> to prove most sinewy<sup>63</sup> sword-men.

*Exeunt [Bertram and Parolles]*

*Enter Lafew*

*Kneels*

LAFEW Pardon, my lord, for me and for my tidings.<sup>64</sup>

BERTRAM I'll fee<sup>65</sup> thee to stand up.

*Rises*

LAFEW Then here's a man stands that has brought his pardon.<sup>66</sup> Would you had kneeled, my lord, to ask me mercy,

nd that at my bidding you could so stand up.

ING I would I had, so I had [broke thy pate](#)<sup>69</sup>,  
nd asked thee mercy for't.

A FEW Good faith, [across](#).<sup>71</sup> But, my good lord, 'tis thus:  
/ill you be cured of your infirmity?

ING No.

A FEW O, [will you eat no grapes, my royal fox?](#)<sup>74</sup>  
es, but you [will](#) my noble grapes, [an if](#)<sup>75</sup>  
ly royal fox could reach them. I have seen a [medicine](#)<sup>76</sup>  
hat's able to breathe life into a stone,  
[uicken](#) a rock, and make you dance [canary](#)<sup>78</sup>  
/ith sprightly fire and motion, whose [simple](#)<sup>79</sup> touch,  
powerful to [araise King Pippin](#)<sup>80</sup>, nay,  
o give great Charlemain a [pen](#)<sup>81</sup> in's hand  
nd write to her a love-line.

ING What 'her' is this?

A FEW Why, Doctor She: my lord, there's one arrived,  
'you will see her. Now, by my faith and honour,  
'seriously I may convey my thoughts  
i this my [light deliverance](#)<sup>87</sup>, I have spoke  
/ith one that, in her sex, her years, [profession](#)<sup>88</sup>,  
/isdom and constancy, hath amazed me more  
han I dare [blame](#) my [weakness](#).<sup>90</sup> Will you see her,  
or that is her demand, and know her business?  
hat done, laugh well at me.

ING Now, good Lafew,  
ring in the [admiration](#)<sup>94</sup> that we with thee  
lay [spend](#) our wonder too, or [take off](#)<sup>95</sup> thine

y wondering how thou took'st<sup>96</sup> it.

AFEW Nay, I'll fit<sup>97</sup> you,  
nd not be all day neither.

*Lafew goes to the door or exits and re-enters*

ING Thus he his special nothing ever prologues.<sup>99</sup>

*Enter Helen*

*To Helen*

AFEW Nay, come your ways.<sup>100</sup>

ING This haste hath wings indeed.

AFEW Nay, come your ways.

his is his majesty, say your mind to him.

traitor you do look like, but such traitors  
is majesty seldom fears. I am Cressid's uncle<sup>105</sup>,  
hat dare leave two together. Fare you well.

*Exit*

ING Now, fair one, does your business follow<sup>107</sup> us?

ELEN Ay, my good lord.

erard de Narbon was my father,  
i what he did profess, well found.<sup>110</sup>

ING I knew him.

ELEN The rather will I spare my praises towards him.  
nowing him is enough. On's bed of death  
lany receipts<sup>114</sup> he gave me, chiefly one  
hich, as the dearest issue<sup>115</sup> of his practice,  
nd of his old experience th'only<sup>116</sup> darling,  
e bade me store up, as a triple<sup>117</sup> eye,  
after<sup>118</sup> than mine own two. More dear I have so,  
nd hearing your high majesty is touched

With that malignant [cause wherein the honour](#)<sup>120</sup>

Of my dear father's gift stands chief in power,

Come to [tender](#) it and my [appliance](#)<sup>122</sup>

With all [bound](#)<sup>123</sup> humbleness.

ING We thank you, maiden,

But may not be so [credulous](#)<sup>125</sup> of cure,

When our most learned doctors leave us, and

The [congregated college](#)<sup>127</sup> have concluded

That labouring [art](#)<sup>128</sup> can never ransom nature

From her [inaudible](#)<sup>129</sup> estate. I say we must not

To stain our judgement, or corrupt our hope,

To [prostitute](#)<sup>131</sup> our past-cure malady

To [empirics](#), or to [dissever](#)<sup>132</sup> so

Our [great self](#) and our [credit](#), to [esteem](#)<sup>133</sup>

[senseless](#) help when help past [sense](#) we [deem](#).<sup>134</sup>

ELEN My [duty](#) then shall pay me for my [pains](#)<sup>135</sup>:

Will no more enforce mine [office](#)<sup>136</sup> on you,

Humblly entreating from your royal thoughts

[modest one to bear me back again](#).<sup>138</sup>

ING I cannot give thee less, [to](#)<sup>139</sup> be called 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](#)<sup>142</sup>,

Knowing all my peril, thou no [art](#).<sup>143</sup>

ELEN What I can do can do no hurt to try,

Since you [set up your rest](#)<sup>145</sup> gainst remedy.

[He](#)<sup>146</sup> that of greatest works is finisher

Yet does them by the weakest minister:



o holy writ in babes<sup>148</sup> hath judgement shown,  
/hen judges have been babes; great floods have flown<sup>149</sup>  
rom simple sources, and great seas have dried<sup>150</sup>  
/hen miracles have by the great'st<sup>151</sup> been denied.  
ft expectation fails, and most oft there  
/here most it promises, and oft it hits<sup>153</sup>  
/here hope is coldest and despair most shifts.<sup>154</sup>  
ING I must not hear thee. Fare thee well, kind maid.  
hy pains not used must by thyself be paid<sup>156</sup>:  
roffers not took reap thanks for<sup>157</sup> their reward.  
ELEN Inspired merit so by breath<sup>158</sup> is barred.  
is not so with him that all things knows  
s 'tis with us that square our guess by shows.<sup>160</sup>  
ut most it is presumption in us when  
he help of heaven we count<sup>162</sup> the act of men.  
ear sir, to my endeavours give consent.  
f heaven, not me, make an experiment.<sup>164</sup>  
am not an impostor that proclaim<sup>165</sup>  
lyself against the level of mine aim,  
ut know I think, and think I know most sure,  
ly art is not past power, nor you past cure.  
ING Art thou so confident? Within what space<sup>169</sup>  
op'st thou my cure?  
ELEN The greatest<sup>171</sup> grace lending grace  
re twice the horses of the sun shall bring  
heir fiery torcher his diurnal ring<sup>173</sup>,  
re twice in murk and occidental<sup>174</sup> damp  
loist Hesperus<sup>175</sup> hath quenched her sleepy lamp,

r four and twenty times the [pilot's glass](#)<sup>176</sup>  
hath told the thievish minutes how they pass,  
/hat is infirm from your sound parts shall fly,  
ealth shall live free and sickness freely die.

ING Upon thy certainty and confidence  
/hat dar'st thou [venture?](#)<sup>181</sup>

ELEN [Tax](#)<sup>182</sup> of impudence,  
[strumpet's](#)<sup>183</sup> boldness, a divulgèd shame  
[raduced](#)<sup>184</sup> by odious ballads: my maiden's name  
[eared](#) otherwise, nay, worse of worst, [extended](#)<sup>185</sup>  
/ith vilest torture, let my life be ended.

ING Methinks in thee some blessèd spirit doth speak  
is powerful sound within an organ weak:  
nd what impossibility would [slay](#)<sup>189</sup>

1 common [sense](#)<sup>190</sup>, sense saves another way.

hy life is dear, for all that life can [rate](#)<sup>191</sup>  
/orth name of life in thee hath [estimate](#)<sup>192</sup>:

outh, beauty, wisdom, courage, all  
hat happiness and [prime](#)<sup>194</sup> can happy call.  
[hou this to hazard needs](#)<sup>195</sup> must intimate  
kill infinite or [monstrous desperate](#).<sup>196</sup>

weet [practicer](#), thy [physic](#)<sup>197</sup> I will try,  
hat [ministers](#)<sup>198</sup> thine own death if I die.

ELEN If I [break time](#), or flinch in [property](#)<sup>199</sup>  
f what I spoke, unpitied let me die,  
nd well deserved. [Not](#)<sup>201</sup> helping, death's my fee.  
ut if I help, what do you promise me?

ING Make thy demand.

ELEN But will you **make it even?**<sup>204</sup>

ING Ay, by my sceptre and my hopes of heaven.

ELEN Then shalt thou give me with thy kingly hand

**/hat**<sup>207</sup> husband in thy power I will command:

**xempted**<sup>208</sup> be from me the arrogance

o choose from forth the royal blood of France,

ly low and humble name to propagate

**/ith** any branch or image of thy state.

ut such a one, thy vassal, whom I know

free for me to ask, thee to bestow.

ING Here is my hand. The **premises observed**<sup>214</sup>,

hy will by my **performance**<sup>215</sup> shall be served.

o make the choice **of**<sup>216</sup> thy own time, for I,

hy **resolved** patient, on thee **still**<sup>217</sup> rely.

lore should I question thee, and more I must —

hough more to know could not be more to trust —

rom whence thou cam'st, how **tended on.**<sup>220</sup> But rest

**nquestioned**<sup>221</sup> welcome and undoubted blest.—

ive me some help here, ho!— If thou proceed

s **high as word**<sup>223</sup>, my deed shall match thy deed.

*Flourish. Exeunt [the King is carried out]*

## **[Act 2 Scene 2]**

*running scene 5*

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*Enter Countess and Clown [Lavatch]*

COUNTESS Come on, sir, I shall now **put you to the height**<sup>1</sup> of

our **breeding.**<sup>2</sup>

AVATCH I will show myself **highly fed** and **lowly**<sup>3</sup> taught. I

now my business is but to the court.

DUNTESS To the court! Why, what place [make you](#)<sup>5</sup> special, then you [put off](#)<sup>6</sup> that with such contempt? But to the court!

AVATCH Truly, madam, if God have lent a man any manners, he may easily [put](#)<sup>8</sup> it off at court: he that cannot [take a leg](#), put off's cap, kiss his hand and say nothing, has either 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](#)<sup>12</sup> will serve all men.

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

AVATCH It is like a barber's chair that fits all buttocks: the [in](#)-buttock, the [quatch](#)-buttock, the [brawn](#)<sup>16</sup>-buttock, or any buttock.

DUNTESS Will your answer serve [fit](#)<sup>18</sup> to all questions?

AVATCH As fit as ten [groats](#)<sup>19</sup> is for the hand of an attorney, as our [French crown](#) for your [taffety punk](#), as Tib's [rush](#)<sup>20</sup> for Tom's [forefinger](#), as a [pancake](#) for Shrove Tuesday, a [morris](#)<sup>21</sup> for May Day, as the [nail](#) to [his hole](#), the [cuckold](#) to his [horn](#)<sup>22</sup>, as a scolding [quean](#) to a [wrangling knave](#)<sup>23</sup>, as the nun's lip to the friar's mouth, nay, as the [pudding](#) to [his](#)<sup>24</sup> skin.

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

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

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

AVATCH But a trifle [neither](#)<sup>31</sup>, in good faith, if the learned

ould 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.

OUNTESS To be young again, if we could. I will be a fool in<sup>34</sup>  
uestion, hoping to be the wiser by your answer. I pray you,  
r, are you a courtier?

AVATCH O lord, sir! There's a simple putting off.<sup>37</sup> More, more,  
hundred of them.

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

AVATCH O lord, sir! Thick<sup>40</sup>, thick, spare not me.

OUNTESS I think, sir, you can eat none of this homely meat.<sup>41</sup>

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

OUNTESS You were lately whipped, sir, as I think.

AVATCH O lord, sir! Spare not me.

OUNTESS Do you cry, 'O lord, sir!' at your whipping, and  
'spare not me'? Indeed your 'O lord, sir!' is very sequent<sup>46</sup> to  
our whipping: you would answer<sup>47</sup> very well to a whipping, if  
ou were but bound to't.<sup>48</sup>

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

OUNTESS I play the noble<sup>51</sup> housewife with the time  
o entertain it so merrily with a fool.

AVATCH O lord, sir! Why, there't serves well again.

OUNTESS An end, sir. To your business. Give Helen this,

*Gives a letter*

nd urge her to a present answer back. Commend<sup>55</sup>  
ie to my kinsmen and my son. This is not much.

AVATCH Not much commendation to them.

OUNTESS Not much employment for you. You understand me?

AVATCH Most fruitfully. I am there before my legs.<sup>59</sup>

COUNTRESS Haste you again.<sup>60</sup>

*Exeunt [separately]*

### [Act 2 Scene 3]

*running scene 6*

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*Enter Count [Bertram], Lafew and Parolles*

LAFEW They say miracles are past, and we have our  
philosophical persons to make modern and familiar, things<sup>2</sup>  
supernatural and causeless.<sup>3</sup> Hence is it that we make trifles  
of terrors, ensconcing ourselves into<sup>4</sup> seeming knowledge  
when we should submit ourselves to an unknown fear.<sup>5</sup>

PAROLLES Why, 'tis the rarest argument<sup>5</sup> of wonder that hath  
got out in our latter<sup>7</sup> times.

BERTRAM And so 'tis.

LAFEW To be relinquished of the artists<sup>9</sup>—

PAROLLES So I say, both of Galen and Paracelsus.<sup>10</sup>

LAFEW Of all the learned and authentic fellows<sup>11</sup>—

PAROLLES Right, so I say.

LAFEW That gave him out<sup>13</sup> incurable—

PAROLLES Why, there 'tis. So say I too.

LAFEW Not to be helped —

PAROLLES Right. As 'twere a man assured of a—

LAFEW Uncertain life and sure death.

PAROLLES Just<sup>18</sup>, you say well. So would I have said.

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

PAROLLES It is, indeed: if you will have it in showing<sup>20</sup>, you shall

read it in— what-do-ye-call there?

*Points to the ballad Lafew holds*

*Reads*

AFEW 'A showing of a heavenly effect in an  
arthly actor.'

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

AFEW Why, your *dolphin* is not lustier. 'Fore me<sup>25</sup>, I speak in  
spect—

AROLLES Nay, 'tis strange, 'tis very strange. That is the *brief*<sup>27</sup>  
nd the tedious of it, and he's of a most *facinerious*<sup>28</sup> spirit  
at will not acknowledge it to be the—

AFEW Very hand of heaven.

AROLLES Ay, so I say.

AFEW In a most weak—

AROLLES And *debile minister*<sup>33</sup>, great power, great transcendence,  
hich should indeed give us a further use to be made  
an alone the recovery of the king, as to be—

AFEW *Generally*<sup>36</sup> thankful.

*Enter King, Helen and Attendants*

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

*Lafew and Parolles stand aside*

AFEW *Lustigue*, as the *Dutchman*<sup>39</sup> says. I'll like a maid the  
etter whilst I have a *tooth*<sup>40</sup> in my head. Why, he's able to lead  
er a *coranto*.<sup>41</sup>

AROLLES *Mor du vinager!*<sup>42</sup> Is not this Helen?

AFEW 'Fore God, I think so.

ING Go, call before me all the lords in court.

[Exit Attendant]

it, my preserver, by thy patient's side,

*Helen sits*

nd with this healthful hand, whose banished sense<sup>46</sup>  
hou hast repealed<sup>47</sup>, a second time receive  
he confirmation of my promised gift,  
hich but attends<sup>49</sup> thy naming.

*Enter three or four Lords*

air maid, send forth thine eye: this youthful parcel<sup>50</sup>  
f noble bachelors stand at my bestowing<sup>51</sup>,  
'er whom both sovereign power and father's voice  
have to use. Thy frank election<sup>53</sup> make.

hou hast power to choose, and they none to forsake.<sup>54</sup>

ELEN To each of you one fair and virtuous mistress  
all, when love please! Marry, to each, but one!

A FEW I'd give bay curtal and his furniture<sup>57</sup>  
ly mouth no more were broken than these boys'<sup>58</sup>,  
nd writ<sup>59</sup> as little beard.

ING Peruse them well:

ot one of those but had a noble father.

ELEN Gentlemen, heaven hath through me restored the  
ing to health.

*She addresses her to a Lord*

LL We understand it, and thank heaven for you.

ELEN I am a simple maid, and therein wealthiest  
hat I protest<sup>66</sup> I simply am a maid.

lease it your majesty, I have done already.

he blushes in my cheeks thus whisper<sup>68</sup> me,



Ve blush that thou shouldst choose. But be refused,  
et the [white death](#)<sup>70</sup> sit on thy cheek for ever,  
/e'll ne'er come there again.'

ING Make choice and see,  
[/ho](#) shuns thy love shuns all [his love in me](#).<sup>73</sup>

ELEN Now, [Dian](#)<sup>74</sup>, from thy altar do I fly,  
nd to imperial [Love](#)<sup>75</sup>, that god most high,

*To First Lord*

o my sighs stream.— Sir, will you hear my suit?

RST LORD And grant it.

ELEN Thanks, sir. [All](#)<sup>78</sup> the rest is mute.

*Aside*

A FEW I had rather be in this choice than throw  
[mes-ace for my life](#).<sup>80</sup>

*To Second Lord*

ELEN The [honour](#)<sup>81</sup>, sir, that flames in your fair eyes  
efore I speak, too threat'ningly replies.

[ove](#)<sup>83</sup> make your fortunes twenty times above  
[er that so wishes](#)<sup>84</sup>, and her humble love.

COND LORD [No better](#)<sup>85</sup>, if you please.

ELEN My wish receive,  
/hich great love grant! And so I take my leave.

*Aside*

A FEW Do all they deny her? An they were sons  
f mine, I'd have them whipped, or I would send them to  
[i'Turk](#)<sup>90</sup> to make eunuchs of.

*To Third Lord*

ELEN Be not afraid that I your hand should take.

ll never do you wrong for your own sake.  
lessing upon your vows, and in your bed  
ind fairer fortune, if you ever wed!

*Aside*

AFEW These boys are boys of ice, they'll none have  
er. [Sure](#)<sup>96</sup> they are bastards to the English, the French ne'er  
[ot](#)<sup>97</sup> 'em.

*To Fourth Lord*

ELEN You are too young, too [happy](#)<sup>98</sup>, and too good,  
o make yourself a son out of my blood.

FOURTH LORD Fair one, I think not so.

*Aside*

AFEW There's one [grape](#)<sup>101</sup> yet. I am sure thy father  
[runk wine](#).<sup>102</sup> But if thou be'st not an ass, I am a youth of  
urteen. I have [known](#)<sup>103</sup> thee already.

*To Bertram*

ELEN I dare not say I take you, but I give  
le and my service, ever whilst I live,  
nto your guiding power. This is the man.

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

BERTRAM My wife, my liege? I shall beseech your highness,  
i such a business give me leave to use  
he help of mine own eyes.

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

BERTRAM Yes, my good lord,  
ut never hope to know why I should marry her.

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

BERTRAM But follows it, my lord, to [bring me down](#)<sup>115</sup>

Iust answer for your raising? I know her well:

he had her **breeding** at my father's **charge**.<sup>117</sup>

poor physician's daughter my wife? Disdain  
ather **corrupt** me **ever**!<sup>119</sup>

ING 'Tis only **title**<sup>120</sup> thou disdain'st in her, the which

can build up. Strange is it that our bloods,

f colour, weight and heat, poured all together,

ould quite **confound distinction**, yet **stands off**<sup>123</sup>

differences so mighty. If she be

ll that is virtuous, save what thou dislik'st,

poor physician's daughter, thou dislik'st

f virtue for the name. But do not so.

rom lowest place whence virtuous things **proceed**<sup>128</sup>,

he place is dignified by th'doer's deed.

here **great additions swell's, and virtue none**<sup>130</sup>,

is a **dropsied**<sup>131</sup> honour. Good alone

good without a name. Vileness is so:

he **property** by what it is should **go**<sup>133</sup>,

ot by the title. She is young, wise, fair.

d these to nature she's immediate **heir**<sup>135</sup>,

nd these breed honour. **That is honour's scorn**<sup>136</sup>,

hich challenges itself as honour's born

nd is not like the sire. Honours thrive,

hen rather from our acts we them derive

han our **foregoers**.<sup>140</sup> The mere word's a slave,

**eboshed**<sup>141</sup> on every tomb, on every grave

lying **trophy**<sup>142</sup>, and as oft is dumb,

here dust and damned oblivion is the tomb

f honoured bones indeed.<sup>144</sup> What should be said?

'thou canst like this creature as a maid,

can create the rest: virtue and she

her own dower<sup>147</sup>, honour and wealth from me.

ERTRAM I cannot love her, nor will strive<sup>148</sup> to do't.

ING Thou wrong'st thyself if thou shouldst strive to choose.<sup>149</sup>

ELEN That you are well restored<sup>150</sup>, my lord, I'm glad.

et the rest go.

ING My honour's at the stake, which<sup>152</sup> to defeat,

must produce my power. Here, take her hand,

roud scornful boy, unworthy this<sup>154</sup> good gift,

hat dost in vile misprision<sup>155</sup> shackle up

ly love and her desert. That<sup>156</sup> canst not dream,

le, poisoning us in her defective<sup>157</sup> scale,

hall weigh thee to the beam.<sup>158</sup> That wilt not know,

is in us<sup>159</sup> to plant thine honour where

le please to have it grow. Check<sup>160</sup> thy contempt:

bey our will, which travails in<sup>161</sup> thy good.

elieve not thy disdain, but presently<sup>162</sup>

o thine own fortunes that obedient right

hich both thy duty owes and our power claims,

r I will throw thee from my care forever

ito the staggers and the careless lapse<sup>166</sup>

f youth and ignorance, both my revenge and hate

ooosing<sup>168</sup> upon thee, in the name of justice,

ithout all terms<sup>169</sup> of pity. Speak. Thine answer.

ERTRAM Pardon, my gracious lord, for I submit

ly fancy<sup>171</sup> to your eyes. When I consider

That great creation and what dole<sup>172</sup> of honour  
lies where you bid it, I find that she, which late<sup>173</sup>  
was in my nobler thoughts most base, is now  
he praised of the king, who<sup>175</sup>, so ennobled,  
as 'twere born so.

ING Take her by the hand,  
and tell her she is thine, to whom I promise  
counterpoise, if not<sup>179</sup> to thy estate,  
balance more replete.<sup>180</sup>

ERTRAM I take her hand.

ING Good fortune and the favour of the king  
mile upon this contract, whose ceremony<sup>183</sup>  
hall seem expedient on the now-born brief,  
and be performed tonight. The solemn feast  
hall more attend upon the coming space<sup>186</sup>,  
expecting absent friends. As<sup>187</sup> thou lov'st her,  
thy love's to me religious, else, does err.<sup>188</sup>

*Exeunt. Parolles and Lafew stay behind commenting of this wedding*

AFEW Do you hear, monsieur? A word with you.

AROLLES Your pleasure, sir.

AFEW Your lord and master did well to make his  
recantation.

AROLLES Recantation? My lord? My master?

AFEW Ay. Is it not a language I speak?

AROLLES A most harsh one, and not to be understood  
without bloody succeeding.<sup>196</sup> My master?

AFEW Are you companion<sup>197</sup> to the Count Rossillion?

AROLLES To any count, to all counts, to what is man.<sup>198</sup>

AFEW To what is count's man. Count's master is of  
nother style.

AROLLES You are [too old](#), sir. Let it [satisfy](#)<sup>201</sup> you, you are too old.

AFEW I must tell thee, sirrah, I [write](#)<sup>202</sup> man, to which title  
ge cannot bring thee.

AROLLES What I [dare too well do](#), I dare not do.<sup>204</sup>

AFEW I did think thee, for two [ordinaries](#)<sup>205</sup>, to be a pretty  
ise fellow. Thou didst make tolerable [vent](#)<sup>206</sup> of thy travel, it  
ight pass. Yet the [scarfs](#) and the [bannerets](#)<sup>207</sup> about thee did  
anifoldly dissuade me from believing thee a [vessel](#)<sup>208</sup> of too  
reat a [burden](#). I have now [found thee](#).<sup>209</sup> When I lose thee  
gain, I care not. Yet art thou good for nothing but [taking up](#)<sup>210</sup>,  
nd that thou'rt scarce worth.

AROLLES Hadst thou not the privilege of [antiquity](#)<sup>212</sup> upon  
ee—

AFEW Do not plunge thyself too far in anger, lest thou  
asten thy [trial](#), which if— lord have mercy on thee for a [hen](#)!<sup>215</sup>  
o, my good [window of lattice](#), fare thee well. Thy [casement](#)<sup>216</sup> I  
eed not open, for I look through thee. Give me thy hand.

AROLLES My lord, you give me most [egregious](#)<sup>218</sup> indignity.

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

AROLLES I have not, my lord, deserved it.

AFEW Yes, good faith, every [dram](#) of it, and I will not [bate](#)<sup>221</sup>  
ee a [scruple](#).<sup>222</sup>

AROLLES Well, I shall be [wiser](#).<sup>223</sup>

AFEW Even as soon as thou canst, for thou hast to [pull at a](#)<sup>224</sup>  
nack o'th'contrary. If ever thou be'st bound in thy scarf  
nd beaten, thou shall find what it is to be proud of thy

ondage. I have a desire to hold<sup>227</sup> my acquaintance with thee,  
r rather my knowledge, that I may say in the default<sup>228</sup>, he is a  
ian I know.<sup>229</sup>

AROLLES My lord, you do me most insupportable vexation.

AFEW I would it were hell-pains for thy sake, and my poor<sup>231</sup>  
oing eternal. For doing I am past, as I will by thee, in what<sup>232</sup>  
otion age will give me leave.

*Exit*

AROLLES Well, thou hast a son shall take this disgrace off me<sup>234</sup>;  
curvy<sup>235</sup>, old, filthy, scurvy lord! Well, I must be patient. There  
no fettering<sup>236</sup> of authority. I'll beat him, by my life, if I can  
meet him with any convenience, an<sup>237</sup> he were double and  
ouble a lord. I'll have no more pity of his age than I would  
ave of— I'll beat him, an if I could but meet him again.

*Enter Lafew*

AFEW Sirrah, your lord and master's married. There's  
ews for you: you have a new mistress.

AROLLES I most unfeignedly beseech your lordship to make  
ome reservation of your wrongs. He is my good lord. Whom<sup>243</sup>  
serve above is my master.

AFEW Who? God?

AROLLES Ay, sir.

AFEW The devil it is that's thy master. Why dost thou  
arter up thy arms o' this fashion? Dost make hose<sup>248</sup> of thy  
eeves? Do other servants so? Thou wert best set thy lower<sup>249</sup>  
art where thy nose stands. By mine honour, if I were but  
vo hours younger, I'd beat thee. Methink'st thou art a  
eneral offence, and every man should beat thee. I think

you wast created for men to breathe<sup>253</sup> themselves upon thee.

AROLLES This is hard and undeserved measure<sup>254</sup>, my lord.

AFEW Go to, sir. You were beaten in Italy for picking a<sup>255</sup>  
ernel out of a pomegranate. You are a vagabond<sup>256</sup> and no  
ue traveller. You are more saucy<sup>257</sup> with lords and honourable  
ersonages than the commission<sup>258</sup> of your birth and virtue  
ives you heraldry.<sup>259</sup> You are not worth another word, else I'd  
all you knave. I leave you.

*Exit*

AROLLES Good, very good, it is so then. Good, very good, let it  
e concealed awhile.

*Enter Count Rossillion [Bertram]*

ERTRAM Undone, and forfeited to cares<sup>263</sup> forever!

AROLLES What's the matter, sweet heart?

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

AROLLES What, what, sweetheart?

ERTRAM O my Parolles, they have married me!

ll to the Tuscan wars and never bed her.

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

ERTRAM There's letters from my mother. What th'import<sup>272</sup> is,  
know not yet.

AROLLES Ay, that would be known. To th'wars, my boy, to th'wars!  
e wears his honour in a box<sup>275</sup> unseen  
hat hugs his kicky-wicky<sup>276</sup> here at home,  
pending his manly marrow<sup>277</sup> in her arms,  
hich should sustain the bound and high curvet<sup>278</sup>



f Mars' fiery steed. To other regions,  
rance is a stable, we that dwell in't [jades](#)<sup>280</sup>:  
herefore, to th'war!

ERTRAM It shall be so. I'll send her to my house,  
acquaint my mother with my hate to her,  
nd wherefore I am fled, write to the king  
hat which I durst not speak. His present gift  
hall [furnish me to](#) those Italian [fields](#)<sup>286</sup>  
here noble fellows strike. War is no strife  
o the [dark house](#)<sup>288</sup> and the detested wife.

AROLLES Will this [capriccio](#) hold in thee? [Art](#)<sup>289</sup> sure?

ERTRAM Go with me to my chamber, and advise me.  
ll send her [straight](#)<sup>291</sup> away. Tomorrow  
ll to the wars, she to her single sorrow.

AROLLES Why, these [balls bound](#)<sup>293</sup>, there's noise in it. 'Tis hard.  
young man married is a man that's [marred](#)<sup>294</sup>:  
herefore away, and leave her bravely, go.  
he king has done you wrong, but hush, 'tis so.

*Exeunt*

## [Act 2 Scene 4]

*running scene 6 continues*

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*Enter Helena and Clown [Lavatch]*

*Helena reading a letter*

ELEN My mother greets me [kindly](#).<sup>1</sup> Is she well?

AVATCH She is not [well](#)<sup>2</sup>, but yet she has her health: she's very  
erry, but yet she is not well: but thanks be given, she's very  
ell and [wants](#)<sup>4</sup> nothing i'th'world; but yet she is not well.

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

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

ELEN What two things?

AVATCH 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*

AROLLES Bless you, my fortunate lady.

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

AROLLES You had my prayers to lead [them](#)<sup>14</sup> on, and to keep [them](#)<sup>15</sup> on, have them still. O, my knave, how does my old lady?

AVATCH [So](#)<sup>16</sup> that you had her wrinkles and I her money, I would she [did](#)<sup>17</sup> as you say.

AROLLES Why, I say nothing.

AVATCH Marry, you are the wiser man, for many a [man's](#)<sup>19</sup> tongue [shakes out](#)<sup>20</sup> 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](#)<sup>22</sup>, which is within a very little of nothing.

AROLLES Away! Thou'rt a knave.

AVATCH You should have said, sir, '[Before](#)<sup>25</sup> a knave thou'rt a knave.' That's, '[Before me](#)<sup>26</sup> thou'rt a knave.' This had been truth, sir.

AROLLES [Go to](#), thou art a witty fool. I have [found thee](#).<sup>28</sup>

AVATCH Did you find [me](#)<sup>29</sup> 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](#)<sup>31</sup> the world's pleasure and the

increase of laughter.

PAROLLES A good knave, i'faith, and *well fed*.<sup>33</sup>—

LADAM, my lord will go away tonight.

A very serious business calls on him.

THE GREAT prerogative and *rite of love*<sup>36</sup>,

WHICH, as your due, time claims, he does acknowledge,

BUT puts it off *to*<sup>38</sup> a compelled restraint,

WHOSE want, and whose delay, is strewn with *sweets*<sup>39</sup>,

WHICH *they* distil now in the *curbèd*<sup>40</sup> time,

TO make the coming hour o'erflow with joy

AND pleasure *drown*<sup>42</sup> the brim.

ELEN What's his will *else*?<sup>43</sup>

PAROLLES That you will take your instant leave o'th'king

AND *make* this haste *as* your own good *proceeding*<sup>45</sup>,

STRENGTH'ned with what *apology*<sup>46</sup> you think

SHALL make it *probable need*.<sup>47</sup>

ELEN What more commands he?

PAROLLES That, having this obtained, you presently

*tend* his further *pleasure*.<sup>50</sup>

ELEN In everything I wait upon his will.

PAROLLES I shall report it so.

*Exit*

*To Parolles/To Lavatch*

ELEN I pray you.— Come, sirrah.

*Exeunt*

[Act 2 Scene 5]

*running scene 6 continues*

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*Enter Lafew and Bertram*

AFEW But I hope your lordship thinks not him a soldier.

ERTRAM Yes, my lord, and of very valiant **aproof**.

AFEW You have it from his own **deliverance**.<sup>3</sup>

ERTRAM And by other warranted testimony.

AFEW Then my **dial** goes not true. **I took this lark for a**<sup>5</sup>  
unting.

ERTRAM I do assure you, my lord, he is very great in  
nowledge and **accordingly**<sup>8</sup> valiant.

AFEW I have then sinned against his experience and  
ansgressed against his valour, and my **state**<sup>10</sup> that way is  
angerous, since I cannot yet **find**<sup>11</sup> in my heart to repent.  
ere he comes. I pray you make us friends. I will pursue the  
mity.

*Enter Parolles*

*To Bertram*

AROLLES These things shall be done, sir.

*To Bertram*

AFEW Pray you, sir, who's his **tailor**?<sup>15</sup>

AROLLES Sir?

AFEW O, I know him well. Ay, 'sir', he. 'Sir' 's a good  
orkman, a very good tailor.

*Aside to Parolles*

ERTRAM Is she gone to the king?

AROLLES She is.

ERTRAM Will she away tonight?

AROLLES As **you'll have**<sup>22</sup> her.

ERTRAM I have writ my letters, casketed my treasure,

iven order for our horses, and tonight,  
/hen I should take possession of the bride,  
nd ere I do begin.

*Aside*

AFEW A good traveller is [something](#)<sup>27</sup> at the latter  
nd of a dinner, but one that lies [three thirds](#)<sup>28</sup> and uses a  
nown truth to pass a thousand nothings with, should be  
nce heard and thrice beaten.— God save you, captain.

*To Parolles*

ERTRAM Is there any [unkindness](#)<sup>31</sup> between my lord  
nd you, monsieur?

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

AFEW You have [made shift](#)<sup>35</sup> to run into't, boots and spurs  
nd all, like [him that leapt into the custard](#).<sup>36</sup> And out of it  
ou'll run again, rather than [suffer question](#)<sup>37</sup> for your  
[residence](#).<sup>38</sup>

ERTRAM It may be you have [mistaken](#)<sup>39</sup> him, my lord.

AFEW And shall do so ever, though I took him at's prayers.  
are you well, my lord, and believe this of me: there can be  
o kernel in this light nut. The soul of this man is his clothes.  
rust him not in matter of [heavy](#)<sup>43</sup> consequence. I have kept of  
[them tame](#)<sup>44</sup>, and know their natures.— Farewell, monsieur. I  
ave spoken better of you than you have or will [to deserve](#)<sup>45</sup> at  
y hand, but we must do good against evil.

*[Exit]*

AROLLES An [idle](#)<sup>47</sup> lord, I swear.

ERTRAM I think so.

AROLLES Why, do you not know<sup>49</sup> him?

ERTRAM Yes, I do know him well, and common speech  
gives him a worthy pass. Here comes my clog.<sup>51</sup>

*Enter Helena [with an attendant]*

ELEN I have, sir, as I was commanded from you,  
poke with the king and have procured his leave  
or present parting<sup>54</sup>, only he desires  
some private speech with you.

ERTRAM I shall obey his will.

You must not marvel, Helen, at my course,  
which holds not colour with the time<sup>58</sup>, nor does  
the ministration and required office<sup>59</sup>

in 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 your way for home,  
and rather muse<sup>64</sup> than ask why I entreat you,  
for my respects<sup>65</sup> are better than they seem  
and my appointments<sup>66</sup> have in them a need  
greater than shows itself at the first view  
to you that know them not. This to my mother.

*Gives a letter*

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

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

ERTRAM Come, come, no more of that.

ELEN And ever shall

With true observance seek to eke out<sup>75</sup> that  
Wherein toward me my homely stars<sup>76</sup> have failed  
to equal my great fortune.<sup>77</sup>

ERTRAM Let that go.

My haste is very great. Farewell. Hie<sup>79</sup> home.

ELEN Pray, sir, your pardon.

ERTRAM Well, what would you say?

ELEN I am not worthy of the wealth I owe<sup>82</sup>,  
nor dare I say 'tis mine, and yet it is.  
But, like a timorous thief, most fain<sup>84</sup> would steal  
What law does vouch<sup>85</sup> mine own.

ERTRAM What would you have?

ELEN Something, and scarce so much: nothing, indeed.  
I would<sup>88</sup> not tell you what I would, my lord.  
With yes:

Strangers and foes do sunder<sup>90</sup>, and not kiss.

ERTRAM I pray you stay<sup>91</sup> not, but in haste to horse.

ELEN I shall not break your bidding, good my lord.—

*To Attendant*

Where are my other men?—

Monsieur, farewell.

*Exit*

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

AROLLES Bravely, corragio<sup>98</sup>!

*[Exeunt]*

## Act 3 [Scene 1]

*running scene 7*

*Flourish. Enter the Duke of Florence, the two Frenchmen [First and Second Lords Dumaine] with a troop of Soldiers*

DUKE So that [from point to point](#)<sup>1</sup> now have you heard  
the fundamental reasons of this war,  
[/hose great decision](#)<sup>3</sup> hath much blood let forth  
and more thirsts after.

FIRST LORD Holy seems the quarrel  
upon your grace's part, [black](#)<sup>6</sup> and fearful  
in the [opposer](#).<sup>7</sup>

DUKE Therefore we marvel much our [cousin](#)<sup>8</sup> France  
would in so just a business shut his [bosom](#)<sup>9</sup>  
against our [borrowing prayers](#).<sup>10</sup>

SECOND LORD Good my lord,  
the reasons of our state I cannot [yield](#)<sup>12</sup>,  
[but](#) like a [common and an outward man](#)<sup>13</sup>  
that the great [figure](#) of a council [frames](#)<sup>14</sup>  
by [self-unable motion](#)<sup>15</sup>: therefore dare not  
say what I think of it, since I have found  
myself in my incertain grounds to fail  
so often as I guessed.

DUKE Be it [his pleasure](#).<sup>19</sup>

FIRST LORD But I am sure the [younger of our nature](#)<sup>20</sup>,  
that [surfeit on their ease](#)<sup>21</sup>, will day by day  
come here for [physic](#).<sup>22</sup>

DUKE Welcome shall they be,  
and all the honours that can [fly from](#)<sup>24</sup> us



hall on them settle. You know your places well.  
/hen **better fall**, for your **avails**<sup>26</sup> they fell.  
omorrow to th'field.

*Flourish [Exeunt]*

## **[Act 3 Scene 2]**

*running scene 8*

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*Enter Countess and Clown [Lavatch]*

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

AVATCH By my **troth**<sup>3</sup>, I take my young lord to be a very  
melancholy man.

COUNTRESS By what **observance**<sup>5</sup>, I pray you?

AVATCH Why, he will look upon his boot and sing: **mend**<sup>6</sup> the  
riff and sing: ask questions and sing: pick his teeth and sing.  
I know a man that had this trick of melancholy **sold**<sup>8</sup> a goodly  
manor for a song.

*Opens a letter*

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

AVATCH I have no **mind to**<sup>12</sup> Isbel since I was at court. Our old  
**things**<sup>13</sup> and our Isbels o'th'country are nothing like your old  
things and your Isbels o'th'court. The **brains**<sup>14</sup> of my Cupid's  
knocked out, and I begin to love, as an old man loves money,  
with no **stomach**.<sup>16</sup>

COUNTRESS What have we here?

AVATCH **E'en**<sup>18</sup> that you have there.

*Exit*

COUNTESS

[Reads] a letter

have sent you a daughter-in-law. She hath recovered<sup>19</sup> the  
king, and undone me. I have wedded her, not bedded her,  
and sworn to make the “not”<sup>21</sup> eternal. You shall hear I am  
run away: know it before the report come. If there be  
readth enough in the world, I will hold<sup>23</sup> a long distance. My  
duty to you. Your unfortunate son, Bertram.’

This is not well, rash and unbridled boy.

Do fly<sup>26</sup> the favours of so good a king,  
do pluck his indignation on thy head  
by the misprizing<sup>28</sup> of a maid too virtuous  
or the contempt of empire.<sup>29</sup>

*Enter Clown [Lavatch]*

LAVATCH O, madam, yonder is heavy news within<sup>30</sup>, between  
two soldiers and my young lady!

COUNTESS What is the matter?

LAVATCH 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?

LAVATCH So say I, madam, if he run away, as I hear he does.  
The danger is in standing to’t.<sup>38</sup> That’s the loss of men, though  
be the getting<sup>39</sup> of children. Here they come will tell you  
more. For my part, I only hear your son was run away.

[He may exit]

*Enter Helen and two Gentlemen [First and Second Lords Dumaine]*

SECOND LORD Save<sup>41</sup> you, good madam.

ELEN Madam, my lord is gone, forever gone.

RST LORD Do not say so.

OUNTESS Think upon patience. Pray you, gentlemen,  
have felt so many quirks<sup>45</sup> of joy and grief  
that the first face of neither, on the start<sup>46</sup>  
an woman<sup>47</sup> me unto't. Where is my son, I pray you?

RST LORD Madam, he's gone to serve the Duke of Florence:  
Ie met him thitherward, for thence<sup>49</sup> we came,  
and after some dispatch in hand<sup>50</sup> at court,  
hither we bend<sup>51</sup> again.

*Shows a letter*

ELEN Look on his letter, madam, here's my passport.<sup>52</sup>

*Reads*

When thou canst get the ring upon my finger,  
which never shall come off, and show me a child begotten of  
my body that I am father to, then call me husband. But in  
which a "then" I write a "never". This is a dreadful sentence.<sup>56</sup>

OUNTESS Brought you this letter, gentlemen?

RST LORD Ay, madam, and for the contents' sake are sorry for  
your pains.

OUNTESS I prithee, lady, have a better cheer.<sup>60</sup>

'thou engrossest all the griefs are<sup>61</sup> thine,  
thou robb'st me of a moiety<sup>62</sup>: he was my son,  
but I do wash his name out of my blood,  
and thou art all my<sup>64</sup> child. Towards Florence is he?

RST LORD Ay, madam.

OUNTESS And to be a soldier?

RST LORD Such is his noble purpose, and believe't,

he duke will lay upon him all the honour  
that good convenience<sup>69</sup> claims.

DUNTESS Return you thither?

SECOND LORD Ay, madam, with the swiftest wing of speed.

*Reads*

ELEN 'Till I have no wife I have nothing in France.'  
'tis bitter.

DUNTESS Find you that there?

ELEN Ay, madam.

SECOND LORD 'Tis but the boldness of his hand, haply<sup>76</sup>, which his  
heart was not consenting to.

DUNTESS Nothing in France, until he have no wife!

here's nothing here that is too good for him  
but only she, and she deserves a lord  
that twenty such rude<sup>81</sup> boys might tend upon  
and call her hourly mistress. Who was with him?

SECOND LORD A servant only, and a gentleman  
which I have sometime known.

DUNTESS Parolles, was it not?

SECOND LORD Ay, my good lady, he.

DUNTESS A very tainted fellow, and full of wickedness.

My son corrupts a well-derived<sup>88</sup> nature  
with his inducement.<sup>89</sup>

SECOND LORD Indeed, good lady,  
the fellow has a deal of that<sup>91</sup> too much,  
which holds him much to have.<sup>92</sup>

DUNTESS You're welcome, gentlemen.  
I will entreat you, when you see my son,

o tell him that his sword can never win  
he honour that he loses: more I'll entreat you  
/ritten<sup>97</sup> to bear along.

RST LORD We serve you, madam,  
i that and all your worthiest affairs.

OUNTESS Not so, but as we change<sup>100</sup> our courtesies.  
/ill you draw near?<sup>101</sup>

*Exeunt [all but Helen]*

ELEN 'Till I have no wife, I have nothing in France.'

othing in France, until he has no wife!

hou shalt have none, Rossillion<sup>104</sup>, none in France.

hen hast thou all again. Poor lord, is't I

hat chase thee from thy country and expose

hose tender limbs of thine to the event<sup>107</sup>

f the none-sparing war? And is it I

hat drive thee from the sportive<sup>109</sup> court, where thou

/ast shot at with fair eyes, to be the mark<sup>110</sup>

f smoky muskets? O you leaden messengers<sup>111</sup>

hat ride upon the violent speed of fire,

ly with false aim, move the still-peering<sup>113</sup> air

hat sings<sup>114</sup> with piercing. Do not touch my lord.

/hoever shoots at him, I set him there.<sup>115</sup>

/hoever charges on his forward<sup>116</sup> breast,

am the caitiff<sup>117</sup> that do hold him to't,

nd though I kill him not, I am the cause

is death was so effected. Better 'twere

met the ravin<sup>120</sup> lion when he roared

/ith sharp constraint<sup>121</sup> of hunger: better 'twere

hat all the miseries which nature owes<sup>122</sup>  
ere mine at once. No, come thou home, Rossillion,  
hence honour but of danger wins a scar<sup>124</sup>,  
s oft it loses all.<sup>125</sup> I will be gone:  
ly being here it is that holds thee hence.  
hall I stay here to do't? No, no, although<sup>127</sup>  
he air of paradise did fan the house  
nd angels officed all.<sup>129</sup> I will be gone,  
hat pitiful<sup>130</sup> rumour may report my flight,  
o console<sup>131</sup> thine ear. Come night, end day!  
or with the dark, poor thief, I'll steal<sup>132</sup> away.

*Exit*

### [Act 3 Scene 3]

*running scene 9*

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*Flourish. Enter the Duke of Florence, Rossillion [Bertram], Drum and Trumpets, soldiers, Parolles*

DUKE The general of our horse thou art, and we,  
reat in our hope, lay our best love and credence<sup>2</sup>  
pon thy promising fortune.

BERTRAM Sir, it is  
charge too heavy for my strength, but yet  
e'll strive to bear it for your worthy sake  
o th'extreme edge<sup>7</sup> of hazard.

DUKE Then go thou forth,  
nd fortune play upon thy prosperous helm<sup>9</sup>  
s thy auspicious mistress!

BERTRAM This very day,

reat Mars, I put myself into thy [file](#).<sup>12</sup>  
lake me but [like my thoughts](#)<sup>13</sup>, and I shall prove  
lover of thy drum, hater of love.

*Exeunt*

### [\[Act 3 Scene 4\]](#)

*running scene 10*

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*Enter Countess and Steward [Reynaldo]*

COUNTESS Alas! And would you take the letter [of](#)<sup>1</sup> her?  
light you not know she would do as she has done,  
y sending me a letter? Read it again.

EYNALDO

*[Reads the] letter*

[am Saint Jaques](#)<sup>4</sup> pilgrim, thither gone.  
mbitious love hath so in me offended,  
hat barefoot plod I the cold ground upon,  
/ith [sainted](#)<sup>7</sup> vow my faults to have amended.  
/rite, write, that from the bloody course of war  
ly dearest master, your dear son, may [hie](#).<sup>9</sup>  
less him at home in peace, whilst I from far  
is name with zealous fervour sanctify.  
is [taken](#)<sup>12</sup> labours bid him me forgive.  
his [despiteful Juno](#)<sup>13</sup>, sent him forth  
rom courtly friends, with [camping](#)<sup>14</sup> foes to live  
/here death and danger dogs the heels of worth.  
e is too good and fair for death and me,  
[/hom](#)<sup>17</sup> I myself embrace, to set him free.'  
COUNTESS Ah, what sharp stings are in her mildest words!

Reynaldo, you did never lack [advice](#)<sup>19</sup> so much,  
as letting her pass so: had I spoke with her,  
could have well diverted her intents,  
Which thus she hath [prevented](#).<sup>22</sup>

EYNALDO Pardon me, madam.

'I had given you this [at overnight](#)<sup>24</sup>,  
he might have been o'erta'en, and yet she writes  
pursuit would be but vain.

COUNTESS What angel shall  
less this unworthy husband? He cannot thrive,  
unless her prayers, [whom](#)<sup>29</sup> heaven delights to hear  
and loves to grant, reprieve him from the wrath  
of greatest justice. Write, write, Reynaldo,  
of this [unworthy husband](#)<sup>32</sup> of his wife.  
Let every word [weigh heavy of](#)<sup>33</sup> 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](#)<sup>37</sup> 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  
dearest to me, I have no skill in [sense](#)<sup>41</sup>  
to make distinction. [Provide](#)<sup>42</sup> this messenger.  
My heart is heavy and mine age is weak.  
Grief would have tears, and sorrow bids me speak.

*Exeunt*



## [Act 3 Scene 5]

*running scene 11*

*A tucket afar off. Enter old Widow of Florence, her daughter [Diana], and Mariana with other Citizens*

WIDOW Nay, come, for if they do approach the city, we shall see all<sup>2</sup> the sight.

DIANA They say the French count has done most honourable service.

WIDOW It is reported that he has taken their<sup>5</sup> greatest commander, and that with his own hand he slew the duke's brother.

*Tucket*

DIANA We have lost our labour. They are gone a contrary way. Mark! You may know by their trumpets.

DIANA Come, let's return again, and suffice<sup>10</sup> ourselves with the report of it. Well, Diana, take heed of this French earl.<sup>11</sup> The honour of a maid is her name<sup>12</sup>, and no legacy is so rich as honesty.<sup>13</sup>

WIDOW I have told my neighbour how you have been solicited<sup>15</sup> by a gentleman his companion.

DIANA I know that knave, hang him! One Parolles: a filthy officer he is in those suggestions for<sup>17</sup> the young earl. Beware of them, Diana; their promises, enticements, oaths, tokens and all these engines of lust, are not the things they go<sup>19</sup> under. Many a maid hath been seduced by them, and the misery is example that so terrible shows in the wreck of<sup>21</sup> maidenhood, cannot for all that dissuade succession<sup>22</sup>, but that they are limed<sup>23</sup> with the twigs that threatens them. I

ope I need not to advise you further, but I hope your own  
race will keep you where you are, *though*<sup>25</sup> there were no  
urther danger known but the modesty which is so lost.<sup>26</sup>

IANA You shall not need to *fear*<sup>27</sup> me.

*Enter Helen [disguised as a pilgrim]*

TDOW I hope so. Look, here comes a pilgrim. I know she will  
*see*<sup>29</sup> at my house: thither they send one another. I'll question  
er.— God save you, pilgrim! Whither are you bound?

ELEN To Saint Jaques le Grand.

Where do the *palmer*s<sup>32</sup> lodge, I do beseech you?

TDOW At the *Saint Francis* here beside the *port*.<sup>33</sup>

*A march afar*

ELEN Is this the way?

TDOW Ay, marry, is't. Hark you!

hey come this way. If you will *tarry*<sup>36</sup>,  
holy pilgrim, but till the troops come by,  
will conduct you where you shall be lodged,  
he rather *for*<sup>39</sup> I think I know your hostess  
s *ample*<sup>40</sup> as myself.

ELEN Is it yourself?

TDOW If you shall please so, pilgrim.

ELEN I thank you, and will *stay upon* your *leisure*.<sup>43</sup>

TDOW You came, I think, from France?

ELEN I did so.

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

ELEN His name, I pray you.

IANA The Count Rossillion. Know you such a one?

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

IANA Whatsome'er<sup>52</sup> he is,  
he's bravely taken<sup>53</sup> here. He stole from France,  
as 'tis reported, for<sup>54</sup> the king had married him  
against his liking. Think you it is so?

ELEN Ay, surely, mere<sup>56</sup> the truth. I know his lady.

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

ELEN What's his name?

IANA Monsieur Parolles.

ELEN O, I believe<sup>61</sup> with him,  
in argument of praise, or to<sup>62</sup> the worth  
of the great count himself, she is too mean<sup>63</sup>  
to have her name repeated. All her deserving<sup>64</sup>  
in a reserved honesty<sup>65</sup>, and that  
have not heard examined.<sup>66</sup>

IANA Alas, poor lady!  
'tis a hard bondage to become the wife  
of a detesting lord.

WIDOW I write<sup>70</sup> good creature: wheresoe'er she is,  
her heart weighs sadly. This young maid might do her  
shrewd<sup>72</sup> turn if she pleased.

ELEN How do you mean?  
maybe the amorous count solicits her  
in the unlawful purpose?

WIDOW He does indeed,  
and brokes with all that can in such a suit<sup>77</sup>

orrupt the tender honour of a maid.  
ut she is armed for him and keeps her guard  
i **honestest**<sup>80</sup> defence.

*Drum and colours. Enter Count Rossillion [Bertram], Parolles and the whole army*

ARIANA The gods forbid **else**!<sup>81</sup>

WIDOW So, now they come:

hat is Antonio, the duke's eldest son.

hat, Escalus.

ELEN Which is the Frenchman?

IANA He,

hat with the plume. 'Tis a most gallant fellow.

would he loved his wife: if he were **honest**<sup>88</sup>

ie were much goodlier. Is't not a handsome gentleman?

ELEN I like him well.

IANA 'Tis pity he is not honest. Yond's that same knave

hat leads him to these places. Were I his lady,

would poison that vile rascal.

ELEN Which is he?

IANA That **jackanapes**<sup>95</sup> with scarves. Why is he melancholy?

ELEN Perchance he's hurt i'th'battle.

AROLLES Lose our drum! Well.

ARIANA He's **shrewdly**<sup>98</sup> vexed at something. Look, he has  
oied us.

WIDOW Marry, hang you!

ARIANA And your **courtesy**, for a **ring-carrier**!<sup>101</sup>

*Exeunt [Bertram, Parolles and army]*

WIDOW The troop is past. Come, pilgrim, I will bring you

Here you shall [host](#). Of [enjoined penitents](#)<sup>103</sup>  
here's four or five, to great Saint Jaques bound,  
lready at my house.

ELEN I humbly thank you:

[lease it](#)<sup>107</sup> this matron and this gentle maid  
o eat with us tonight, the [charge](#)<sup>108</sup> and thanking  
hall be [for me](#).<sup>109</sup> And, to requite you further,  
will bestow some [precepts of](#)<sup>110</sup> this virgin  
orthy the note.

OTH We'll take your offer [kindly](#).<sup>112</sup>

*Exeunt*

### [\[Act 3 Scene 6\]](#)

*running scene 12*

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*Enter Count Rossillion [Bertram] and the [two] Frenchmen, as at first*  
SECOND LORD Nay, good my lord, put him [to't](#)<sup>1</sup>, let him have his  
ay.

FIRST LORD If your lordship find him not a [hilding](#)<sup>3</sup>, hold me no  
ore in your respect.

SECOND LORD On my life, my lord, a [bubble](#).<sup>5</sup>

BERTRAM Do you think I am so far deceived in him?

SECOND LORD Believe it, my lord, in mine own direct knowledge,  
ithout any malice, but to speak of him [as](#)<sup>8</sup> my kinsman, he's  
most notable coward, an infinite and endless liar, an hourly  
romise-breaker, the owner of no one good quality worthy  
our lordship's [entertainment](#).<sup>11</sup>

FIRST LORD It were fit you knew him, lest [reposing](#)<sup>12</sup> too far in his  
irtue, which he hath not, he might at some great and [trusty](#)<sup>13</sup>

business in a main danger fail you.

BERTRAM I would I knew in what particular action to [try](#)<sup>15</sup> him.

FIRST LORD None better than to let him [fetch off](#)<sup>16</sup> 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](#)<sup>19</sup> from the enemy: we will bind and [hoodwink](#)<sup>20</sup> him so, that he shall suppose no other but that he is carried into the [leaguer](#)<sup>21</sup> of the adversaries, when we bring him to our own tents. Be at 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](#)<sup>25</sup> in his power against you, and that with the divine forfeit of his soul upon [oath](#)<sup>27</sup>, never trust my judgement in anything.

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](#)<sup>30</sup> of his success in't, and to what metal this counterfeit lump of [ore](#) will be melted, if you [give him not](#)<sup>31</sup> John Drum's entertainment, your [inclining](#)<sup>32</sup> cannot be removed. Here he comes.

*Enter Parolles*

*Aside to Bertram*

SECOND LORD O, for the love of laughter, hinder not the honour of his design. Let him fetch off his drum [in any hand](#).<sup>36</sup>

BERTRAM How now, monsieur? This drum [sticks sorely in](#)<sup>37</sup> our disposition.

FIRST LORD A [pox](#)<sup>39</sup> on't! Let it go, 'tis but a drum.

AROLLES 'But a drum'? Is't 'but a drum'? A drum so lost?  
here was excellent command: to charge in with our horse  
pon our own wings, and to rend<sup>42</sup> our own soldiers!

FIRST LORD That was not to be blamed in the command of the<sup>43</sup>  
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.

AROLLES It might have been recovered.

BERTRAM It might, but it is not now.

AROLLES It is to be recovered. But<sup>51</sup> that the merit of service is  
 seldom attributed to the true and exact performer, I would  
 have that drum or another, or *hic jacet*<sup>53</sup>.

BERTRAM Why, if you have a stomach<sup>54</sup>, to't, monsieur: if you  
link your mystery<sup>55</sup> in stratagem can bring this instrument  
of honour again into his<sup>56</sup> native quarter, be magnanimous in  
the enterprise and go on. I will grace<sup>57</sup> the attempt for a  
worthy exploit. If you speed<sup>58</sup> well in it, the duke shall both  
peak of it and extend to you what further becomes<sup>59</sup> his  
greatness, even to the utmost syllable of your worthiness.

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

BERTRAM But you must not now slumber in it.<sup>62</sup>

AROLLES I'll about it this evening, and I will presently pen<sup>63</sup>  
down my dilemmas<sup>64</sup>, encourage myself in my certainty, put  
myself into my mortal preparation<sup>65</sup>, and by midnight look to  
hear further from me.

BERTRAM May I be bold to acquaint his grace you are gone

bout it?

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

ERTRAM I know thou'rt valiant, and to the possibility<sup>71</sup> of thy soldiership will subscribe<sup>72</sup> for thee. Farewell.

AROLLES 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 his business, which he knows is not to be done, damns<sup>76</sup> 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<sup>81</sup> him ever after.

ERTRAM Why, do you think he will make no deed<sup>82</sup> 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<sup>85</sup> lies. But we have almost embossed<sup>86</sup> him. You shall see his fall tonight; for indeed he is not for<sup>87</sup> your lordship's respect.

FIRST LORD We'll make you some sport with the fox ere we case<sup>88</sup> him. He was first smoked<sup>89</sup> by the old lord Lafew. When his disguise and he is parted, tell me what a sprat<sup>90</sup> you shall find him, which you shall see this very night.

SECOND LORD I must go look my twigs.<sup>92</sup> He shall be caught.

*To First Lord*

ERTRAM Your brother he shall go along with me.<sup>93</sup>



FIRST 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.

SECOND 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'th'wind<sup>100</sup> 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?

SECOND LORD With all my heart, my lord.

*Exeunt*

### [Act 3 Scene 7]

*running scene 13*

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*Enter Helen and Widow*

ELEN If you misdoubt<sup>1</sup> me that I am not she, know not how I shall assure you further, but I shall lose the grounds I work upon.<sup>3</sup>

WIDOW Though my estate<sup>4</sup> be fall'n, I was well born, nothing acquainted with these businesses, and would not put my reputation now in any staining act.

ELEN Nor would I wish you.

First, give me trust, the count he is my husband, and what to your sworn counsel<sup>10</sup> I have spoken so from word to word.<sup>11</sup> And then you cannot,

y<sup>12</sup> the good aid that I of you shall borrow,  
rr in bestowing it.

WIDOW I should believe you,  
or you have showed me that which well approves<sup>15</sup>  
ou're great in fortune.

*Gives a purse*

ELEN Take this purse of gold,  
nd let me buy your friendly help thus far,  
hich I will over-pay and pay again  
hen I have found it.<sup>20</sup> The count he woos your daughter,  
ays down his wanton<sup>21</sup> siege before her beauty,  
esolves to carry her: let her in fine<sup>22</sup> consent,  
s we'll direct her how 'tis best to bear<sup>23</sup> it.  
ow his important blood<sup>24</sup> will naught deny  
hat she'll demand: a ring the county<sup>25</sup> wears,  
hat downward hath succeeded in his house  
rom son to son, some four or five descents  
ince the first father wore it. This ring he holds  
most rich choice, yet in his idle fire<sup>29</sup>,  
o buy his will<sup>30</sup>, it would not seem too dear,  
owe'er repented after.

WIDOW Now I see  
he bottom<sup>33</sup> of your purpose.

ELEN You see it lawful<sup>34</sup>, then: it is no more,  
ut that your daughter, ere she seems as won,  
esires this ring; appoints him an encounter<sup>36</sup>;  
i fine, delivers me to fill the time,  
herself most chastely absent. After,

o marry her<sup>39</sup>, I'll add three thousand crowns  
o what is passed<sup>40</sup> already.

WIDOW I have yielded:

instruct my daughter how she shall persevere<sup>42</sup>,  
that time and place with this deceit so lawful  
may prove coherent.<sup>44</sup> Every night he comes  
with musics<sup>45</sup> of all sorts and songs composed  
to her unworthiness. It nothing steads<sup>46</sup> us  
to chide<sup>47</sup> him from our eaves, for he persists  
as if his life lay<sup>48</sup> on't.

ELEN Why then tonight

let us assay our plot, which, if it speed<sup>50</sup>,  
will wicked meaning in a lawful deed<sup>51</sup>,  
and lawful meaning in a lawful act,  
where both not sin, and yet a sinful fact.<sup>53</sup>  
But let's about it.

[Exeunt]

## Act 4 [Scene 1]

*running scene 14*

*Enter one of the Frenchmen [the First Lord Dumaine], with five or six other Soldiers in ambush*

RST LORD He can come no other way but by this hedge-corner.

When you **sally** upon him, speak what **terrible**<sup>2</sup> language you will: though you understand it not yourselves, no matter, for we must not seem to understand him, **unless**<sup>4</sup> some one among us, whom we must produce for an interpreter.

RST SOLDIER Good captain, let me be th'interpreter.

RST LORD Art not acquainted with him? Knows he not thy voice?

RST SOLDIER No, sir, I warrant you.

RST LORD But what **linsey-woolsey**<sup>10</sup> hast thou to speak to us **gain**?<sup>11</sup>

RST SOLDIER E'en such as you speak to me.

RST LORD He must think us some band of **strangers**<sup>13</sup> th'adversary's **entertainment**. Now he hath a **smack**<sup>14</sup> of all neighbouring languages: therefore we must every one be a man of his own **fancy**, not **to know**<sup>16</sup> what we speak one to another, **so** we seem to know, is to **know straight**<sup>17</sup> our purpose: **roughs**<sup>18</sup> language, gabble enough and good enough. As for you, interpreter, you must seem very **politic**. But **couch**<sup>19</sup>, ho! ere he comes, to **beguile**<sup>20</sup> two hours in a sleep, and then to return and swear the lies he forges.

*They hide*

*Enter Parolles*

AROLLES Ten o'clock. Within these three hours 'twill be time enough to go home. What shall I say I have done? It must be very **plausive** invention that carries **it**. They begin to **smoke**<sup>24</sup> me, and disgraces have of late knocked too often at my door. My find my tongue is too foolhardy, but my heart hath the fear of Mars before it and of his **creatures, not daring the reports**<sup>27</sup> of my tongue.

*Speaks aside to the others throughout*

FIRST LORD This is the first truth that e'er mine own tongue was guilty of.

AROLLES 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**<sup>34</sup>, and say I got them in exploit: yet eight ones will not carry it. They will say, 'Came you off with a little?' And great ones I dare not give. Wherefore, what's the **instance? Tongue, I must put you into a butter-woman's**<sup>37</sup> mouth and buy myself another **of Bajazet's mule**<sup>38</sup>, if you rattle me into these perils.

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

AROLLES I would the cutting of my garments would **serve the**<sup>42</sup> turn, or the breaking of my Spanish sword.

FIRST LORD We cannot **afford**<sup>44</sup> you so.

AROLLES Or the **baring** of my beard, and to say it was **in**<sup>45</sup> ratagem.

FIRST LORD 'Twould not do.

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

RST LORD Hardly serve.

AROLLES Though I swore I leaped from the window of the  
tadel.<sup>51</sup>

RST LORD How deep?

AROLLES Thirty fathom.<sup>53</sup>

RST LORD Three great oaths would scarce make that be  
elieved.

AROLLES I would I had any drum of the enemy's. I would  
wear I recovered it.

RST LORD You shall hear one anon.

AROLLES A drum now of the enemy's—

*Alarum within*

*The Lord and Soldiers come out of hiding*

*First Soldier will act as Interpreter*

RST LORD *Throca movousus, cargo, cargo, cargo.*

LL *Cargo, cargo, cargo, villianda par corbo, cargo.*

*They seize and blindfold Parolles*

AROLLES O, ransom, ransom! Do not hide mine eyes.

INTERPRETER *Boskos thromuldo boskos.*

AROLLES I know you are the Muskos<sup>64</sup>' regiment,

and I shall lose my life for want of language.

'there be here German, or Dane, low Dutch<sup>66</sup>,

alian, or French, let him speak to me,

ll discover<sup>68</sup> that which shall undo the Florentine.

INTERPRETER *Boskos vauvado.* I understand thee, and can speak

my tongue. *Kerelybonto.* Sir, betake thee<sup>70</sup> to thy faith, for

eventeen poniards<sup>71</sup> are at thy bosom.

AROLLES O!

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

FIRST LORD *Oscorbidulchos volivorco.*

INTERPRETER The general is content to spare thee yet,  
and, hoodwinked as thou art, will lead thee on<sup>76</sup>  
to gather<sup>77</sup> 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.

INTERPRETER But wilt thou faithfully?

PAROLLES If I do not, damn me.

INTERPRETER *Acordo linta.*  
Come on, thou art granted space.<sup>86</sup>

*Exeunt [with Parolles guarded]*

*A short alarum within*

FIRST LORD Go tell the Count Rossillion and my brother  
we have caught the woodcock, and will keep him muffled<sup>88</sup>  
till we do hear from them.

SECOND SOLDIER Captain, I will.

FIRST LORD A<sup>91</sup> will betray us all unto ourselves:  
inform on<sup>92</sup> that.

SECOND SOLDIER So I will, sir.

FIRST LORD Till then I'll keep him dark and safely locked.

*Exeunt*

**[Act 4 Scene 2]**

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*Enter Bertram and the maid called Diana*

ERTRAM They told me that your name was Fontybell.<sup>1</sup>

IANA No, my good lord, Diana.

ERTRAM Titled goddess<sup>3</sup>,  
and worth it, with addition!<sup>4</sup> But, fair soul,  
in your fine frame hath love no quality?<sup>5</sup>  
The quick<sup>6</sup> fire of youth light not your mind,  
you are no maiden, but a monument.<sup>7</sup>  
When you are dead, you should be such a one  
as you are now, for you are cold and stern,  
and now you should be as your mother was  
when your sweet self was got.<sup>11</sup>

IANA She then was honest.<sup>12</sup>

ERTRAM So should you be.

IANA No:

My mother did but duty, such, my lord,  
as you owe to your wife.

ERTRAM No more o'that.  
prithee do not strive against my vows<sup>18</sup>:  
I was compelled to her, but I love thee  
by love's own sweet constraint<sup>20</sup>, and will forever  
do thee all rights<sup>21</sup> of service.

IANA Ay, so you serve us  
ill we serve you, but when you have our roses<sup>23</sup>,  
you barely leave our thorns to prick ourselves<sup>24</sup>  
and mock us with our bareness.<sup>25</sup>

ERTRAM How have I sworn!

IANA 'Tis not the many oaths that makes the truth,



ut the plain single vow that is vowed true.  
/hat is not holy, that we swear not by,  
ut take the [high'st to](#)<sup>30</sup> witness. Then, pray you tell me:  
' I should swear by [Jove](#)<sup>31</sup>'s great attributes,  
loved you dearly, would you believe my oaths  
/hen I did love you [ill](#)? This has no [holding](#)<sup>33</sup>,  
o swear by him whom I [protest](#)<sup>34</sup> to love  
hat I will work against him: therefore your oaths  
re [words](#) and poor [conditions](#) but [unsealed](#)<sup>36</sup>,  
t least in my opinion.

ERTRAM Change [it](#)<sup>38</sup>, change it.  
e not so [holy-cruel](#)<sup>39</sup>: love is holy,  
nd my integrity ne'er knew the [crafts](#)<sup>40</sup>  
hat you do charge men with. Stand no more off,  
ut give thyself unto my [sick](#)<sup>42</sup> desires,  
[/ho](#) then [recovers](#).<sup>43</sup> Say thou art mine, and ever  
ly love as it begins shall so persèver.

IANA I see that men make ropes in such a [scar](#)<sup>45</sup>  
hat we'll forsake ourselves. Give me that ring.

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

IANA Will you not, my lord?

ERTRAM It is an [honour](#)<sup>50</sup> 'longing to our house,  
equeathèd down from many ancestors,  
/hich were the greatest [obloquy](#)<sup>52</sup> i'th'world  
i me to lose.

IANA Mine [honour's](#) such a [ring](#)<sup>54</sup>:  
ly chastity's the jewel of our house,

equethèd down from many ancestors,  
Which were the greatest obloquy i'th'world  
to me to lose. Thus your own proper<sup>58</sup> wisdom  
rings in the champion honour on my part  
against your vain assault.

ERTRAM Here, take my ring.

*Gives her a ring*

My house, mine honour, yea, my life, be thine,  
and I'll be bid<sup>63</sup> by thee.

IANA When midnight comes, knock at my chamber-window:

All order take<sup>65</sup> my mother shall not hear.

Now will I charge you in the band<sup>66</sup> of truth,

When you have conquered my yet maiden<sup>67</sup> 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 delivered:

And on your finger in the night I'll put

no other ring, that what in time proceeds<sup>72</sup>

I lay token<sup>73</sup> to the future our past deeds.

Adieu, till then. Then, fail not. You have won

wife of me, though there my hope be done.<sup>75</sup>

ERTRAM A heaven on earth I have won by wooing thee.

*[Exit]*

IANA 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<sup>81</sup> 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**<sup>83</sup>,  
**larry**<sup>84</sup> that will, I live and die a maid.  
nly in this **disguise**<sup>85</sup> I think't no sin  
o **cozen**<sup>86</sup> him that would unjustly win.

*Exit*

### [Act 4 Scene 3]

*running scene 16*

*Enter the two French Captains [the Lords Dumaine] 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**<sup>2</sup>: 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**<sup>5</sup> blame laid upon him for taking 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**<sup>8</sup> to bring happiness to him. I will tell you a thing, but you shall let dwell **darkly**<sup>10</sup> with you.

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

SECOND LORD He hath **perverted**<sup>13</sup> a young gentlewoman here in Florence, of a most chaste renown, and this night he **fleshes**<sup>14</sup> is **will** in the **spoil**<sup>15</sup> of her honour. He hath given her his **monumental** ring, and thinks himself **made**<sup>16</sup> in the unchaste composition.<sup>17</sup>

FIRST LORD Now, God **delay** our **rebellion**! As we are **ourselves**<sup>18</sup>,  
that things are we!

SECOND LORD **Merely**<sup>20</sup> our own traitors. And as in the common  
course of all treasons, we **still** see them reveal **themselves**<sup>21</sup>, till  
they **attain to** their abhorred **ends**, so **he**<sup>22</sup> that in this action  
**contrives** against his own nobility, in his **proper stream**<sup>23</sup>  
overflows himself.

FIRST LORD **Is it not meant**<sup>25</sup> damnable in us, to be trumpeters of  
our unlawful intents? We shall not then have his company  
tonight?

SECOND LORD Not till after midnight, for he is **dieted to his hour**.<sup>28</sup>

FIRST LORD That approaches **apace**.<sup>29</sup> I would gladly have him  
see his **company anatomized**<sup>30</sup>, that he might take a measure  
of his own judgements, wherein so **curiously he had set this**<sup>31</sup>  
counterfeit.

SECOND LORD We will not meddle with **him** till **he come, for his**<sup>33</sup>  
presence must be the whip of **the other**.<sup>34</sup>

FIRST LORD In the meantime, what hear you of these wars?

SECOND LORD I hear there is an **overture**<sup>36</sup> of peace.

FIRST LORD Nay, I assure you, a peace concluded.

SECOND LORD What will Count Rossillion do then? Will he  
travel **higher**<sup>39</sup>, or return again into France?

FIRST LORD I perceive by this **demand**, you are not altogether **of**<sup>40</sup>  
his council.

SECOND LORD Let it be forbid, sir! So should I be a great **deal of**<sup>42</sup>  
his act.

FIRST LORD Sir, his wife some two months since fled from his  
house. Her **pretence**<sup>45</sup> is a pilgrimage to Saint Jaques le Grand;

which holy undertaking with most austere sanctimony<sup>46</sup> 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?<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> to say is come, was faithfully confirmed by the rector<sup>54</sup> of the place.

SECOND LORD Hath the count all this intelligence?

FIRST LORD Ay, and the particular confirmations, point from point, to the full arming of the verity.<sup>57</sup>

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

FIRST LORD How mightily sometimes we make us comforts of<sup>59</sup> 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<sup>63</sup> with a shame so 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 merited<sup>68</sup> by our virtues.

*Enter a [Servant as 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<sup>71</sup> his absence. The duke hath offered<sup>72</sup> him letters of commendations

to the king.

SECOND LORD They shall be no more than **needful** there, **if**<sup>74</sup> they were **more than they can commend**.<sup>75</sup>

*Enter Count Rossillion [Bertram]*

FIRST LORD They cannot be too sweet for the king's tartness. Here's his lordship now.— How now, my lord! Is't not after midnight?

BERTRAM I have tonight **dispatched**<sup>79</sup> sixteen businesses, a month's length apiece, **by an abstract of success**<sup>80</sup>; I have **conferred with** the duke, done my adieu with his **nearest**<sup>81</sup>, married a wife, mourned for her, writ to my lady mother I am returning, **entertained my convoy**<sup>83</sup> and between these main **articles of dispatch** effected many **nicer**<sup>84</sup> needs. The last was the greatest, but that I have not ended yet.

SECOND LORD If the business be of any difficulty, and this marring your departure hence, it requires haste of your lordship.

BERTRAM I mean, the business is not ended, as fearing to **hear**<sup>89</sup> of it hereafter. But shall we have this dialogue between the fool and the soldier? Come, bring forth this counterfeit **module**, he's deceived me like a **double-meaning prophet**.<sup>92</sup>

*To Soldiers*

SECOND LORD Bring him forth.

He's sat i'th' **stocks** all night, poor **gallant**<sup>94</sup> knave.

*[Exit some Soldiers]*

BERTRAM No matter. His heels have deserved it in **usurping**<sup>95</sup> his **ours** so long. How does he **carry**<sup>96</sup> himself?

SECOND LORD I have told your lordship already, the stocks carry

im. But to answer you as you would be understood: he  
reeps like a wench that had shed<sup>99</sup> her milk, he hath confessed  
himself to Morgan, whom he supposes to be a friar, from the  
me of his remembrance to this very instant disaster<sup>101</sup> of his  
etting i'th'stocks. And what think you he hath confessed?

ERTRAM Nothing of me, has a?<sup>103</sup>

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

*Enter Parolles [blindfolded] with his Interpreter*

ERTRAM A plague upon him! Muffled? He can say nothing of  
ie. Hush, hush.

FIRST LORD Hoodman<sup>109</sup> comes! Portotartarossa.

INTERPRETER He calls for the tortures. What will you say  
ithout 'em?

AROLLES I will confess what I know without constraint.<sup>112</sup> If ye  
inch me like a pasty<sup>113</sup>, I can say no more.

INTERPRETER Bosko chimurcho.

FIRST LORD Boblibindo chicurmurco.

INTERPRETER You are a merciful general. Our general bids you  
nswer to what I shall ask you out of a note.<sup>117</sup>

AROLLES And truly, as I hope to live.

*Pretends to read*

INTERPRETER 'First demand of him how many horse<sup>119</sup>  
ie duke is strong.<sup>120</sup>' What say you to that?

AROLLES Five or six thousand, but very weak and  
nserviceable. The troops are all scattered, and the  
ommanders very poor rogues, upon my reputation and

credit and as I hope to live.

INTERPRETER Shall I set down your answer so?

PAROLLES Do. I'll [take the sacrament](#) on't, [how and which](#)<sup>126</sup> way you will.

*Bertram and the Lords speak aside throughout*

BERTRAM [All's one](#) to him. What a [past-saving](#)<sup>128</sup> 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](#)<sup>131</sup> of war in the knot of his scarf, and the practice in the [chape](#)<sup>132</sup> of his dagger.

SECOND LORD I will never trust a man again for keeping his word [clean](#)<sup>134</sup>, nor believe he can have everything in him by wearing his apparel neatly.

*To Parolles*

INTERPRETER 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](#)<sup>140</sup> he delivers it.

PAROLLES 'Poor rogues', I pray you say.

INTERPRETER Well, that's set down.

PAROLLES I humbly thank you, sir. A truth's a truth, the rogues are [marvellous](#)<sup>145</sup> poor.

*Pretends to read*

INTERPRETER 'Demand of him, of what strength they are [a-foot](#).<sup>147</sup>' What say you to that?

PAROLLES By my troth, sir, if I were to [live](#)<sup>148</sup> this present hour,



will tell true. Let me see: Spurio, a hundred and fifty:  
Sebastian, [so](#)<sup>150</sup> many: Corambus, so many: Jaques, so many:  
Miltian, Cosmo, Lodowick and Gratii, two hundred fifty  
each: mine own company, Chitopher, Vaumond, Bentii, two  
hundred fifty each. So that the [muster-file](#), [rotten and sound](#)<sup>153</sup>,  
upon my life, amounts not to fifteen thousand [poll](#)<sup>154</sup>, half of  
the which dare not shake the snow from off their [cassocks](#)<sup>155</sup>,  
lest they shake themselves to pieces.

ENTERAM What shall be done to him?

FIRST LORD Nothing, but let him have thanks. Demand of him  
his [condition](#)<sup>159</sup>, and what credit I have with the duke.

*Pretends to read*

INTERPRETER Well, that's set down. 'You shall  
demand of him, whether one Captain Dumaine be  
of th'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](#)<sup>164</sup>  
sums of gold, to corrupt him to a revolt.' What say you to  
this? What do you know of it?

PAROLLES I beseech you let me answer to the [particular](#)<sup>167</sup> of the  
[interrogatories](#)<sup>168</sup>: demand them singly.

INTERPRETER Do you know this Captain Dumaine?

PAROLLES I know him: he was a [botcher](#)'s [prentice](#)<sup>170</sup> in Paris,  
from whence he was whipped for getting the [shrieve's fool](#)<sup>171</sup>  
with child — a dumb [innocent](#)<sup>172</sup> that could  
not say [him nay](#).<sup>173</sup>

*First Lord attempts to hit Parolles*

ENTERAM Nay, by your leave, hold your hands, though I know

is brains are forfeit to the next tile that falls.<sup>175</sup>

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

AROLLES Upon my knowledge he is, and lousy.<sup>178</sup>

FIRST LORD Nay look not so upon me. We shall hear of your  
word anon.

INTERPRETER What is his reputation with the duke?

AROLLES The duke knows him for no other but a poor officer  
of mine, and writ to me this other day to turn him out  
of his band.<sup>184</sup> I think I have his letter in my pocket.

*They search his pockets*

INTERPRETER Marry, we'll search.

AROLLES In good sadness<sup>186</sup>, I do not know. Either it is there, or  
it is upon a file with the duke's other letters in my tent.

INTERPRETER Here 'tis. Here's a paper. Shall I read it to you?

AROLLES I do not know if it be it or no.

INTERPRETER Our interpreter does it well.

FIRST LORD Excellently.

*Reads*

INTERPRETER 'Dian, the count's a fool, and full of gold'—

AROLLES That is not the duke's letter, sir. That is an  
advertisement to a proper<sup>194</sup> maid in Florence, one Diana, to  
take heed of the allurements of one Count Rossillion, a foolish  
little boy, but for all that very ruttish. I pray you, sir, put it up<sup>196</sup>  
again.

INTERPRETER Nay, I'll read it first, by your favour.<sup>198</sup>

AROLLES 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<sup>202</sup> it finds.

ERTRAM Damnable both-sides<sup>203</sup> rogue!

INTERPRETER

*[Reads the] letter*

When he swears oaths, bid him drop<sup>204</sup> gold, and take it.

After he scores<sup>205</sup>, he never pays the score.

Half won is match well made, match and well make it<sup>206</sup>;

He ne'er pays after-debts, take it<sup>207</sup> before.

And say a soldier, Dian, told thee this:

Men are to mell<sup>209</sup> with, boys are not to kiss.

For count<sup>210</sup> of this, the count's a fool, I know it,

Who pays before<sup>211</sup>, but not when he does owe it.

Hence, as he vowed to thee in thine ear, Parolles.'

ERTRAM He shall be whipped through the army with this

ryme in's<sup>214</sup> forehead.

SECOND LORD This is your devoted friend, sir, the manifold<sup>215</sup>

linguist and the armipotent<sup>216</sup> soldier.

ERTRAM I could endure anything before but a cat, and now

there's a cat to me.

INTERPRETER I perceive, sir, by the general's looks, we shall be

hanged<sup>220</sup> 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.<sup>223</sup> Let me live, sir, in a dungeon, i'th' stocks,

or anywhere, so I may live.

INTERPRETER We'll see what may be done, so you confess freely:

Therefore, once more to this Captain Dumaine. You have

answered to his reputation with the duke and to his valour.  
What is his honesty?

AROLLES He will steal, sir, an [egg out of a cloister](#)<sup>229</sup>, for rapes and ravishments he parallels [Nessus](#). He [professes not](#)<sup>230</sup> keeping of oaths, in breaking 'em he is stronger than [Hercules](#).<sup>232</sup> 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](#)<sup>234</sup>, and in his sleep he does little harm, save to his bed-clothes about him. But [they](#) know his [conditions](#)<sup>235</sup> and lay him in straw. I have but little more to say, sir, of his honesty: he has everything 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.

INTERPRETER What say you to his expertness in war?

AROLLES Faith, sir, he's [led the drum before the English](#)<sup>243</sup> pagadians — to [believe](#)<sup>244</sup> him, I will not — and more of his soldieryship I know not, except, in that country he had the honour to be the officer at a place there called [Mile-end](#)<sup>246</sup>, to instruct for the [doubling of files](#).<sup>247</sup> I would do the man what honour I can, but of this I am not certain.

FIRST LORD He hath out-villained villainy so far that the rarity redeems him.

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

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

AROLLES Sir, for a [carducue](#) he will sell the [fee-simple](#)<sup>254</sup> of his

salvation, the inheritance of it, and [cut th'entail from all](#)<sup>255</sup>  
remainders, and a perpetual succession for it perpetually.

INTERPRETER What's his brother, the other Captain Dumaine?

SECOND LORD Why does he ask him of me?

INTERPRETER What's he?

AROLLES E'en a crow o'th'same nest: not altogether so great  
as the first in goodness, but greater a great deal in evil. He  
excels his brother [for](#)<sup>262</sup> a coward, yet his brother is reputed one  
of the best that is. In a retreat he outruns any [lackey](#)<sup>263</sup>; marry,  
on [coming on](#)<sup>264</sup> he has the cramp.

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

AROLLES Ay, and the [captain of his horse](#)<sup>267</sup>, Count Rossillion.

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

*Aside*

AROLLES I'll [no more](#)<sup>270</sup> drumming. A plague of all  
drummers! Only to seem to deserve well, and to [beguile the](#)<sup>271</sup>  
opposition of that lascivious young boy, the count, have I  
fallen into this danger. Yet who would have suspected an  
ambush where I was taken?

INTERPRETER There is no remedy, sir, but you must die. The  
general says, you that have so traitorously [discovered](#)<sup>276</sup> the  
secrets of your army and made such [pestiferous](#)<sup>277</sup> reports of  
men very nobly [held](#)<sup>278</sup>, can serve the world for no honest use:  
therefore you must die. Come, headsman, off with his head.

AROLLES O lord, sir, let me live, or let me see my death!

FIRST LORD That shall you, and take your leave of all your

iends. So, look about you: know you any here?

*Unblindfolds him*

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](#)<sup>286</sup> to my Lord Lafew?  
I am [for](#)<sup>287</sup> France.

FIRST LORD Good captain, will you give me a copy of the sonnet  
you writ to Diana [in](#)<sup>289</sup> behalf of the Count Rossillion? An I  
were not [a very](#)<sup>290</sup> coward, I'd compel it of you. But fare you  
well.

*Exeunt [Bertram and Lords]*

INTERPRETER You are [undone](#)<sup>292</sup>, captain — all your scarf that has  
knot on't yet.

PAROLLES Who cannot be crushed with a plot?

INTERPRETER If you could find out a country where [but](#)<sup>295</sup> women  
were that had received so much shame, you might begin an  
[impudent](#)<sup>297</sup> nation. Fare ye well, sir. I am for France too. We  
shall speak of you there.

*Exeunt [Interpreter and Soldiers]*

PAROLLES Yet am I thankful. If my heart were [great](#)<sup>299</sup>  
it would 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](#)<sup>303</sup> knows himself a braggart,  
let him fear this; for it will come to pass  
that every braggart shall be found an ass.  
Must, sword. Cool, blushes. And, Parolles, live

afest in shame. Being [fooled](#)<sup>307</sup>, by fool'ry thrive;  
here's place and means for every man alive.  
ll after them.

*Exit*

#### [Act 4 Scene 4]

*running scene 17*

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*Enter Helen, Widow and Diana*

ELEN That you may well perceive I have not wronged you,  
[ne of the greatest in the Christian world](#)<sup>2</sup>  
hall be my [surety](#)<sup>3</sup>, 'fore whose throne 'tis needful,  
re I can perfect mine intents, to kneel.  
ime was, I did him a desired office,  
ear almost as his life, [which gratitude](#)<sup>6</sup>  
[hrough](#) flinty [Tartar's](#)<sup>7</sup> bosom would peep forth,  
nd answer thanks. I duly am informed  
is grace is at Marseilles, to which place  
I have [convenient convoy](#).<sup>10</sup> You must know  
am supposed dead. The army [breaking](#)<sup>11</sup>,  
ly husband [hies him](#)<sup>12</sup> home, where, heaven aiding,  
nd by the leave of my good lord the king,  
I'll be before [our welcome](#).<sup>14</sup>

WIDOW Gentle madam,  
ou never had a servant to whose trust  
our business was more welcome.

ELEN Nor you, mistress,  
ver a friend whose thoughts more truly labour  
o recompense your love. Doubt not but heaven

hath brought me up to be your daughter's dower<sup>21</sup>,  
as it hath fated her to be my motive<sup>22</sup>  
and helper to a husband. But, O strange men,  
what can such sweet use make of what they hate,  
When saucy trusting of the cozened<sup>25</sup> thoughts  
defiles the pitchy<sup>26</sup> night, so lust doth play  
With what it loathes for that which is away.<sup>27</sup>  
But more of this hereafter. You, Diana,  
under my poor instructions yet<sup>29</sup> must suffer  
something in my behalf.

DIANA Let death and honesty<sup>31</sup>  
go with your impositions<sup>32</sup>, I am yours,  
upon<sup>33</sup> your will to suffer.

ELEN Yet<sup>34</sup>, I pray you:  
But with the word<sup>35</sup> the time will bring on summer,  
When briars shall have leaves as well as thorns,  
and be as sweet as sharp. We must away.  
Our wagon is prepared, and time revives<sup>38</sup> us:  
All's well that ends well, still the fine's<sup>39</sup> the crown;  
Whate'er the course, the end is the renown.<sup>40</sup>

*Exeunt*

## [Act 4 Scene 5]

*running scene 18*

*Enter Clown [Lavatch], Old Lady [Countess] and Lafew*

LAFEW No, no, no, your son was misled with a snipt-taffeta<sup>1</sup>  
allow there, whose villainous saffron<sup>2</sup> would have made all  
the unbaked and doughy<sup>3</sup> youth of a nation in his colour.



our<sup>4</sup> daughter-in-law had been alive at this hour, and your son here at home, more advanced by the king than by that head-tailed humble-bee<sup>6</sup> 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<sup>10</sup>, I could not have owed her a more rooted<sup>11</sup> love.

AFEW 'Twas a good lady, 'twas a good lady. We may pick a thousand salads ere we light on<sup>13</sup> such another herb.

AVATCH Indeed, sir, she was the sweet marjoram<sup>14</sup> of the salad, or rather, the herb of grace.<sup>15</sup>

AFEW They are not herbs, you knave, they are nose-herbs.<sup>16</sup>

AVATCH I am no great Nebuchadnezzar<sup>17</sup>, sir. I have not much skill in grace.<sup>18</sup>

AFEW Whether<sup>19</sup> dost thou profess thyself, a knave or a fool?

AVATCH A fool, sir, at a woman's service<sup>20</sup>, and a knave at a man's.

AFEW Your distinction?

AVATCH I would cozen the man of his wife and do his service.<sup>23</sup>

AFEW So you were a knave at his service, indeed.

AVATCH And I would give his wife my bauble, sir, to do<sup>25</sup> her service.

AFEW I will subscribe<sup>27</sup> for thee, thou art both knave and fool.

AVATCH At your service.

AFEW No, no, no.

AVATCH Why, sir, if I cannot serve you, I can serve as great a

ince as you are.

AFEW Who's that? A Frenchman?

AVATCH Faith, sir, a has an English *maine*, but his *fisnomy*<sup>34</sup> is more *hotter in France*<sup>35</sup> than there.

AFEW What prince is that?

AVATCH The *black prince*<sup>37</sup>, sir, alias the prince of darkness, alias the devil.

*Gives a purse*

AFEW *Hold thee*<sup>39</sup>, there's my purse: I give thee not this to *suggest*<sup>40</sup> thee from thy master thou talkest of. Serve him still.

AVATCH I am a *woodland*<sup>42</sup> fellow, sir, that always loved a great *fire*<sup>43</sup>, and the master I speak of ever keeps a good fire. But sure he is the *prince of the world*.<sup>44</sup> Let his nobility remain in his court. I am for the house with the *narrow gate*<sup>45</sup>, which I like to be too little for *pomp*<sup>46</sup> to enter. Some that humble themselves may, but the *many* will be too *chill* and *tender*<sup>47</sup>, and they'll be for the flowery way that leads to the broad gate and the great fire.

AFEW *Go thy ways*<sup>50</sup>, I begin to be weary of thee, and I tell thee so *before*<sup>51</sup>, because I would not fall out with thee. Go thy ways. Let my horses be well looked to, without any *tricks*.<sup>52</sup>

AVATCH If I put any tricks upon 'em, sir, they shall be *jades*'<sup>53</sup> tricks, which are their own right by the law of nature.

*Exit*

AFEW A *shrewd* knave and an *unhappy*.<sup>55</sup>

COUNTESS So a is. My lord that's *gone*<sup>56</sup> made himself much sport out of him. By his authority he remains here, which he

inks is a patent for his sauciness, and indeed he has no  
ace<sup>59</sup>, but runs where he will.

AFEW I like him well, 'tis not amiss. And I was about to tell  
ou, since I heard of the good lady's<sup>61</sup> death and that my lord  
our son was upon his return home, I moved<sup>62</sup> the king my  
aster to speak in the behalf of my daughter, which, in the  
minority of them both, his majesty, out of a self-gracious<sup>64</sup>  
emembrance did first propose.<sup>65</sup> His highness hath promised  
e to do it, and to stop up the displeasure he hath conceived  
gainst your son, there is no fitter matter. How does your  
dyship like it?

OUNTESS With very much content, my lord, and I wish it  
appily effected.

AFEW His highness comes post<sup>71</sup> from Marseilles, of as able  
ody as when he numbered<sup>72</sup> thirty. A will be here tomorrow,  
r I am deceived by him that in such intelligence<sup>73</sup> hath  
eldom failed.

OUNTESS It rejoices me that I hope I shall see him ere I die. I  
ave letters that my son will be here tonight. I shall beseech  
our lordship to remain with me till they meet together.

AFEW Madam, I was thinking with what manners I might<sup>78</sup>  
afely be admitted.

OUNTESS You need but plead your honourable privilege.<sup>80</sup>

AFEW Lady, of that I have made a bold charter<sup>81</sup>, but I thank  
y God it holds yet.

*Enter Clown [Lavatch]*

AVATCH O madam, yonder's my lord your son with a patch<sup>83</sup>  
f velvet on's face. Whether there be a scar under't or no, the

elvet **knows**<sup>85</sup>, but 'tis a goodly patch of velvet: his left cheek  
a cheek of **two pile and a half**, but his right cheek is **worn**<sup>86</sup>  
are.

AFEW A scar nobly got, or a noble scar, is a good **liv'ry**<sup>88</sup> of  
onour, so **belike**<sup>89</sup> is that.

AVATCH But it is your **carbonadoed**<sup>90</sup> face.

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

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

*Exeunt*

## **Act 5 [Scene 1]**

*running scene 19*

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*Enter Helen, Widow and Diana, with two Attendants*

ELEN But this **exceeding posting**<sup>1</sup> day and night  
must **wear**<sup>2</sup> your spirits low. We cannot help it:  
but since you have made the days and nights as one,  
do wear your gentle limbs in my affairs,  
and **bold** you do so grow in **my requital**<sup>5</sup>  
as nothing can unroot you. **In happy time.**<sup>6</sup>

*Enter a Gentle Astringer*

*Perhaps with a hawk*

this man may help me to his majesty's ear,  
if he would **spend**<sup>8</sup> his power. God save you, sir.

GENTLEMAN And you.

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

ENTLEMAN I have been sometimes there.

ELEN I do presume, sir, that you are not *fall'n*<sup>12</sup>  
rom the report that goes upon your goodness,  
nd therefore, goaded with most *sharp occasions*<sup>14</sup>  
hich lay *nice* manners by, I *put*<sup>15</sup> you to  
he use of your own virtues, for the which  
shall continue thankful.

ENTLEMAN What's your will?

ELEN That it will please you  
o give this poor *petition*<sup>20</sup> to the king,

*Shows a petition*

nd aid me with that store of power you have  
o come into his presence.

ENTLEMAN The king's not here.

ELEN Not here, sir?

ENTLEMAN Not, indeed.

he *hence removed*<sup>26</sup> last night, and with more haste  
han is his *use*.<sup>27</sup>

WIDOW Lord, how we lose our *pains!*<sup>28</sup>

ELEN All's well that ends well yet,  
hough time seem so adverse and means unfit.  
do beseech you, whither is he gone?

ENTLEMAN Marry, as I take it, to Rossillion,  
hither I am going.

ELEN I do beseech you, sir,  
ince you are *like*<sup>35</sup> to see the king before me,  
*commend* the paper to his gracious hand,

*Gives petition*

Which I presume<sup>37</sup> shall render you no blame,  
but rather make you thank your pains for it.  
I will come after you with what good speed  
your means will make us means.<sup>40</sup>

ENTLEMAN This I'll do for you.

ELEN And you shall find yourself to be well thanked,  
Whate'er falls more.<sup>43</sup> We must to horse again.  
So, go, provide.<sup>44</sup>

[Exeunt, separately]

## [Act 5 Scene 2]

*running scene 20*

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*Enter Clown [Lavatch] and Parolles*

*Gives Lavatch a letter*

PAROLLES Good Monsieur Lavache<sup>1</sup>, give my lord  
a few 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, muddled in Fortune's mood<sup>4</sup>, and  
am well somewhat strong of her strong displeasure.

LAVATCH Truly, Fortune's displeasure is but sluttish<sup>6</sup> if it smell  
so strongly as thou speakest of. I will henceforth eat no fish of  
Fortune's butt'ring. Prithee allow the wind.<sup>8</sup>

PAROLLES Nay, you need not to stop<sup>9</sup> your nose, sir. I spake but  
of a metaphor.

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

PAROLLES Pray you, sir, deliver me<sup>14</sup> this paper.

AVATCH Foh! Prithee stand away. A [paper](#)<sup>15</sup> from Fortune's [rose-stool](#)<sup>16</sup> to give to a nobleman! Look, here he comes himself.

*Enter Lafew*

Here is a [purr](#)<sup>18</sup> of Fortune's, sir, or of Fortune's cat — but not [musk-cat](#)<sup>19</sup> — that has fallen into the unclean fishpond of her displeasure, and as he says, is muddied [withal](#).<sup>20</sup> Pray you, sir, use the [carp](#)<sup>21</sup> as you may, for he looks like a poor, decayed, [ingenious](#)<sup>22</sup>, foolish, rascally knave. I do pity his distress in my [niles of comfort](#)<sup>23</sup> and leave him to your lordship.

[Exit]

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

AFEW And what would you have me to do? 'Tis too late to [are](#)<sup>27</sup> her nails now. Wherein have you played the knave with Fortune that she should scratch you, who of herself is a good body and would not have knaves thrive long under her? There's

*Gives coin*

[cardecue](#) for you. Let the [justices](#)<sup>30</sup> make you and Fortune friends; I am for other business.

*Starts to leave*

AROLLES I beseech your honour to hear me one single word.

AFEW You beg a single penny more. Come, you shall have your word.

*Gives another coin*

AROLLES My name, my good lord, is Parolles.

AFEW You beg more than 'word' then. [Cox my passion!](#)<sup>36</sup> Give me your hand. How does your drum?

AROLLES O my good lord, you were the first that found *me*.<sup>38</sup>

AFEW Was I, in *sooth*? And I was the first that *lost*<sup>39</sup> thee.

AROLLES It lies in you, my lord, to bring me *in* some *grace*<sup>40</sup>, for  
ou did bring me *out*.<sup>41</sup>

AFEW *Out upon thee*<sup>42</sup>, knave! Dost thou put upon me at  
nce both the office of God and the devil? One brings thee

*Trumpets sound*

grace and the other brings thee out. The  
ing's coming. I know by his trumpets. Sirrah, *inquire*<sup>45</sup>  
urther after me. I had talk of you last night. Though you are  
fool and a knave, you shall eat. Go to, follow.

AROLLES I praise God for you.

[*Exeunt*]

### [Act 5 Scene 3]

*running scene 20 continues*

*Flourish. Enter King, Old Lady [Countess], Lafew, the two French Lords,  
with Attendants*

ING We lost a jewel *of* her, and *our esteem*<sup>1</sup>  
/as made much poorer by it: but your son,  
s mad in folly, lacked the sense to know  
er estimation *home*.<sup>4</sup>

COUNTESS 'Tis past, my liege,  
nd I beseech your majesty to *make*<sup>6</sup> it  
*atural* rebellion, done *i'th'blade*<sup>7</sup> of youth,  
/hen oil and fire, too strong for reason's force,  
'erbears it and burns on.

ING My honoured lady,



have forgiven and forgotten all,  
though my revenges were **high bent**<sup>12</sup> upon him,  
and **watched**<sup>13</sup> the time to shoot.

**A FEW** This I must say,  
but first I beg **my pardon**<sup>15</sup>, 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**<sup>19</sup>  
of **richest**<sup>20</sup> eyes, whose words all ears took captive,  
whose dear perfection hearts that scorned to serve  
humbly called mistress.

**THE KING** Praising what is lost  
makes the remembrance dear. Well, call him hither.  
We are reconciled, and the first **view** shall **kill**<sup>25</sup>  
all repetition. Let him not ask our pardon.  
The nature of his great offence is **dead**<sup>27</sup>,  
and deeper than oblivion we do bury  
his **incensing relics**<sup>29</sup> of it. Let him approach  
**stranger**<sup>30</sup>, no offender; and inform him  
as 'tis our will he should.

**THE GENTLEMAN**<sup>32</sup> I shall, my liege.

[Exit]

To Lafew

**THE KING** What says he to your daughter? Have you  
spoken?

**A FEW** All that he is **hath reference to**<sup>35</sup> your highness.

**THE KING** Then shall we have a match. I have letters sent me

hat sets him high in fame.

*Enter Count Bertram*

*With a patch of velvet on his left cheek*

AFEW He looks well on't.

ING I am not a [day of season](#)<sup>39</sup>,  
or thou mayst see a sunshine and a hail  
me at once. But to the brightest beams  
[istracted](#)<sup>42</sup> clouds give way, so stand thou forth.  
he time is fair again.

ERTRAM My [high-repentèd blames](#)<sup>44</sup>,  
ear sovereign, pardon [to](#)<sup>45</sup> me.

ING All is [whole](#).<sup>46</sup>  
ot one word more of the [consumèd](#)<sup>47</sup> time.  
et's [take the instant by the forward top](#)<sup>48</sup>,  
or we are old, and on our [quick'st](#)<sup>49</sup> decrees  
h'inaudible and noiseless foot of time  
teals ere we can effect them. You remember  
he daughter of this lord?

ERTRAM Admiringly, my liege. At first  
[stuck](#)<sup>54</sup> my choice upon her, ere my heart  
[urst](#) make too bold a [herald](#)<sup>55</sup> of my tongue,  
[/here](#) the [impression](#) of mine eye [infixing](#)<sup>56</sup>,  
ontempt his scornful [perspective](#)<sup>57</sup> did lend me,  
[/hich](#) warped the line of every other [favour](#)<sup>58</sup>,  
corned a [fair colour](#), or [expressed](#) it [stol'n](#)<sup>59</sup>,  
[xtended or contracted](#)<sup>60</sup> all proportions  
o a most hideous [object](#).<sup>61</sup> Thence it came  
hat [she](#)<sup>62</sup> whom all men praised and whom myself,

ince I have lost, have loved, was in mine eye  
he dust that did offend it.

ING Well excused.

hat thou didst love her, strikes some [scores](#)<sup>66</sup> away  
rom the [great count](#).<sup>67</sup> But love that comes too late,  
ike a [remorseful pardon slowly carried](#)<sup>68</sup>,  
o the great sender [turns](#)<sup>69</sup> a sour offence,  
rying, 'That's good that's gone.' Our rash faults  
[lake trivial price](#)<sup>71</sup> of serious things we have,  
ot [knowing](#) them until we [know their grave](#).<sup>72</sup>  
ft our [displeasures](#)<sup>73</sup>, to ourselves unjust,  
estroy our friends and after [weep](#) their [dust](#).<sup>74</sup>  
ur own love waking cries to see what's done,  
hile shameful hate sleeps [out](#)<sup>76</sup> the afternoon.  
e this sweet Helen's [knell](#)<sup>77</sup>, and now forget her.  
end forth your amorous token for fair [Maudlin](#).<sup>78</sup>  
he [main consents](#)<sup>79</sup> are had, and here we'll stay  
o see our widower's second marriage day,  
hich better than the first, O dear heaven, bless!  
r, ere [they meet](#), in me, O nature, [cesse](#)!<sup>82</sup>  
AFEW Come on, my son, in whom my house's name  
lust be [digested](#), give a [favour](#)<sup>84</sup> from you  
o sparkle in the spirits of my daughter,  
hat she may quickly [come](#).<sup>86</sup>

*Bertram gives Lafew a ring*

y my old beard,  
nd every hair that's on't, Helen, that's dead,  
as a sweet creature: such a ring as this,

he **last** that e'er I **took her leave**<sup>90</sup> at court,  
saw upon her finger.

ERTRAM    Hers it was not.

*Lafew gives it to him*

ING    Now, pray you let me see it. For mine eye,  
/hile I was speaking, oft was fastened to't.  
his ring was mine, and when I gave it Helen,  
**bade**<sup>96</sup> her, if her fortunes ever stood  
**ecessitied to**<sup>97</sup> help, that by this token  
would relieve her. Had you that craft, to **reave**<sup>98</sup> her  
f what should **stead**<sup>99</sup> her most?

ERTRAM    My gracious sovereign,  
/owe'er it pleases you to take it so,  
he ring was never hers.

OUNTESS    Son, on my life,  
have seen her wear it, and she **reckoned**<sup>104</sup> it  
**t her life's rate.**<sup>105</sup>

AFEW    I am sure I saw her wear it.

ERTRAM    You are deceived, my lord. She never saw it.  
1 Florence was it from a **casement**<sup>108</sup> thrown me,  
/rapped in a paper, which contained the name  
f her that threw it. Noble she was, and thought  
stood **engaged**, but when I had **subscribed**<sup>111</sup>  
o mine own fortune and informed her fully  
could not **answer in that course of honour**<sup>113</sup>  
s she had made the overture, she ceased  
1 **heavy satisfaction**<sup>115</sup> and would never  
eceive the ring again.

ING Plutus<sup>117</sup> himself,  
hat knows the tinct and multiplying med'cine<sup>118</sup>,  
ath not in nature's mystery more science<sup>119</sup>  
han I have in this ring. 'Twas mine, 'twas Helen's,  
/hoever gave it you. Then, if you know  
hat you are well acquainted with yourself,  
onfess 'twas hers, and by what rough enforcement  
ou got it from her. She called the saints to surety<sup>124</sup>  
hat she would never put it from her finger,  
nless she gave it to yourself in bed,  
/here you have never come, or sent it us  
pon her great disaster.<sup>128</sup>

ERTRAM She never saw it.

ING Thou speak'st it falsely, as I love mine honour,  
nd mak'st conjectural<sup>131</sup> fears to come into me  
/hich I would fain<sup>132</sup> shut out. If it should prove  
hat thou art so inhuman — 'twill not prove so —  
nd yet I know not. Thou didst hate her deadly,  
nd she is dead, which nothing but to close  
er eyes myself could win me to believe,

↓↑Puts ring on his own finger↓↑

lore than to see this ring. Take him away.  
ly fore-past proofs, howe'er the matter fall<sup>138</sup>,  
hall tax my fears of little vanity<sup>139</sup>,  
aving vainly<sup>140</sup> feared too little. Away with him.  
/e'll sift<sup>141</sup> this matter further.

ERTRAM If you shall prove  
his ring was ever hers, you shall as easy

rove that I husbanded her bed in Florence,  
/here yet she never was.

[Exit, guarded]

*Enter a Gentleman [the Astringer]*

ING I am wrapped in dismal thinkings.

ENTLEMAN Gracious sovereign,  
/hether I have been to blame or no, I know not:  
ere's a petition from a Florentine,  
/ho hath for four or five removes come short<sup>150</sup>  
o tender<sup>151</sup> it herself. I undertook it,  
anquished<sup>152</sup> thereto by the fair grace and speech  
f the poor suppliant, who by this<sup>153</sup> I know  
here attending. Her business looks<sup>154</sup> in her  
/ith an importing visage<sup>155</sup>, and she told me,  
a sweet verbal brief<sup>156</sup>, it did concern  
our highness with herself.

ING

[Reads a] letter

Jpon his many protestations to marry me when his wife  
as dead, I blush to say it, he won me. Now is the Count  
ossillion a widower. His vows are forfeited to me, and my  
onour's paid to him. He stole from Florence, taking no<sup>161</sup>  
ave, and I follow him to his country for justice. Grant it me,  
king! In you it best lies, otherwise a seducer flourishes and  
poor maid is undone. Diana Capilet.'

AFEW I will buy me a son-in-law in a fair, and toll for this.<sup>165</sup>  
ll none of him.

ING The heavens have thought well on thee, Lafew,

o bring forth this discov'ry. Seek these [suits](#).<sup>168</sup>  
o speedily and bring again the count.

*Enter Bertram [guarded]*

am [afraid](#)<sup>170</sup> the life of Helen, lady,  
/as [foully snatched](#).<sup>171</sup>

COUNTESS Now, justice on the doers!

BERTRAM I wonder, sir, [sith](#)<sup>173</sup> wives are monsters to you,  
and [that](#) you [fly them as you swear them lordship](#)<sup>174</sup>,  
yet you desire to marry.— What woman's that?

*Enter Widow [and] Diana*

DIANA I am, my lord, a wretched Florentine,  
[erived](#)<sup>177</sup> 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](#)<sup>182</sup>, without your remedy.

BERTRAM 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](#)<sup>186</sup> upon your wife?

BERTRAM She's none of mine, my lord.

DIANA If you shall marry,  
you give away [this hand](#)<sup>189</sup>, and that is mine,  
you give away heaven's vows, and those are mine,  
you give away myself, which is known mine,  
or I by vow am so [embodied yours](#)<sup>192</sup>,  
that she which marries you must marry me,

ither both or none.

*To Bertram*

AFEW Your reputation comes too short for my  
aughter. You are no husband for her.

ERTRAM My lord, this is a [fond](#)<sup>197</sup> and desp'rate creature,  
/hom sometime I have laughed with. Let your highness  
ay a more noble thought upon mine honour  
han for to think that I would sink it here.

ING Sir, for my thoughts, [you have them ill to friend](#)<sup>201</sup>  
ill your deeds [gain them](#)<sup>202</sup>: fairer prove your honour  
han in my thought it lies.

IANA Good my lord,  
sk him upon his oath, if he does think  
e had not my virginity.

ING What say'st thou to her?

ERTRAM She's [impudent](#)<sup>208</sup>, my lord,  
nd was a common [gamester](#)<sup>209</sup> to the camp.

IANA He does me wrong, my lord. If I were so,  
e might have bought me at a common price.  
o not believe him. O, behold this ring,

*Shows a ring*

/hose high respect and rich [validity](#)<sup>213</sup>  
id lack a [parallel](#).<sup>214</sup> Yet for all that  
e gave it to a [commoner](#)<sup>215</sup> o'th'camp,  
'I be one.

OUNTESS He blushes, and 'tis [hit](#).<sup>217</sup>  
[f](#)<sup>218</sup> six preceding ancestors, that gem,  
onferred by [testament](#) to [th'sequent issue](#)<sup>219</sup>,



hath it been [owed](#)<sup>220</sup> and worn. This is his wife,  
that ring's a thousand proofs.

ING Methought you said

you saw one here in court could witness it.

IANA I did, my lord, but loath am to produce  
so bad an [instrument](#)<sup>225</sup>: his name's Parolles.

AFFEW I saw the man today, if man he be.

ING Find him, and bring him hither.

*[Exit an Attendant]*

ERTRAM What of him?

He's [quoted for](#) a most [perfidious](#)<sup>229</sup> slave  
[With](#) all the [spots](#) o'th'world [taxed](#) and [deboshed](#)<sup>230</sup>,  
whose nature sickens [but](#)<sup>231</sup> to speak a truth.  
Can I [or that or this for](#)<sup>232</sup> what he'll utter,  
that will speak anything?

ING She hath that ring of yours.

ERTRAM I think she has; certain it is I liked her,  
and [boarded](#) her i'th' [wanton](#)<sup>236</sup> way of youth.  
He [knew her distance](#)<sup>237</sup> and did angle for me,  
[ladding](#)<sup>238</sup> my eagerness with her restraint,  
as all impediments in [fancy's](#)<sup>239</sup> course  
are motives of more fancy. And in fine,  
her [insuite](#) cunning, with her [modern](#)<sup>241</sup> grace,  
[subdued me](#) to her [rate](#)<sup>242</sup>: she got the ring,  
and I had that which any inferior might  
at market-price have bought.

IANA I must be patient.

you, that have [turned](#)<sup>246</sup> off a first so noble wife,

lay justly [diet](#)<sup>247</sup> me. I pray you yet —  
ince you lack virtue, I will lose a husband —  
end for your ring, I will return it home,  
nd give me mine again.

ERTRAM I have it not.

ING What ring was yours, I pray you?

IANA Sir, much like the same upon your finger.

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

IANA And this was it I gave him, being abed.

ING The story then [goes](#)<sup>256</sup> false, you threw it him  
ut of a casement.

IANA I have spoke the truth.

*Enter Parolles*

ERTRAM My lord, I do confess the ring was hers.

ING You [boggle shrewdly](#), every feather [starts](#)<sup>260</sup> you.  
this the man you speak of?

IANA Ay, my lord.

*To Parolles*

ING Tell me, sirrah — but tell me true, I charge you,  
ot fearing the displeasure of your master,  
hich on your [just proceeding](#)<sup>265</sup> I'll keep off —  
[y](#)<sup>266</sup> him and by this woman here what know you?

AROLLES So please your majesty, my master hath been an  
onourable gentleman. [Tricks](#)<sup>268</sup> he hath had in him, which  
entlemen have.

ING Come, come, to th'purpose: did he love this woman?

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

ING How, I pray you?

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

ING How is that?

AROLLES He loved her, sir, and loved her not.<sup>275</sup>

ING As thou art a knave, and no knave. What an equivocal companion<sup>277</sup> is this!

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

A FEW He's a good drum, my lord, but a naughty<sup>279</sup> orator.

IANA Do you know he promised me marriage?

AROLLES Faith, I know more than I'll speak.

ING But wilt thou not speak all thou knowest?

AROLLES 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<sup>285</sup> and I know not what. Yet I was in that credit with them<sup>286</sup> at that time that I knew of their going to bed, and of other motions<sup>288</sup>, as promising her marriage, and things which would derive<sup>289</sup> me ill will to speak of: therefore I will not speak that I know.

ING Thou hast spoken all already, unless thou canst say they are married. But thou art too fine<sup>292</sup> in thy evidence: therefore stand aside. This ring, you say, was yours?

IANA Ay, my good lord.

ING Where did you buy it? Or who gave it you?

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

ING Who lent it you?

IANA It was not lent me neither.

ING Where did you find it, then?

IANA I found it not.

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

IANA I never gave it him.

AFEW This woman's an *easy glove*, my lord: she *goes off*<sup>304</sup>  
and on *at pleasure*.<sup>305</sup>

ING This ring was mine, I gave it his first wife.

IANA It might be yours or hers, for *aught*<sup>307</sup> I know.

ING 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.

IANA I'll never tell you.

ING Take her away.

IANA I'll *put in*<sup>314</sup> bail, my liege.

ING I think thee now some common *customer*.<sup>315</sup>

IANA By Jove, *if ever I knew*<sup>316</sup> man, 'twas you.

ING Wherefore hast thou accused him all this while?

IANA 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.

*Points to Lafew*

ING She does abuse our ears. To prison with her.

IANA Good mother, fetch my bail.— Stay, royal sir.

*[Exit Widow]*

the jeweller that *owes*<sup>325</sup> the ring is sent for,  
and he shall *surety* me. But *for*<sup>326</sup> this lord

Who hath abused me, as he knows himself,  
though yet he never harmed me, here I **quit**<sup>328</sup> 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**<sup>332</sup>,  
and now behold the meaning.

*Enter Helen and Widow*

WIDOW Is there no exorcist  
**anguish** the **truer office**<sup>335</sup> of mine eyes?  
Isn't real that I see?

ELEN No, my good lord,  
This is but the **shadow**<sup>338</sup> of a wife you see,  
The name and not the thing.

ERTRAM Both, both. O, pardon!

ELEN O my good lord, when I was **like**<sup>341</sup> this maid,  
I found you wondrous kind. There is your ring,  
And, look you, here's your letter. This it says:

*Shows letter*

When from my finger you can get this ring  
And are by me with child', etc. This is done:  
Will you be mine, now you are doubly won?

ERTRAM If she, my liege, can make me **know**<sup>347</sup> this clearly,  
I'll love her dearly, ever, ever dearly.

ELEN If it appear not plain and prove untrue,  
**readily divorce**<sup>350</sup> step between me and you!  
O my dear mother, do I see you living?

ERTRAM Mine eyes smell onions. I shall weep anon:

*To Parolles*

ood Tom Drum, lend me a [handkercher](#).<sup>353</sup> So. I  
rank thee. [Wait on](#) me home, I'll [make sport](#)<sup>354</sup> with thee.  
et thy [court'sies](#)<sup>355</sup> alone, they are scurvy ones.  
ING Let us from point to point this story know,  
o make the [even](#)<sup>357</sup> truth in pleasure flow.—

*To Diana*

'thou be'st yet a fresh uncroppèd flower,  
hooose thou thy husband, and I'll pay thy dower,  
or I can guess that by thy honest aid  
hou kept'st a wife herself, thyself a maid.—  
f that and all the [progress more and less](#)<sup>362</sup>  
[esolvedly](#)<sup>363</sup> more leisure shall express.  
ll yet seems well, and if it end so [meet](#)<sup>364</sup>,  
he bitter [past](#)<sup>365</sup>, more welcome is the sweet.

*Flourish*

### **Epilogue]**

he king's a beggar now the play is done.  
ll is well ended if this suit be won,  
hat you [express content](#)<sup>368</sup>, which we will pay  
/ith [strife](#) to please you, day [exceeding](#)<sup>369</sup> day.  
[urs be your patience then, and yours our parts](#)<sup>370</sup>,  
[our gentle hands lend us, and take our hearts](#).<sup>371</sup>

*Exeunt*

## TEXTUAL NOTES

F = First Folio text of 1623, the only authority for the play  
F2 = a correction introduced in the Second Folio text of 1632  
F3 = a correction introduced in the Third Folio text of 1663–64  
F4 = a correction introduced in the Fourth Folio text of 1685  
Ed = a correction introduced by a later editor  
SD = stage direction  
SH = speech heading (i.e. speaker's name)

**List of parts** = Ed

**.1.1 SH COUNTESS** = Ed. F = *Mother* **3 SH BERTRAM** = Ed. F = *Ros.* **122 got** = F2. F = *goe* **148 wear** = Ed. F = *were* **159 traitress** = F2. F = *Traitoresse*

**.2.4 SH FIRST LORD** = Ed. F = *1.Lo.G.* **19 SH SECOND LORD** = Ed. F = *2.Lo.E* **23 Rossillion** = F2. F = *Rosignoll*

**.3.2 SH REYNALDO** = Ed. F = *Ste.* **11 SH LAVATCH** = Ed. F = *Clo.* **16 I** = F2. F = *w* **22 bairns spelled** *barnes in F* **67 F omits this line, but prints 'bis' (Latin for 'twice') at the end of the preceding line** **78 ere** = Ed. F = *ore* **100 Dian no queen** = Ed. F = *Queene* **114 rightly** = Ed. F = *righlie* **164 t'one** = F2. F = *'ton tooth* **193 intenable** = F2. F = *intemible* **228 Haply spelled** *Happily in F* **241 and** = F2. F = *an*

**.1.6 SH FIRST LORD** = Ed. F = *Lord. G.* **19 SH SECOND LORD** = Ed. F = *L.G.* **28 SH SECOND LORD** = Ed. F = *2.Lo.E.* **45 with his cicatrice** = Ed. F = *his sicatrice, with* **65 fee** = Ed. F = *see* **100 SD Enter Helen** = Ed. *One line later in F* **165 impostor** = F3. F = *Impostrue* **185 nay** = Ed. F = *ne* **205 heaven** = Ed. F = *helpe*

**.2.1 SH COUNTESS** = Ed. F = *Lady.* (*F also uses Count., Lad., Old La. and La.*) **54 An** = Ed. F = *And* **59 legs** = F2. F = *lelegs*

- .3.1 SH LAFEW = Ed. F = *Ol. Laf.* 96 **her** = F2. F = heere 133 **it is** = F2. F = is is 211 **thou'rt** = F3. F = th'ourt 263 SD **Enter Count Rossillion** = Ed. *One line earlier in F* 288 **detested** = Ed. F = detected
- .5.17 Ay, 'sir', he 'Sir' 's = Ed. F = I sir, hee sirs 26 **End** = Ed. F = And 28 **one** = Ed. F = on 30 **heard** = F2. F = hard
- .1.11 SH SECOND LORD = Ed. F = *French E.* 20 SH FIRST LORD = Ed. F = *Fren. G.* 27 **th'field** = F2. F = th the field
- .2.8 **sold** = F3. F = hold 18 **E'en** = Ed. F = In
- .4.1 SH COUNTESS = Ed. *Not in F* 4 SH REYNALDO = Ed. *Not in F* 7 **have** = F2. F = *hane* 18 SH COUNTESS = Ed. *Not in F* 23 SH REYNALDO = Ed. F = Ste.
- .5.0 SD *Diana* = Ed. F = *Violenta* 30 **are you** = F2. F = are 31 **le** = Ed. F = la
- .6.1 SH SECOND LORD = Ed. F = *Cap. E.* 3 SH FIRST LORD = Ed. F = *Cap. G.* 30 **his** = Ed. F = this 31 **ore** = Ed. F = ours
- .7.22 **Resolves** = F2. F = Resolve 38 **After** = F. F2 = After this 46 **steads** = F4. F = steeds
- .1.1 SH FIRST LORD = F (1 Lord E.). Lo.E *for remainder of scene, perhaps because Shakespeare has forgotten that elsewhere first lord is G and second is E* 6 **captain** = F3. F = Captaiue 86 **art** = F3. F = are
- .2.45 **scar spelled** scarre in F
- .3.128 All's ... **him** *assigned to Parolles in F* 219 **the** = F2. F = your 254 **cardecue** = F2. F = Cardceue
- .4.18 **you** = F4. F = your
- .2.1 **Monsieur** = Ed. F = Mr 29 **under her** = F2. F = vnder
- .3.67 **count spelled** compt in F 117 **Plutus** = Ed. F = *Platus* 139 **tax** = F2. F = taze 158 SH KING = Ed. *Not in F* 173 **sith** = Ed. F = sir 176 SD *Diana* = Ed. F = *Diana, and Parolles* 241 **cunning** = Ed. F = comming 345 **are** = Ed. F = is 369 **strife** = F2. F = *strift*



## SCENE-BY-SCENE ANALYSIS

### ACT 1 SCENE 1

**Lines 1–74:** The widowed Countess of Rossillion is saying goodbye to her son, Bertram, who has been summoned by the King of France, his legal guardian. Lafew reports that the virtuous King is very ill and has given up his doctors' attempts to cure him of a painful fistula. The Countess laments that Helen's father, the renowned physician, Gerard de Narbon, is dead, believing that his skill would have cured the King. She is full of praise for Helen, who was entrusted to the Countess' care after her father's death. Helen is weeping. The Countess offers her son advice on how to behave at court, wishes him well and leaves. Bertram asks Helen to comfort and look after his mother and then departs with Lafew.

**Lines 75–215:** Now alone, Helen confides that her tears are not for her father but for the departure of Bertram whom she loves. She says she cannot live without him but she might as well "love a bright particular star" and think to marry that as Bertram since "he is so above me." She's tormented by her love for one who is her social superior. Despite her pain, she enjoyed seeing him all the time and drawing a picture of him in her heart. Now she has only these "relics" to remember him by. She sees Bertram's friend Parolles and says that even though she knows he's a coward and a liar she likes him for Bertram's sake. He asks her if she's thinking about "virginity" and they conduct a bawdy exchange about its merits with Helen defending it and Parolles believing it overrated. She turns the conversation obliquely to Bertram and her wishes. Parolles is called away and Helen accuses him of cowardice. He advises her to get a husband. Once he's gone, Helen argues in a

soliloquy that an individual's fate lies in their own hands. She has a plan relating to the King and is determined to carry it through.

## ACT 1 SCENE 2

The King reports that Florence and Siena are at war but are equally matched. France is not going to aid the Florentines but French knights will be allowed to fight on either side if they choose. Bertram, Lafew, and Parolles arrive. The King welcomes them, praising Bertram's late father who was an old friend and regretting his own ill health, asking how long ago Bertram's father's doctor (Helen's late father) died, believing that he might have cured him.

## ACT 1 SCENE 3

**Lines 1–111:** The Countess and Reynaldo the Steward are about to discuss Helen when the Countess notices the Clown Lavatch. He explains that he wants to get married; his reasons are desires of the flesh, repentance, and to make “friends.” He goes on to offer a paradoxical justification for adultery and the Countess says she'll speak to him later. She tells him to ask Helen to come to her and Lavatch sings a song about Helen of Troy. The Countess complains about his corruption of the song and abuse of women and sends him again for Helen. When Lavatch is gone, Reynaldo explains how he recently overheard Helen saying that she loves Bertram and feels bitter that the social distance between them means they can never marry. The Countess says she is not surprised and thanks Reynaldo for his “honest care” as he leaves.

**Lines 112–252:** As Helen enters, the Countess exclaims in an aside, “Even so it was with me when I was young” and she goes on to register her sympathy for Helen. She calls herself Helen's “mother” but Helen rejects the idea. When asked her reason, she's confused, saying she can't be Bertram's sister, she's too humble, and he mustn't be her brother. The Countess says that Helen could be her daughter-in-law then. Helen's reaction assures her that she has discovered the secret of her love for Bertram. Helen is reluctant to

confess but the Countess is determined to learn the truth. Helen admits that she loves her son and begs the Countess' pardon but says she cannot help it—her love does Bertram no harm. The Countess then asks why she wants to go to Paris. Helen admits that she believes she can cure the King, having inherited her father's skill. The Countess gives her blessing and offers her aid for the enterprise.

## ACT 2 SCENE 1

**Lines 1–63:** The King is saying goodbye to the young lords going to fight in the Italian wars. He encourages them to fight bravely and be honorable and warns them against love. As the King goes aside to speak with the lords, Bertram complains that he isn't allowed to go—the King's told him he's "Too young" and he can go "the next year." The other lords sympathize. Parolles recalls his previous experiences of war and, telling Bertram to be "more expressive" with his goodbyes to them, they go off.

**Lines 64–223:** Lafew tells the King that a young woman has arrived who believes she can cure him. The King agrees to see her. Helen enters and Lafew leaves them alone. Helen explains that she's the only child of Gerard de Narbon and that on his death he left her his secret medical recipes. The King is initially reluctant but Helen eventually convinces him to let her try, guaranteeing that he will be cured within forty-eight hours and if he isn't, she's prepared to die. If she succeeds she asks only that she may be allowed to choose her own husband, promising not to choose one of royal blood. The King agrees to her terms.

## ACT 2 SCENE 2

A short comic scene between the Countess and Lavatch, in which he boasts that he has an answer for all questions and occasions and she goes along with him, playing his stooge. His fit-all response turns out to be "O lord, sir!" Finally she sends him off with a letter for Helen and greetings to Bertram.

## ACT 2 SCENE 3

**Lines 1–149:** Lafew, Bertram, and Parolles are discussing the King's recovery in terms of miracle versus science. The King, now cured, enters with Helen. He confirms the bargain they struck and has his young lords line up for Helen to choose a husband. She rejects the other young men and selects Bertram who is shocked and resentful, complaining that he wishes to choose his own wife. He knows Helen well and believes marriage to her would bring him social disgrace. The King says if that's his only objection, he can ennoble her, and goes on to point out that she is "young, wise, fair," all qualities that breed "honour," which should be derived from the individual's acts rather than noble ancestry.

**Lines 150–260:** When she realizes that Bertram doesn't want to marry her, Helen offers to give up the agreement, but the King insists, believing his own "honour" is "at the stake." Bertram submits to his authority and agrees to the marriage. Everyone but Parolles and Lafew leaves to witness the ceremony. Lafew compliments Parolles' "lord and master" on his "recantation," by agreeing to the King's wishes. Parolles objects to these terms to describe himself and says he'd challenge Lafew for insulting him if he weren't so old. Lafew now realizes Parolles is a fool, which he'd suspected from his showy clothes and, continuing to insult him, leaves. Parolles vows he'll be revenged, however old and however much a lord Lafew is, when the opportunity presents itself. Lafew returns to say that Bertram is married and Parolles now has a "new mistress." Parolles, however, claims that while Bertram is his "good lord," he serves the one "above," but Lafew says it's not God he serves but the devil. He tells Parolles he's a worthless "vagabond" and leaves.

**Lines 261–96:** Bertram returns, complaining that he's ruined and determined that even though he's married to Helen, he'll go to the wars and "never bed her." Parolles encourages him in his decision, calling France a "dog-hole" and saying that to gain honor a man

should go to the wars to fight rather than hug his “kicky-wicky [wife] here at home.” Bertram says he’ll send Helen back to his mother, telling her how much he hates Helen, and spend the money given him by the King to equip himself for the war, since war is preferable to a “dark house” and “detested wife.” Parolles tells him it’s the right decision: “A young man married is a man that’s marred.”

#### ACT 2 SCENE 4

Helen is reading the letter delivered by Lavatch from the Countess. He gives a riddling response to Helen’s inquiries about her. Parolles arrives and after a comic exchange with Lavatch tells Helen that she is to return to the Countess at once since Bertram is detained on “very serious business.” She says she’ll do whatever Bertram wishes.

#### ACT 2 SCENE 5

**Lines 1–51:** Lafew is discussing Parolles with Bertram who assures him that Parolles is a “valiant” soldier. Lafew is unconvinced and continues to mock Parolles. Bertram asks if Helen is going away as he has ordered her to and Parolles confirms that she is. Bertram says he will leave for the wars himself then. Parolles denies that there is any ill feeling between himself and Lafew and Bertram is convinced that Lafew is mistaken in his estimate of his friend. Lafew’s opinion is that “The soul of this man is his clothes” though, and he warns Bertram not to trust him in important matters. Parolles dismisses Lafew as an “idle lord” and Bertram agrees. Seeing Helen coming toward him, Bertram exclaims: “Here comes my clog.”

**Lines 52–98:** Helen says she has spoken to the King who has given her permission to leave, but he wishes to speak to Bertram. Bertram says he’ll do as he asks. He then excuses himself, saying he wasn’t prepared for “such a business” and is “unsettled.” He asks her to go home and gives her a letter for his mother. He’ll see her in two days. She repeats that she knows she isn’t worthy but would ask a small thing of him. She changes her mind and then says, “Strangers and

foes do sunder, and not kiss,” but he tells her to hurry. After she’s gone, he vows he’ll never go home while he can “shake [his] sword or hear the drum.”

### ACT 3 SCENE 1

The Duke of Florence has explained the cause of the war to the two French lords. They agree that it seems a just war on his part but cannot say why the French king refused to ally France with Florence, however they are sure that the young French knights will all want to fight with him. The Duke says they will be welcome and he will honor them.

### ACT 3 SCENE 2

**Lines 1–29:** Lavatch has told the Countess about recent events in Paris. She’s delighted with the way things have turned out, except that Bertram hasn’t returned with Helen. Lavatch describes him as “a very melancholy man.” The Countess reads the letter from her son while Lavatch explains that he no longer wishes to marry, having seen the women at court. He leaves and, now alone, the Countess reads Bertram’s letter aloud in which he says that he’s “wedded” but not “bedded” Helen and never intends to. He has “run away” and wants her to know the truth from him first. She’s disgusted by his impetuous, immature behavior, which shows contempt for the King’s favor and Helen’s virtue.

**Lines 30–64:** Lavatch returns to tell the Countess that Helen and two lords have returned with bad news. Helen says Bertram has run away and the lords confirm that he has gone to fight for the Duke of Florence. Helen relates Bertram’s letter to her which says he’ll never be her husband until she can “get the ring upon my finger” and prove that she’s pregnant by him: “show me a child begotten of thy body that I am father to.” The Countess tells Helen to cheer up—half the griefs are hers since he’s her son, but now she washes her hands of him and Helen is her only child.

**Lines 65–132:** The Countess inquires if Bertram has gone to Florence to be a soldier and the lords confirm it and assure her that the Duke of Florence will honor him. Helen bitterly quotes another line from Bertram's letter which says, "Till I have no wife I have nothing in France." The lords try to make light of the words, but the Countess exclaims that there's nothing in France too good for him except Helen, who deserves a lord that twenty such "rude boys" might serve. She asks who is with Bertram, if it's Parolles, and when the lords admit it is, calls him "A very tainted fellow, and full of wickedness." He is a bad influence on Bertram. She gives them a message for her son, to say that he can never win "The honour that he loses" by his sword. She asks them to take a letter from her. Alone, Helen repeats Bertram's words and is shocked that her presence has driven him away to war, where he may be hurt or killed. Fearful for his safety, she decides that she must leave France that night.

### ACT 3 SCENE 3

The Duke of Florence promotes Bertram to "general of our horse." Bertram says it is too great an honor but he'll try to live up to it. The Duke wishes him well and he says he will follow Mars, love war and hate love.

### ACT 3 SCENE 4

The Countess questions why Reynaldo took the letter from Helen, since he must have known what she would do. She asks him to read it again. In her letter Helen says she has decided to tread the pilgrim way of Saint Jaques to repent her sin of "Ambitious love" and begs the Countess to write that her own departure has brought Bertram back safe from the war. She asks the Countess to beg Bertram's forgiveness. He is too good to die and she would prefer her own death to set him free. The Countess says Reynaldo should have brought her the letter last night so that Helen could be persuaded against this course of action, but he replies that Helen has written that pursuit would be in vain. The Countess does not believe her son

—“this unworthy husband”—can thrive except through Helen’s prayers. She asks Reynaldo to write to Bertram telling him of Helen’s worth and her departure, in the hope that he may return and Helen may also out of “pure love.” She cannot say which of the two she loves best and is overcome with sorrow.

#### ACT 3 SCENE 5

**Lines 1–80:** The Widow and her daughter, Diana, are discussing the French count’s valor in the war. Mariana warns her against him and the Widow explains how she has been “solicited” by his friend. Mariana says she knows who Diana means, “One Parolles,” a “filthy officer,” and again warns Diana to beware of them. Diana reassures her that she has no need to worry on her account. Helen enters, disguised as a pilgrim, asking where the “palmer” (pilgrim) lodge, and the Widow confirms it’s at her house. They guess she’s from France and tell her that one of her countrymen has fought valiantly in the war and name the Count of Rossillion. Helen says she knows him by name only. They report that he left France because he had been married against his will and ask Helen if she knows anything about it. Helen says she knows the lady and Diana says that Parolles speaks “but coarsely of her.” Helen says the lady is chaste and honest and the women pity her. The Widow says her daughter could do the lady a “shrewd” (malicious) turn if she chose and Helen guesses that he has tried to seduce Diana. The Widow says her daughter is able to defend herself against his advances.

**Lines 81–112:** Bertram, Parolles, and the whole army pass across the stage. As they parade by, the Widow points out who is who and Diana points to Bertram. She asks Helen whether he is not “a handsome gentleman” and Helen replies, “I like him well.” They point out Parolles—“That jackanapes with scarves”—who is muttering about “Los[ing] our drum!” When they have passed by the Widow says she will show Helen where she is to lodge. Helen thanks her and invites mother and daughter to eat with her, at her



expense, and she will give Diana some advice. They agree and go off together.

#### ACT 3 SCENE 6

The two French lords are trying to convince Bertram that he is deceived about Parolles, who is nothing but a coward and a liar. Bertram wonders how it can be proved and the French lords hatch a plot for him to go and recover his drum. They meanwhile will capture and blindfold him, pretending to be the enemy, and they are convinced that if Bertram is present at his interrogation, he'll soon change his opinion of his friend. They convince Bertram to encourage Parolles to attempt to recover the drum. Parolles enters still complaining about the loss of the drum and volunteers to go and get it back. One of the lords goes after Parolles while the other goes with Bertram to see Diana, whose only "fault" he says is that "she's honest."

#### ACT 3 SCENE 7

Helen has explained her true identity to the Widow, who explains that though she's poor, she's honest and was "well born." Helen reassures her that she will not be involved in anything that might damage her or Diana's reputation but begs their help in winning her husband. She wants Diana to ask Bertram for his ring and then to make an assignation with him, which she herself will keep rather than Diana. Helen has already given them money and agrees to give Diana a further "three thousand crowns" when she marries. The Widow agrees, and Helen justifies the deceit as "wicked meaning in a lawful deed / And lawful meaning in a lawful act."

#### ACT 4 SCENE 1

**Lines 1–59:** The French lord and soldiers plan to trap Parolles. They must speak in some "terrible language" so that he can't understand them. One of the soldiers, whose voice Parolles doesn't know, volunteers to act as "interpreter." Parolles enters, meditating with himself what he will say when he returns. He fears that his tongue

has been “too foolhardy” and has run away with him but he is too frightened to carry out his boasts. He cannot understand how he volunteered for this mission, which they all knew was impossible. He will have to pretend to have been hurt, but they’ll scorn small injuries and he daren’t give himself larger ones. He decides he’ll have to keep his tongue quiet in future if it gets him into trouble. Parolles works through a list of the things he might do to prove that he’s been wounded, dismissing each. The soldiers meanwhile comment in satirical asides on his character.

**Lines 60–94:** An “Alarum” (call to arms) sounds and the soldiers jump and blindfold a terrified Parolles. They talk nonsense to him. He says he’ll tell them what he knows and the soldier who volunteered to be “interpreter” conducts a comic dialogue, pretending to interpret their gobbledygook. He says he’ll tell them “all the secrets of our camp.” They lead him off still blindfolded and send for Bertram to witness his interrogation.

## ACT 4 SCENE 2

**Lines 1–46:** Bertram is trying to persuade Diana that she should sleep with him, arguing that virginity is no use to the dead, that she should be like her mother, when Diana was conceived. Diana counters that her mother was doing her duty since she was married and that Bertram owes such a duty to his wife. He objects that he was forced to marry against his will but it’s Diana he loves and vows he will always love and serve her. Diana says that men say that to gain their sexual desires but then such vows mean nothing. Bertram continues to try to convince her to lose her virginity to him but she refuses him, saying that men only try to trap women. Then she asks for his ring.

**Lines 47–86:** Bertram says he can’t give her the ring since it’s a family heirloom and it would be shameful to lose it. Diana counters his argument, saying that her honor’s “such a ring,” that her “chastity’s the jewel of our house,” and that it would be equally shameful to lose that. He is persuaded and gives her the ring and

vows his “house,” “honour,” and “life” are all hers and he’ll do what she asks. She tells him to come to her at midnight. After giving him her virginity, he can only remain one hour and he must not speak to her. She will explain her reasons when his ring is returned to him and she will give him a ring which will be a token of past deeds in the future. She ambiguously claims that he has “won / A wife of me.” He believes he has won “A heaven on earth” and leaves. Diana reflects that her mother told her just what he’d say and do and for herself she’d rather stay single; however, she doesn’t think it’s a sin to deceive him in this way since he would cheat her.

#### ACT 4 SCENE 3

**Lines 1–68:** The French lords are discussing Bertram and his reaction to a letter from his mother. They say he is blamed for his treatment of Helen which has displeased the king. The first lord confides how Bertram has seduced “a young gentlewoman” in Florence and given her his ring. He will be back after midnight and they decide to postpone their interrogation of Parolles till then so that Bertram can see for himself how poor his judgment has been. In the meanwhile, peace has been concluded between the combatants. They question what Bertram will do now, whether he will continue his travels or return to France. He has been told of Helen’s flight and pilgrimage to Saint Jaques and that she is now dead. They think it a pity that he will be glad of such news and reflect on the paradox that his valor as a soldier is countermanded by his domestic shame, reflecting further that “The web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together.”

**Lines 69–106:** Bertram’s servant appears and they ask where his master is. He replies that he is saying farewell to the Duke of Florence since he is going to France in the morning. Bertram then enters and explains that he has been busy saying farewell to the Duke and his friends, burying and mourning a wife, writing to his mother, organizing his return, and “many nicer deeds,” concluding that the last was the “greatest” but isn’t yet finished. He’s now ready

for the “dialogue between the fool and the soldier.” Parolles, who has been in the stocks all night, is sent for. He has been weeping like a woman and has confessed everything right up to the present. Bertram is concerned about what Parolles has said of him.

**Lines 107–309:** They interrogate the still-blindfolded Parolles in a comic nonsense language with one soldier interpreting throughout. Parolles immediately betrays all the secrets of the army. Bertram is shocked and disgusted by his former friend and mentor’s performance. They search him for letters and find a “sonnet” from Parolles to Diana about Bertram, calling him a “dangerous and lascivious boy” and advising her not to trust him. They threaten him with hanging and Parolles begs for his life, to live under any conditions. They ask him about the characters of the French lords and of Bertram and he betrays and insults them all. They finally remove his blindfold and Parolles sees that he has been duped and asks plaintively, “Who cannot be crushed with a plot?” They leave him promising to reveal his impudence in France. Parolles is undaunted, claiming he doesn’t care. He’s glad and won’t be a captain any longer. He’ll just be himself: “Simply the thing I am / Shall make me live.”

#### ACT 4 SCENE 4

Helen assures the Widow and Diana that she has not wronged them and says that they must go and kneel before the King who is at Marseille. They willingly agree to do as she asks. Helen reflects on the strangeness of men who can “such sweet use make of what they hate.” She regrets that Diana will have more to suffer for her sake but believes that her end is justified.

#### ACT 4 SCENE 5

Lafew and the Countess are discussing recent events with Lavatch present. Lafew claims that Bertram was led astray by Parolles. The Countess says her grief is for the death of Helen whom she could not have loved more if she’d been Helen’s real mother. Lafew and

Lavatch continue a conversation full of the Clown's witty banter until Lafew sends him away. The Countess says that Bertram is amused by him and he's allowed to stay but gets carried away with his wit. Lafew then says that since Helen's dead, he suggested to the King that Bertram should marry his daughter. The King agreed to his proposition and he wondered what the Countess thought of it. She too is content. The King is to arrive from Marseille the next day. Lavatch returns to say that Bertram has arrived, wearing a velvet patch on his left cheek.

#### ACT 5 SCENE 1

Helen, the Widow, and Diana have arrived at Marseille and Helen asks the gentleman keeper of the King's hawks (the Astringer) to present the King with a petition, only to be told that the King has already left for Rossillion. Since he's going to Rossillion himself, she asks the Astringer again to present the petition to the King for her; he'll be well rewarded and they will follow.

#### ACT 5 SCENE 2

Parolles asks Lavatch to deliver a letter from him to Lafew. Lavatch complains that he smells and tells him to deliver it himself since Lafew is here. Parolles asks Lafew to help him since it was he who first "found" him out. Lafew says he will see him after; he can hear the King's trumpets, but even though he's "a fool and a knave" he shall still eat.

#### ACT 5 SCENE 3

**Lines 1–64:** The King is discussing Helen with the Countess. He regrets her death and Bertram's folly. The Countess puts it down to his youth and asks for him to be forgiven. Lafew adds that he wronged everyone, especially himself, through the loss of such a wife. The King sends for Bertram and asks what his response was to the proposed match with Lafew's daughter. Lafew says Bertram was content to do as the King wished. Bertram enters and the King tells him that he is "not a day of season," meaning that his moods are

changeable and now his anger has passed. Bertram begs his pardon and the King says he is forgiven. He then reminds him of Lafew's daughter. Bertram says that he always admired her before his judgment was warped by contempt. Understanding how he has misjudged things, he has finally come to love the woman everyone praised and he, since he has lost her, has learned to love.

**Lines 65–116:** The King is pleased to hear of Bertram's love for Helen, even though it comes too late. He reflects how often we fail to value what we have until we've lost it. And now he advises Bertram to forget Helen and think of Maudlin (Lafew's daughter). Lafew asks for a token to give his daughter from Bertram and Bertram gives him a ring. Lafew says he last saw it on Helen's hand, but Bertram denies it belonged to Helen. The King then says that he gave it to her himself, adding that if she was ever in need, by this token he would help her. The King wonders how Bertram acquired it. Bertram assures the King it didn't belong to Helen. Both the Countess and Lafew assure Bertram that they saw her wear it, but Bertram explains it was thrown to him wrapped in paper from a casement window in Florence by a lady who refused to have it back.

**Lines 117–69:** The King intervenes to say that he knows the ring; it was his, he gave it to Helen, and she swore that she would never take it from her finger except to give it to Bertram in her bed or to send it to the King. Bertram says she never saw it, but the King says he is lying, and the King is now full of doubt and fear about Helen's fate. He orders Bertram to be detained; he will investigate the matter further. As he is led away Bertram says the King can as easily prove the ring was Helen's as that he had sex with her in Florence, where she'd never been. The King is full of anxiety. The Gentleman hawk-keeper arrives and gives him the petition from Diana which claims that she has been seduced by Bertram. Lafew says he no longer wants Bertram for a son-in-law after this—he'd rather buy himself one "in a fair." The King sends for the Widow and Diana and for Bertram again.

**Lines 170–255:** The King voices his fear that Helen was murdered. Diana and her mother enter. Bertram admits that he knows them but that's all. Diana asks him why he treats his wife like a stranger, but he denies that she's his wife. When asked if he does not believe he took her virginity, he claims she's a common prostitute. She then holds up the ring that Bertram gave her. The Countess recognizes it as a family heirloom and says it's proof that Diana is his wife. Parolles is sent for as a witness to the truth of this. Bertram now says that everyone knows Parolles is a liar, but the King points out that Diana has Bertram's ring. Bertram admits he had sex with her. She says she will return his ring if he will give her hers again. When asked what ring, she says it was like the one the King is wearing and she gave it to Bertram in bed.

**Lines 256–333:** Bertram admits the ring was Diana's. Parolles confirms that he acted as go-between for Bertram to Diana. The King asks Diana how she came by the ring and she says she neither bought it nor was loaned nor gave it. They cannot understand her riddling words and the King is about to send her to prison when she asks her mother to "fetch my bail." She says that even though he thinks he did, Bertram never harmed her and she forgives him. He believes that he had sex with her but he actually made his wife pregnant. Even though she's dead, his wife "feels her young one kick." Her riddle is: "one that's dead is quick," and she invites them all to "behold the meaning" as Helen and the Widow appear.

**Lines 334–65:** Everyone is amazed. Helen tells Bertram she is the "shadow of a wife" he sees, "The name and not the thing." He replies that she is both and begs her pardon. She says that when he thought she was Diana, he was kind to her, and she shows him the letter and the ring, asking him if he will be hers now he is "doubly won." He says if she can explain it all to him, he'll love her forever. She says if it isn't clear, he can have a divorce. Lafew asks Parolles for a handkerchief and promises to joke with him. The King demands to know the full story from Diana and says that if she's a virgin, she can choose herself a husband and he'll pay her dowry,

since he guesses it was with her help that Helen was able to win Bertram. They will learn the rest in due time, meanwhile everything “seems well” and since it’s ending so fittingly, the bitterness of past experiences makes the present sweetness more welcome.



## EPILOGUE

The King speaks a short epilogue in which he says that he is now a beggar as he asks the audience, if they are pleased with the play, for applause—"Your gentle hands"—while the players offer their "hearts."

***ALL'S WELL  
THAT ENDS WELL***  
**IN PERFORMANCE:  
THE RSC AND BEYOND**

The best way to understand a Shakespeare play is to see it or ideally to participate in it. By examining a range of productions, we may gain a sense of the extraordinary variety of approaches and interpretations that are possible—a variety that gives Shakespeare his unique capacity to be reinvented and made “our contemporary” four centuries after his death.

We begin with a brief overview of the play’s theatrical and cinematic life, offering historical perspectives on how it has been performed. We then analyze in more detail a series of productions staged over the last half-century by the Royal Shakespeare Company. The sense of dialogue between productions that can only occur when a company is dedicated to the revival and investigation of the Shakespeare canon over a long period, together with the uniquely comprehensive archival resource of promptbooks, program notes, reviews, and interviews held on behalf of the RSC at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust in Stratford-upon-Avon, allows an “RSC stage history” to become a crucible in which the chemistry of the play can be explored.

Finally, we go to the horse’s mouth. Modern theater is dominated by the figure of the director, who must hold together the whole play, whereas the actor must concentrate on his or her part. The director’s viewpoint is therefore especially valuable. Shakespeare’s plasticity is wonderfully revealed when we hear directors of highly successful productions answering the same questions in very

different ways. We also hear from an actor about his experience of playing Parolles in a much praised performance.

#### FOUR CENTURIES OF *ALL'S WELL*: AN OVERVIEW

Despite its catchy, proverbial title, the unconventional characters and plot of *All's Well That Ends Well* have won it few admirers and often evoked negative responses to the play from the time it was written in the early seventeenth century until at least the middle of the twentieth. There is no evidence of any performance before the closure of the theaters in 1642 and, although it was assigned to Thomas Killigrew's King's Company in 1660 after the Restoration, it wasn't staged until Henry Giffard's production at Goodman's Fields Theatre in 1741 when Shakespeare's comedies were becoming popular once more. Giffard played Bertram with his wife as Helen and Joseph Petersen as Parolles. The braggart soldier became a favorite part with actors thereafter and the focus on which many subsequent revivals and adaptations were based.

The following year the play acquired a reputation as "the unfortunate comedy" when it was put on at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, for the first time. Milward playing the King caught cold and died shortly after, while Peg Woffington as Helen was taken ill and fainted onstage. Theophilus Cibber played Parolles to great acclaim, although the part had originally been assigned to Charles Macklin which caused further ill-feeling in the company. Henry Woodward, who took over as Parolles in Giffard's Covent Garden production of 1746, was so successful that he continued to play the part for the next thirty years. He reprised the role in David Garrick's 1756 adaptation, which was built around his performance and emphasized the play's farcical elements. John Bannister's 1785 revival at the Haymarket went even further, virtually eliminating Helen and the first three acts. Neither were well received, though, and John Philip Kemble's 1793 adaptation shifted the focus back to Helen, played by Dorothy Jordan, with himself as Bertram and Bannister again playing Parolles.

Charles Kemble mounted a spectacular production in 1811 at Covent Garden, using his brother's text, which received good reviews but, despite this and an excellent cast, it was revived for only one further performance. Kemble's script had emphasized the play's romantic elements; the next adaptation, Frederick Reynolds's operatic version for Covent Garden in 1832, attempted to excise those aspects of the play considered tasteless and to replace them with musical extracts from more popular Shakespeare plays such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Twelfth Night*, but to little avail as both public and critics still found the play unacceptable.

Samuel Phelps played Parolles himself in his 1852 Sadler's Wells production to general acclaim, despite continued critical carping about the "rude nature of its plot" and "exceedingly gross" manners.<sup>25</sup> Henry Irving's amateur production at St. George's Hall in 1895 likewise failed to please, despite his efforts to render the play fit for Victorian audiences by extensive cuts: "The text had been so carefully bowdlerised for the Irving Club that the story would scarcely have been comprehensible to any one who did not know it beforehand."<sup>26</sup> George Bernard Shaw, similarly exercised about the textual cuts, was equally scathing about the leading performances:

The cool young woman, with a superior understanding, excellent manners, and a habit of reciting Shakespear, [sic] presented before us by Miss Olive Kennett, could not conceivably have been even Helena's thirty-second cousin. Miss Lena Heinekey, with the most beautiful old woman's part ever written in her hands, discovered none of its wonderfully pleasant good sense, humanity, and originality ... Mr Lewin-Mannering did not for any instant make it possible to believe that Parolles was a real person to him.<sup>27</sup>

The actor-manager Frank Benson finally produced *All's Well* for the Shakespeare Theatre in 1916—after thirty-five years this and *Titus Andronicus* were the only two plays which had never been produced at Stratford. Benson himself played Parolles with his wife

as Helen but the production was overshadowed by the celebrations of his recent knighthood:

The play was held up for some minutes by the unrestrained applause which greeted the appearance of the Bensons on stage. And Lady Benson noted that the audience joined with the cast in singing “Auld Lang Syne” at the end of the play. Understandably, *All’s Well* could not compete with its celebrated cast.<sup>28</sup>

Theater historian Joseph G. Price argues that productions of the play underwent a fundamental transformation in the twentieth century with the advent of the director, anxious to impose a coherent interpretation on the play as a whole: “The stage history of *All’s Well* in the twentieth century is, with a few exceptions, a record of attempts of directors to thread the brilliant parts with a unifying, appealing theme.”<sup>29</sup> The problem was that “theatrical tradition offered only remnants as guides, and scholarly analysis had failed to fashion a coherent pattern. The threading was difficult, and early experiments did little to change the general distaste for the play.”<sup>30</sup>

William Poel’s 1920 production at the Ethical Church, Bayswater, was certainly driven by a strong directorial line. Poel had founded the Elizabethan Stage Society which attempted to reproduce original stagings as far as possible for the plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. In *All’s Well* though he saw a play with a contemporary social message:

He saw a plea for the removal of class barriers where the affections between men and women were in question ... For Poel the play had an ethical significance which gave it a place in the history of women’s emancipation; in 1919 this freedom had at last been won and the exploits of Miss Sylvia Pankhurst were a recent memory.<sup>31</sup>

However, Poel’s decision to emphasize the play’s serious elements and to use low lighting gave the production a somber tone that

prompted the critic of the *Athenaeum* to comment that “Helena has her counterpart in Hamlet.”<sup>32</sup>

Robert Atkins’s production for the Old Vic in 1921 was judged “both interesting and disappointing.”<sup>33</sup> The set and lighting were praised but something was missing: “It is passionate power that Mr. Atkins fails habitually to get from his actors; he has, too, a sort of statuesque convention which he imposes on every play, as though Shakespeare could be played in talking tableaux.”<sup>34</sup> The pace of the production dragged; Jane Bacon’s Helen was too solemn and the comedy was underplayed: “Parolles discussing virginity with Helena, for example ... Mr Ernest Milton got through this scene without once provoking a laugh; he played it like someone skating on very thin ice, as though he were trying to spare Helena’s blushes instead of provoking them.”<sup>35</sup>

Tastes were changing slowly, and the second Stratford production directed by William Bridges-Adams in 1922 proved no more successful than the first. Birmingham Repertory Theatre staged the first modern-dress production in 1927 with “the Countess swathed in the crêpe so loved by Gallic widows, and Helena beside her in the simplest of dresses to show a dependant’s humility.”<sup>36</sup> Bernard Shaw noted the “buoyant sense of humour” of Parolles, described by the critic J. C. Trewin as “an amiable, too smart young man, a *sommelier’s* scourge,” played by “a youth of nineteen, virile, heavy-eyebrowed, darkly handsome ... His name was Laurence Olivier.”<sup>37</sup>

In 1935 Ben Iden Payne directed the third Stratford production which again failed to please. Robert Atkins was fortunate that in 1940 at the time of his third production it was the only play in London’s war-torn West End. Audience and critics were duly grateful but not bowled over. Catherine Lacey, who had played the Countess in the previous Stratford production, now played Helen to general acclaim, as “a creature from a fantastic story-book. You need not believe in her, but love her you must—and love her you will.”<sup>38</sup> Doubts were still expressed about the play itself though: “The plot proves untrue to the title by going from bad to worse; but the poetry, intermittently, goes from good to better.”<sup>39</sup> Needless to say, this view did not go unchallenged: “Mr. Robert Atkins should

be praised and encouraged for his direction. But the play may now be put by for another twenty years without great loss. Anybody heard defending its poetry should be asked point-blank to quote two consecutive lines.”<sup>40</sup>

It was Tyrone Guthrie in 1953 at the Stratford Festival, Ontario, who finally succeeded in capturing the play’s divergent elements to create a coherent whole and establish its place in the modern repertoire:

The first [Stratford, Ontario] season’s *Richard III* provided the most exciting night in the history of Canadian theatre but the second night’s *All’s Well That Ends Well* topped it, and every other performance at Stratford since, in sheer theatrical magic, in its discovery of breathless beauty in a dark old Shakespearean comedy.<sup>41</sup>

Guthrie recognized its essential modernity and saw how he might translate this insight to the stage: “Helena might be the heroine of an Existentialist drama. She refuses to be passive; she will not resign herself to be what Simone de Beauvoir, in *The Second Sex*, calls ‘the prisoner of immanence.’ She takes a firm line with her fate.”<sup>42</sup> The production’s modern dress “did a great deal to explain Helena to the audience.”<sup>43</sup> Joseph G. Price expands on the point:

The fantastic turns of the plot, of Helena’s traps, became much more acceptable in modern dress to a contemporary audience which had been saturated with aggressive heroines, often “career women” who had won reluctant males in innumerable romantic comedy films during the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>44</sup>

Its staging suggests another “modern” aspect of the production. As film has largely superseded the theater in presenting “realism,” theater has returned to its roots, capitalizing on the immediacy of the actors’ presence to the audience. The aim of the set designer,

Tanya Moiseiwitsch, was “to offer the facilities of an Elizabethan stage, but not to attempt an Elizabethan pseudo-antique style.”<sup>45</sup> All the performances were praised, but Irene Worth’s Helen was singled out:

In his skilful placing of emphasis Dr. Guthrie was immeasurably aided by some superb playing, particularly by Irene Worth as Helena. From her first silent entrance, gazing so longingly after Bertram, Miss Worth had power to move us to tears. She convinced us of her passion before ever she spoke, and we were committed to support her in every device she found to win her love.<sup>46</sup>

In the same year the Old Vic mounted a less successful production directed by Michael Benthall, who was accused by one critic of turning the play into “a cross between rollicking pantomime and fairytale.”<sup>47</sup> Benthall, who had set himself the task of performing all of Shakespeare’s plays in his five-year tenure at the Old Vic, did not much care for the play, and in order to make it palatable for modern audiences, aimed “to remove some of the bitter taste from the play and to give it instead a fairy-tale unreality.”<sup>48</sup> With this end in mind, he invited Osbert Lancaster (best known as a cartoonist) to design costumes and sets: “The backdrops, clear and bright like cut-outs from a child’s picture book, and the fresh colours of the costumes, admirably succeeded in creating a fairy-tale atmosphere.”<sup>49</sup> The undoubted prettiness was unconvincing though:

The result of this approach was to divorce the play from any semblance of reality and turn it into a quick-moving farce. In this guise it won many laughs and one could hardly take seriously the match-making activities of such a high-comedy King. Yet had the more serious scenes been played with more belief the real comedy might have increased in stature ...<sup>50</sup>



The honors, such as they were, went to “Mr. Michael Hordern’s horribly real and truly pointed performance as the boastful cowardly militarist, Parolles, and Miss Fay Compton’s Countess of Roussillon.”<sup>51</sup>

Two years later in 1955 Noel Willman directed the play at Stratford “as a dark comedy,” but

complicated his approach by his sets, his stage business, and his interpretations of Bertram and Parolles. He placed the play in the late seventeenth century against ponderous scenery and sumptuous costumes. The heavy representative sets robbed the stage of a starkness better suited to the mood; the prettiness of the costumes conflicted with the darkness of the theme.<sup>52</sup>

Joyce Redman’s Helen “dominated the stage, not with her vivacity, nor indeed emotional variety, but by a moral earnestness which prompted frequent appeals to heaven ... she behaved ‘like some ghastly Shavian woman ... [demonstrating] a pertinacity worthy of the North-West Mounted Police.’ ”<sup>53</sup> The lightweight Bertram “could not be taken seriously as a partner in the ‘dark comedy’ ” and the “sinister potentialities of Parolles were ignored as well.”<sup>54</sup>

In 1959 Tyrone Guthrie’s successful Canadian production was revived at the Stratford Memorial Theatre with Zoe Caldwell as Helen, Robert Hardy as the King, and Dame Edith Evans as the Countess. The majority of critics were enthusiastic, concurring with the judgment of the *Times*’s critic:

His [Guthrie’s] production wears Edwardian dress, but it has a real Elizabethan vitality and its vindication of Helena is undertaken with as much care as the uproariously funny “debunking” of Parolles.<sup>55</sup>

A. Alvarez thought that “Mr Tyrone Guthrie’s Stratford production of *All’s Well That Ends Well* is about as perfect as we are likely to

see.”<sup>56</sup> One piece of business noted by many was Helen’s curing of the King:

Miss Caldwell makes a quick and unexpected move, stands behind the King’s chair, and places her hands on his brow. He makes an impatient gesture as if to brush aside her insolent presumption—their timing throughout this passage was perfection—stops at her invocation of “the great’st grace” [2.1.171], relaxes, closes his eyes and listens, while with a subtle, barely perceptible rise in tone into what is practically recitative, she speaks the couplets, with their fanciful, stilted phrasing, as an incantation, a charm; and carried beyond herself, rises to the crucial answer upon which her life and fortune depend, and wrings from the so-called fustian rhymes a moment of pure theater magic and spell-binding. It is quite breath-taking, and completely right, startling and convincing us simultaneously.<sup>57</sup>

There were dissenters. The critic of the *New York Times* argued that “it is apparent that Mr. Guthrie’s intentions are frivolous rather than serious, and that his aim is less to reveal hidden depths in this play than to extract all possible fun.”<sup>58</sup> While Muriel St. Clare Byrne declared Edith Evans’s performance “flawless,”<sup>59</sup> Alan Brien characterized it thus: “Edith Evans is Edith Evans—an exiled queen locked away in a madhouse who still bestows her autumnal wisdom on the deaf zanies around her,” concluding that “the play itself remains a ragbag of revue sketches.”<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless, Guthrie’s is generally regarded as the watershed production for *All’s Well*, demonstrating that the play was now acceptable and could be made to work for wider audiences.



1. Tyrone Guthrie's "watershed" production of 1959 with Zoe Caldwell as Helen and Robert Hardy as the King: "Miss Caldwell makes a quick and unexpected move, stands behind the King's chair, and places her hands upon his brow ... It is quite breath-taking, and completely right, startling and convincing us simultaneously."

The stage history of the play in America is "astonishingly brief."<sup>61</sup> There was a production in 1799 at the Federal Street Theatre, Boston, in which Elizabeth Kemble-Whitlock (a sister of the

Kembles) played Helen, although no reviews of the production have survived. In the nineteenth century Augustin Daly seems to have been interested in putting it on and commissioned an acting text from William Winter, but in the event he never staged it. Guthrie's was thus the first significant North American production. Price does, however, mention the "amusing fact" of its "popularity as a burlesque in American vaudeville."<sup>62</sup>

In 1959, the same year as the revival of Guthrie's production, John Houseman directed the play for the American Shakespeare Festival at Stratford, Connecticut. Whereas Guthrie had emphasized its comic elements, Houseman produced a dark tragicomedy: "Surprisingly, the reception by critics and audiences was almost as enthusiastic as that won by the Guthrie revival."<sup>63</sup> Nancy Wickwire as Helen "played the heroine with intensity," making her "the centre of the play to the exclusion of all other characters":

The force of her character assumed a tragic intensity with Bertram's rejection of her. Her horror at the thought that she was responsible for Bertram's flight to war and at the potential danger that was threatened to him suggested that the "dark comedy" was in fact a very dark tragedy.<sup>64</sup>

The character of Bertram, meanwhile, was softened with stage business such as a kiss and wave to Helen in the first scene:

This kind of stage business was even more effective after the marriage when Bertram sent his bride back to Rousillon. He was not unkind to her. Somewhat overwhelmed by the force of her passion, he turned to say something to her, some kind word, but she had already begun her exit. He checked himself, showed dismay at hurting her, then recovered quickly and shouted his youthful boast.<sup>65</sup>

Price concluded, however, that Houseman had

paid a heavy price for his tragi-comedy. The infusion of passion changed Parolles from a braggart soldier to a coward-villain who failed to draw his first real laugh from the audience until his capture. Even then, the turnabout of his exposure was pathetic as he was knocked about by each of the departing lords in what became a repugnant scene.<sup>66</sup>

Nevertheless, the production was a popular success and the majority of critics agreed with Henry Hewes of the *Saturday Review* that “Houseman had ‘made this unpopular play work by filling it with genuine passion.’”<sup>67</sup>

Since then the play has been revived at regular intervals and become, if not popular, at least a standard part of the Shakespearean repertoire. The five notable RSC productions at Stratford are discussed in more detail below.

Elijah Moshinsky’s 1980 BBC television production was widely praised for the way it transferred the play to the small screen: “it seems to accept the inevitable diminution in theatrical power that the translation involves, and tries to invent new relationships which will (to some degree) compensate for that loss.”<sup>68</sup> Jeremy Treglown describes how

Moshinsky has framed the scenes as a series of calm seventeenth-century Dutch paintings, using mirrors to give depth to his surface and filling the small screen with the interplay of grouping and of light and shade, rather than with elaborate action or tricky camerawork. It works beautifully and gives a rich visual context to the unexpectedly plausible action itself, from Helena’s falling (on the rebound from her father’s death) for her shiftily childhood friend Bertram, to his miserably trapped duplicities in the arranged marriage which follows.<sup>69</sup>

Angela Down’s “serenely unstoppable” Helen was praised, as was Ian Charleson’s “sulkily handsome” Bertram, with Celia Johnson as

his “understandably anxious old mother” and Michael Hordern as the “melancholy-wise, genial old Lafeu.”<sup>70</sup> Donald Sinden’s rather “fruity” representation of the King caused several critics concern: “one of the lapses in a usually cool and contained production.”<sup>71</sup> The production’s successful translation to television was nowhere more apparent than the televisual technique employed to handle the final reveal as Diana is being taken to prison, as described by G. K. Hunter:

At the door she stops and pleads her final stay of execution: “Good mother, fetch my bail.” As the cast looks through the door music begins to play. “Behold the meaning,” says Diana. But the camera does not allow us to behold. Instead it does what the camera does best—it shows us a set of mouths and eyes. As it tracks along the line we are made witness to a series of inner sunrises, as face after face responds to the miracle and lights up with understanding and relief. I confess to finding it a very moving experience.<sup>72</sup>

In 1993 Richard Jones directed a “mesmerizing”<sup>73</sup> production of the play for the New York Shakespeare Festival in Central Park, in a style “more akin” to “tragicomedy.”<sup>74</sup> The set design was essentially abstract:

On a sea-green backing, marked by an aqua blue strip, hangs a white Rothko-like panel with a Donald Judd-like sculpture in the center that doubles as a mirror. When the action moves to Italy, the panel divides to reveal a lovely Tuscan countryside, decked with burnt umber fields and a tiny medieval town ... Washed by Mimi Jordan Sherin’s sea-change lighting, the visual impact is ravishing.<sup>75</sup>

The production was literally stalked by a death’s head, “a little boy in a Halloween skeleton costume. Sometimes he slips,



unnoticed, scythe in hand, into courtly processions at Rousillon and Paris; sometimes he peers down at the action from a perch in a row of spectators above and behind the railings.”<sup>76</sup> The acting was strong, with “standout performances” by Miriam Healy-Louie as Helen and Joan Macintosh as the Countess; however, “The only genuine comedy [was] provided by the chorus—courtiers drilled within an inch of their lives—whether simultaneously lighting clay pipes during the interrogation scene or returning from Italy with identical suit-cases.”<sup>77</sup>

Matthew Lloyd’s 1996 production at Manchester’s Royal Exchange Theatre was set in “a stiff and chilly version of the 1930s ... holding throughout to the sombre economies implied by the allblack costumes of its opening stage-direction.”<sup>78</sup> This theme was reflected in the “unwelcoming set, the floor an expanse of dark, glassy marble fractured by numerous cracks” and the lack of “emotional warmth” with the cast deployed in “stiffly stylised groupings” displayed in “cool isolation.”<sup>79</sup> The production’s “saving grace” was Alastair Galbraith’s Parolles, “blessedly exempt from the icy self-control exuded by the rest of the cast.”<sup>80</sup>

Very different was Irina Brook’s production for the Oxford Playhouse in 1997, which “attempted to create a world in which the folk-story origins of the play might operate freely by presenting it in a pastiche African world.”<sup>81</sup> The production revealed that “the play’s theatrical energy is more or less indestructible if the role that drives it has been adequately cast.”<sup>82</sup> In this case Rachel Pickup’s Helen was “so full of energy, so gracefully and intelligently spoken, and so committed in her love for Emil Marwa’s boyishly naive Bertram, that much of this wonderful play’s essence seemed to survive the mistaken directorial concept.”<sup>83</sup>

Two recent productions have enjoyed critical and popular success; Marianne Elliott’s in 2009 for the National Theatre and Stephen Fried’s 2010 production for the Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey. Elliott offered a “picture-book romance” that evolved into a story about “the attainment of maturity.”<sup>84</sup> In critic Michael Billington’s view its strength was the way in which the production balanced “romance and realism,” with Michelle Terry’s “fine performance” as

Helen “holding the evening together”: “We see her growth from fairy princess into real woman. And even though hero and heroine are finally united, there is a look of aghast bewilderment as they pose for the cameras. In short Elliott gives us a fairytale for grown-ups.”<sup>85</sup>

Stephen Fried’s inspired decision to set the play in the Edwardian period of the “New Woman” enabled beautiful, flowing art nouveau sets and elegant costumes, while making Ellen Adair’s combination of “girlish modesty with the passion and wiles of a determined go-getter”<sup>86</sup> seem plausible. The versatile cast of nine played all twenty-three parts in this lively, warmly received production, with some notable doubling by John Ahlin as the King of France and the Clown Lavatch, and Tamara Tunie, the Countess and Widow Capilet. The three actors who played single roles were Adair as “an engagingly outgoing and energetically upbeat”<sup>87</sup> Helen; Clifton Duncan softening the unlovable Bertram by making him appear “blandly clueless”;<sup>88</sup> and Clark Carmichael playing Parolles with “dandified comic flair ... Ostentatiously grooming his mustache and eyebrows while peering into a hand-held mirror, he is the ultimate braggart and prevaricator, itching for a comeuppance.”<sup>89</sup>

The conclusion of the *New York Times*’s review seems to sum up the theatrical fate of the play: “Though you leave the theater wondering about the long-term viability of Helena and Bertram’s union, you hope for the best. In the meantime, you can’t help loving this show.”<sup>90</sup>

## AT THE RSC

The play’s historical unpopularity and paucity of performances over the years has offered modern directors a particular sort of challenge:

*All’s Well That Ends Well* is for us virtually a new play, and in this it is not unlike another problem comedy that has only recently found an audience, *Troilus and Cressida*. The “indelicate” of the central story, in which a woman pursues a man all the way into his bed, has ensured that



the play has no theatrical history worth mentioning until a few years ago.<sup>91</sup>

John Barton (1967)

John Barton's production with Estelle Kohler as Helen (Lynn Farleigh took over the role the following year) to Ian Richardson's Bertram offers a striking set of ambiguities. From the start, Kohler presents a bright, witty young woman, sincere in her devotion to Bertram, while Richardson, stunned by her effrontery, recoils in anger at the "betrothal" and storms, "I cannot *love* her." The critic of the *Birmingham Mail* acknowledged the dilemma for an audience faced with a likable Helen and a justifiably angry Bertram:

She does the early debate with Parolles on virginity with wit, and for the rest of the evening she has so completely won our sympathies as a young woman in love with her social superior that I doubt whether we give much thought to the lack of scruple in her tactics. It is much to Ian Richardson's credit, in the face of this attack, that he can make Bertram's resentment and defiance reasonably understandable.<sup>92</sup>

The theater program suggests that Bertram's conduct "has recently been viewed with less repulsion. It is realised that his attitude to a match with a poor girl below his rank would have seemed normal and not snobbish in Shakespeare's time." Accordingly, taking its cue from Stuart Hall's discussion in the theater program of a struggle in the play between the old order, represented by the King, Lafew, and the Countess, and a counterculture where "the young make up the rules," the play could be appraised as "an unromantic analysis of sex and station in life": "In John Barton's splendidly simple production the modernity of the play is appreciated."<sup>93</sup> Timothy O'Brien's simple wooden set, together with the Jacobean costumes, emphasized the historical and cultural contexts against which the sexual politics were played out.

A change in critical perceptions of Helen is evident from remarks by the critic J. C. Trewin:

Estelle Kohler does very little indeed that could win me to Helena but Bertram is transformed by one of the finest Royal Shakespeare actors, Ian Richardson: making no excuses for the man's weakness and arrogance, he does get us to listen.<sup>94</sup>

While Milton Schulman argues that Bertram "is one of the most abused young men in Shakespeare" and that John Barton's production "seems determined, as far as Bertram is concerned, to correct a critical wrong": "As interpreted by Ian Richardson, Bertram is harmless rather than wilful, amiable rather than cruel, weak rather than venal. He just doesn't want to get married."<sup>95</sup> Praise was extended to "Catherine Lacey's beautifully autumnal Countess," Elizabeth Spriggs (the Widow), Helen Mirren (Diana), and Brewster Mason (Lafew).<sup>96</sup>



2. John Barton's 1967 RSC production with Ian Richardson as Bertram and Clive Swift as Parolles: "As interpreted by Ian Richardson, Bertram is harmless rather than wilful, amiable rather than cruel, weak rather than venal. He just doesn't want to get married."

Trevor Nunn (1981)

Michael Billington in the *Guardian* described Trevor Nunn's production, with Mike Gwilym as Bertram and Harriet Walter as Helen, "a total masterpiece":

Indeed, Nunn's great achievement is to have endowed a fairytale plot about a miracle-curing heroine and her defecting husband, with a total emotional reality. Partly he does this by updating the play to a precise Edwardian world in which class differences are crucial: thus the keys around Helena's waist tell us that she is a working girl down on the Countess of Rossillion's humane Chekhovian estate while Bertram, the object of her affection, is an aristocratic scion who at the Paris court becomes one of a bevy of fencing, vaulting, brandy-swilling St Cloud\* junior officers.<sup>97</sup>

In Billington's view, Harriet Walter "is no ruthless opportunist," but rather "a love-struck heroine who knows she is up against an inflexible class-system," while Mike Gwilym's Bertram is "a savage Strindbergian monster" (Philip Franks played a less monstrous, more "caddish" Bertram when the production transferred to the Barbican).

Tom Vaughan praised John Gunter's "Crystal Palace-style setting" as "brilliantly ingenious and evocative" but felt "a vital ingredient gets lost; this society is really medieval and the King and possibly the Countess as well have life and death powers over their subjects."<sup>98</sup>

Helen was played as "a sombre, governessy girl"<sup>99</sup> who faltered at the first hurdle when Bertram rejects her:

In the scene of choosing a husband, she had tried to prevent the King from joining their hands, and when she made her final appearance, Bertram "went to take her hand, but didn't actually do so; instead he spoke that cryptic, conditioned couplet.\* This wary meeting between husband and wife contrasted strikingly with Helena's intensely moving reunion with the Countess ... Left alone, Bertram and Helena walked upstage together, their hands still apart, the final image of an unequal marriage."<sup>100</sup>

Sympathy for Helena can be detected in James Fenton's review: "In terms of the play, Helena's tricking of Bertram is a legitimate response to the challenge he issues to her. Helena never wrongs Bertram, however much he may feel wronged."<sup>101</sup>

Others were less impressed with the moral turnaround:

There is a slight snag about such realism and this is that the bad characters are so much more likeable than the good ones. Harriet Walter's Helena is an admirable performance, but by God what a dull person this Helena turns out to be. The Florentine Diana, who lures the unfaithful Bertram to her bed but substitutes Helena in the dark ... is twice as much fun and Cheryl Campbell has a splendid time with her.<sup>102</sup>

The performances were likewise praised of Parolles (Stephen Moore); the "higher grade" comedy of Lafew (Robert Eddison) and Lavatch (Geoffrey Hutchings), "bent double like Rigoletto and, like Rigoletto, pretty contemptuous of the upper classes"; and Peggy Ashcroft's "true dignity" as the Countess. Ashcroft, whose performance was described as "perfect, noble, maternal, affectionate by turn,"<sup>103</sup> imbued her words "with a sure, sad knowledge of the world."<sup>104</sup>



3. Trevor Nunn's RSC production (1981) with Harriet Walter as "a sombre, governessy" Helen and Peggy Ashcroft as the Countess: "perfect, noble, maternal, affectionate by turn," she imbued her words "with a sure, sad knowledge of the world."

### Barry Kyle (1989)

The theater program for Barry Kyle's 1989 production illustrates a world of toy soldiers, some marching to the beat of a drum and others blowing the bugle, astride a rocking horse. As Waller remarks, "Kyle opened the play with Bertram playing with toy soldiers, taking up the description of war as 'a nursery to our gentry' [1.2.20]." <sup>105</sup>

Kyle offers a perfectly plausible account of two children growing up together, but unfortunately Patricia Kerrigan's Helen matures earlier than her playfellow, Bertram (Paul Venables). She is ready for a relationship but he is young and seeks adventure and glory with other boy soldiers. The potential tragedy of their situation is insisted upon by Chris Dyer's permanent set, "a child's nursery

complete with huge hobby-horse and three toy soldiers.”<sup>106</sup> One critic praised “the achievement of coherence, remarkable in a play which sometimes appears to be a patchwork of fragments culled from other Shakespeare plays.”<sup>107</sup> Kyle presents Helen’s “sturdy self-assertion” in choosing Bertram for her husband as “an acceptable error” and shows her immediate “agonised realisation of her miscalculation.” For the “choosing” scene, the suitors had each a full-length mirror “by which they could set their images.”<sup>108</sup> The illusory attraction of the world of toy soldiers became apparent when the angry King of France (Hugh Ross) struck Bertram for refusing Helen, forced their hands together and then threatened him with his sword. Bertram had no option but to take her hand and exit.

Michael Billington felt that the director had imposed an “artificial visual unity” on the play but that “Mr Kyle’s most original idea is to preface the court scenes with images of Elizabeth and James I implying that Shakespeare, writing around 1603, was lamenting the loss of a vanished Golden Age.”<sup>109</sup> In one interview Kyle admitted that he had toyed with the idea of setting *All’s Well That Ends Well* in the City of London in 1989, with characters setting off to the wars by helicopter. The themes he finds in the play, of “an old world being supplanted by a new world and new values, new money,” had obvious and tempting parallels with 1980s Britain.<sup>110</sup> Opinions were divided over Paul Venables as Bertram who was accused of giving “an over-diagrammatic performance,” which suggested that “buried deep down, Bertram may harbour a secret affection for his enforced bride.”<sup>111</sup> The production was described as a “cop-out” that offered the spectator “a boring compromise.”<sup>112</sup> Certainly, the unambiguous ending showed Bertram, Helen, and the Countess locked in embrace.





4. Barry Kyle's 1989 RSC production with Patricia Kerrigan as Helena: for the "choosing" scene, the suitors had each a full-length mirror "by which they could set their images." The illusory attraction of the world of toy soldiers became apparent.

While Gwen Watford delivered the Countess's "embittered grief," Bruce Alexander's "admirable braggart Parolles" was not only "exactly costumed (his cross-hatched finery is precisely the 'window of lattice' described by Lafew) but even in decline retains the clipped accents of the Sandhurst saloon-bar military poseur."<sup>113</sup>

Peter Hall (1992)

Reviewing Peter Hall's production at The Swan in 1992, Michael Billington noted a particular problem with the play: "Shakespeare's psychological realism often bursts through the fairy tale structure." He remarked that Hall, returning to the Royal Shakespeare Company after a twenty-year absence, had solved the difficulties "by giving the play the elegant formality of a spoken opera staged in Caroline costumes," a device he considered "very much classical, late Peter Hall."<sup>114</sup>

Martin Dodsworth in his review for the *Times Literary Supplement* found the production "intense and powerful": "The bare stage of the



Swan puts all the emphasis in how characters relate to one another. Body language throughout is significant. It rarely signifies happiness.”<sup>115</sup> Helen (Sophie Thompson) entered “radiant with success” to dance with the cured King (Richard Johnson) in “a splendid scene.”<sup>116</sup> When Bertram (Toby Stephens) rejected her, with an angry emphasis on “Disdain / Rather corrupt me ever!” (2.3.118–19), the court, as one, moved to protect the King. In this production, courtly etiquette demanded that Bertram quickly repair the breach of decorum, accede to the King’s command and exit holding Helen’s hand.

Charles Spencer thought the production smacked of “dogged conscientiousness rather than real inspiration,” the Caroline costumes made the play “something of a museum piece,” and that “too few of the characters take on a life of their own.”<sup>117</sup> While conceding the latter point, Dodsworth considered, “The price paid for coherence is a certain thinning-out of character” and “Helena is made to seem simpler than she is.” Hall’s “through-line” for Helen was that of “a wide-eyed innocent”:

She is very close to a child and has the power to impose her childish conviction on others. When, at the end of it all, she has fulfilled the impossible conditions for her reunion with Bertram, she had the absolute faith of a child in the written word: “And look you, here’s your letter. This it says ...”<sup>118</sup>



5. Peter Hall's RSC production, 1992: the city wall and view of Florence with Andrée Evans as the Widow, "an example of how to play a small part to perfection," Emily Raymond as Mariana, Sophie Thompson "a wide-eyed innocent" Helen, and Rebecca Saire as a "sparky" Diana.

Other performances drew praise; for example, Barbara Jefford's performance as the Countess was "full of poise and a sense of reflective wisdom, which is matched for weight by Richard Johnson's powerful King of France."<sup>119</sup> Michael Siberry's "rollicking Parolles" possessed "the right energy and elan,"<sup>120</sup> and Rebecca Saire's Diana was "sparky,"<sup>121</sup> while Andrée Evans as the Widow was commended as "an example of how to play a small part to perfection."<sup>122</sup>

Hall kept some interesting surprises for the ending:

As interpreted by Hall, the conclusion loses any refulgent, romance-like glow. When the lights dim and Helena enters dressed in white, the gathered people don't respond to her as some symbol of harmonising fecundity but start back in terror, realistically, as at the approach of a ghost.<sup>123</sup>

Finally there was the “beautiful moment” when the childlike Helen grows up:

She starts to read the letter, pointing with her finger at every significant word: “When from my finger you can get this ring. And are by me with child...” Then suddenly, and at last, an adult understanding takes over, the rest of the letter is summed up in a comprehensive and dismissive “etcetera” and she tears it in half, cancelling the bond to which Bertram had subscribed, inviting him at last to commit himself to her freely and afresh.<sup>124</sup>

Helen moved directly to the Countess, leaving Bertram free to choose. He held out his hand as she hoped he would.

Gregory Doran (2003)

Judi Dench played the Countess in Gregory Doran’s production at the Swan (2003), returning to Stratford for the first time in twenty-four years. Michael Billington observed, “It is Dench who is drawing the crowds, but the triumph lies in the restoration of an unforgivably neglected play.”<sup>125</sup>

The set for the Rossillion estate had “an elegiac quality,” captured in Stephen Brimson Lewis’s “spare, effective design of wintry trees etched on sheets of silvery, scoured glass.”<sup>126</sup> Costumes were seventeenth-century and Judi Dench was the “winter queen.”<sup>127</sup> Kate Kellaway recalls the effect of Dench’s performance:

Tears started into my eyes as she threw herself into the speech that she—or Doran—sees as pivotal to the play. It is the moment when she first learns of Helena’s love for her son—lines that could just as easily have been thrown away. But Dench brings to the speech an urgency, as though her words were the last flowering of everything she had ever felt—age’s passionate identification with

youth: “Even so it was with me when I was young. / If ever we are nature’s, these are ours: this thorn / Doth rightly belong. / Our blood to us, this to our blood is born.”<sup>128</sup>

A note of caution was sounded, however: “She gives an authoritative performance, as one would expect, but it is Helena and Bertram who matter,” and Bertram (Jamie Glover) “has no character change.”<sup>129</sup> There was universal acclaim for Claudie Blakley’s performance as Helen: “she’s feisty and forlorn at the same time, vulnerable when riding high, courageous in deepest misery.”<sup>130</sup> Nicholas de Jongh described how the Countess “scathingly dismisses her heir as a chronic disappointment and passionately upholds Helena as a cherishable daughter-in-law.”<sup>131</sup>

The production had tilted approbation toward Helen in such a way that everything she did appeared “perfectly normal” while Bertram had nowhere to go at the end:

Glover gave a superb rendering here of an unimaginative, unreflective and largely inarticulate young man realizing too late that his attempts at achieving liberty have only betrayed him into a permanent version of exactly the “subjection” he had resented back in I.I: his performance never made the mistake of trying to make Bertram likeable, but I’ve never seen the young Count’s situation illuminated so fully and so desolately.<sup>132</sup>

The play ended with the lights fading on Helen and Bertram “looking warily at one another, circling each other, a pace apart, in a recapitulation of the choosing scene’s dance.”<sup>133</sup>

Turning to the rest of the cast, there was praise for “the wonderfully accomplished” performance of Gary Waldhorn as the King of France, while “Guy Henry as Parolles is bliss: tall as a hollyhock, trailing hippy scarves from unexpected quarters of his

body and glitteringly garrulous. Thank goodness that the play, like life, is sorrow *and* joy.”<sup>134</sup>

#### THE DIRECTOR’S CUT: INTERVIEWS WITH GREGORY DORAN AND STEPHEN FRIED

**Gregory Doran**, born in 1958, studied at Bristol University and the Bristol Old Vic theater school. He began his career as an actor, before becoming associate director at the Nottingham Playhouse. He played some minor roles in the RSC ensemble before directing for the company, first as a freelance, then as associate and subsequently chief associate director. His productions, several of which have starred his partner Antony Sher, are characterized by extreme intelligence and lucidity. He has made a particular mark with several of Shakespeare’s lesser-known plays and the revival of works by his Elizabethan and Jacobean contemporaries. His much-acclaimed 2003 production of *All’s Well That Ends Well* discussed here featured Dame Judi Dench as the Countess of Rossillion and Guy Henry as Parolles.

**Stephen Fried** has a BA in history and drama from Stanford University and an MFA in directing from the Yale School of Drama. He teaches acting at the Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey and is on the directing faculty for the New School for Drama. He is the recipient of the Drama League Director’s Fellowship as well as the Jacob Javitz Fellowship, and has trained at the Center for Theatre Studies in Gardzienice, Poland, and with the Double Edge Theatre troupe. He now works as a freelance director in New York after three years as resident assistant director with the Shakespeare Theatre Company. Apart from his many innovative productions of the plays of Shakespeare and other classic writers, he has also created productions of new writing with contemporary playwrights. His successful *Much Ado About Nothing* in 2010 for the Trinity Shakespeare Festival led to his being hailed as a contemporary “Defining director.” Stephen is talking here about his 2010 *All’s Well*

*That Ends Well* for the Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey, which successfully cast a total of nine actors for all twenty-three parts.

**There are different views as to whether this is an early Shakespeare play (perhaps revised later) or a late play; did you have any preconceptions about this and were they confirmed or confounded by your production?**

**Doran:** I had a very precise impression of what period the play was, because it seemed to have a relationship with the Sonnets. There is something about the ambiguity of the language that reminded me in a very particular way of the Sonnets. Sometimes the language is dense and gnarled; there are times when Helen, in trying to describe her love for Bertram, describes it in a very compressed way. The Sonnets are all about compression; they keep feelings in check with language, whereas in *All's Well That Ends Well* feelings are released through language. That gave me a strong sense that the play would have been written around about the early 1600s. The Sonnets were first published in 1609 but clearly were written before that.

**Fried:** Throughout my time working on *All's Well That Ends Well*, I never felt that it could have been an early play. My experience with the early comedies—having directed both *The Comedy of Errors* and *Love's Labour's Lost*—is that those plays radiate a youthful exuberance and naiveté. You feel in the early comedies that Shakespeare identifies himself principally with his youthful protagonists. In *All's Well That Ends Well*, he seems to take a much more critical look at the subject of youth—he points our attention in the play's first half not only to Bertram's pride and recklessness and Parolles' self-absorption, but also to Helen's inexperience and her mistaking of obsession for mature love. The adult characters—the Countess and the King—function as the play's moral centers, and provide the play with its mature, almost Chekhovian outlook. Take, for example, the Countess's speech from Act 1 Scene 3:

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 impressed in youth.  
By our remembrances of days foregone,  
Such were our faults, or then we thought them none.

I find it difficult to imagine that this could have been the work of a young writer. It's in passages like this one that Shakespeare seems to be identifying more with the older characters in the play, which isn't the case in the earlier plays.

In addition to this, the play's ambiguities, both in content and form, always suggested to me the work of a playwright who had grown so experienced in his craft that he was now experimenting with the comedic genre. In terms of content, the play's complicated moral questions regarding the possibility of redemption and the ability to love someone who may not deserve your love place it in close relation to the other mid-career problem plays *Troilus and Cressida* and *Measure for Measure*. In addition to this, the blending of comedic and dramatic tones seemed to me to connect *All's Well* with later plays—particularly *Cymbeline*—and so it never really seemed possible to me that this could be an early play.

The language of *All's Well That Ends Well* also distances it from the early-career works. In the early plays, Shakespeare frequently seems to be showing off through bold displays of his verbal dexterity. The language in those plays feels youthful and exuberant. *All's Well*, on the other hand, has a more mature, subtle, and complicated feeling to it. The imagery is more delicate and nuanced. To put it simply, the play sounds so different from the early comedies, and feels much more connected in tone to the great tragedies and problem plays that Shakespeare wrote in the middle and later phases of his career.

**The play seems to draw attention to the role of language with its high incidence of rhyming couplets, of proverbs and sayings, on “telling” rather than “showing” and the inclusion of a character called Parolles; how did you cope with this emphasis on language in the play?**

**Doran:** The language in the central scene of the first part, when Helen cures the King, has an incantatory quality. In performance there is a sense that the rhymes themselves are curing the King. There is something very deliberate about the spell and the enchantment that it evokes.

**Fried:** While there certainly are a great number of proverbs and rhymes in the play, in production and in terms of what the play is really about, I didn't find *All's Well That Ends Well* to be significantly more concerned with the role of language than any other of Shakespeare's plays. Human beings' relationship with language and words was a constant fascination of Shakespeare's, and appears as a theme in almost every play he wrote, probably most explicitly in *Love's Labour's Lost*.

That said, the play's emphasis on “telling” rather than “showing” is certainly one of the great challenges that it presents to a director. Many of the play's most significant events—Helen's curing of the King, her discovery that Bertram has run away, the complicated maneuvering of the rings, and of course the infamous “bed trick,” all occur offstage, and we're given complicated conversational scenes such as the beginning of Act 2 Scene 3 between Lafew, Bertram, and Parolles, or the opening of Act 4 Scene 3 between the two Dumaine brothers to learn of the momentous events that have taken place out of our view. As a result, I felt it was important at certain points to delicately weave visual storytelling into places where it wasn't explicitly called for by the playwright. An example of this was the ring plot—which is one of those aspects of the play that is endlessly talked about but barely shown onstage. I felt that the audience's appreciation for the significance of these rings would benefit from seeing a bit of their traffic, and so in the first scene, as the Countess



bade farewell to Bertram, she presented his father's ring to him as a sort of "going away present." In Act 2 Scene 3, the King grandly presented his ring to Helen in gratitude for her curing him. These small moments enabled the audience to follow the conversation over these rings a little more closely in the final scene, I think.

Yet I also felt that the play's emphasis on telling rather than showing was somewhat by design, and I tried not to betray this aspect of the play. The result of this focus on the aftermath of an event, I found, is that the audience's attention is pulled off of the events themselves and onto the way that the play's characters respond to them. Thus, the real "story" of the play lies in the characters' subtle shifts in outlook and behavior as they react to what's happening around them. It's this aspect of the text that I think gives the play its almost Chekhovian tone; there is frequently a sensation of distance between the characters and the events they are responding to, and so the characters are able to reveal aspects of their humanity that they wouldn't if they were right in the middle of the event. For this reason, while we did show certain things when I felt that it might improve narrative clarity without betraying the play's structural intentions (such as the ring exchanges described above), I also tried to honor the play's impulse against showing certain events. I think many directors might be tempted to stage the bed trick in the interest of narrative clarity, but it felt intentional to me that the audience not be allowed to see that. As that moment of consummation represents such a major transformation for both Helen and Bertram, it seemed somehow perfect that Shakespeare leads us right up to that scene, then suddenly takes the characters away to somewhere where we can't see exactly what they go through—where a miracle can occur—and then brings them back radically changed. Both Helen and Bertram's speech and behavior change fundamentally from Act 4 Scene 3 on—after the point in the play where the bed trick would occur. So we come to understand what has happened not by seeing the event itself, but by seeing how it has changed the human beings that were involved in it. By keeping the bed trick offstage, Shakespeare allows the event to

assume a more mythic size than anything that could be shown onstage.

The absence of so many of the play's events from the stage also pulls our focus to the events that actually do occur onstage—Bertram's rejection of Helen, his decision to run away, Parolles' betrayal of Bertram, and Helen's eventual acceptance of him following his pleas of "pardon." These are the events that really delineate that play's most significant journey—the evolution of the relationships between Helen, Bertram, and Parolles—and this journey becomes so much clearer because so many of the other events occur outside of our view.

In terms of how all of this affected our production, I think it was this emphasis on human behavior that led me to take a decidedly Chekhovian approach to the production. The autumn became a major reference point in terms of the physical world, and it was important to me that the play finish in a sort of "magical fall," which captured not only the play's particular pensiveness and its emphasis on time and age, but also its capacity for miraculous redemption. The actors' work also focused on the exploration of those fine details and nuances of human behavior that we frequently associate with Chekhov. All of this, I believe, stems in some degree from the play's emphasis on language, and its tendency to talk about an event rather than to show it directly.

**Shakespeare often yokes together seemingly incompatible plot elements; is *All's Well* a radical play about the removal of class barriers and a woman's right to choose her partner, or a fairy tale with its roots in folklore, or something between the two?**

**Doran:** It's a bittersweet play, a sort of realistic fairy tale. It has fairytale elements, but I think you have to root it in reality. We didn't heighten the sense of fairy tale. I took a rather historicist point of view about the play, again in relationship to the Sonnets. It seemed to me that you could quite easily connect Bertram to either the Earl of Pembroke or Henry Wriothesley, the Earl of Southampton, two of Shakespeare's patrons, both of whom, like

Bertram, had refused marriages to women who they thought were not right for them. I was also fascinated by the possibility that Shakespeare and the King's Men, in order to avoid the plague in 1603, had come to Wilton House, where Mary Pembroke, Sidney's sister, ran this sort of Academy and patronized many poets, writers, and scientists. This was the world of the Countess of Rossillion. We were therefore quite specific and set our production absolutely in 1603/1604.

It's a Blackfriars play rather than a Globe play. It has a concentration of thought and an ambiguity of character which is interesting. From one point of view, Helen is a stalker: she wants her man and she stalks him all the way to Paris and he finds himself stuck with marrying her. That's not the basis for a great relationship, is it? On the other hand, she recognizes something profound about her love for him.

We were interested in the class element in the Sonnets, where the poet is devoted to the young man who is way beyond him in terms of social standing. Shakespeare was just an ordinary boy from Warwickshire, and perhaps in the portrait of Helen there was something autobiographical. Also in Parolles—from the French word *parole*: what better way for Shakespeare to disguise himself than to call himself “words”? Parolles is a spectacular wordsmith. He is also a pompous braggart, but he learns something very precise about living life.

**Fried:** I think it's something between the two. When I first encountered *All's Well That Ends Well*, what initially appealed to me was the way that it begins very much like a fairy tale, but that as the young characters go out into the world and actually experience life, the fairy tale breaks down. Shakespeare pushes the story beyond its fairytale roots into a far more complicated exploration of human behavior, and also of the flaws in each of us and in the world we live in.

That said, I don't think that the play ever really becomes so direct as to be called “a radical play about the removal of class barriers and a woman's right to choose her partner.” Helen's “right” to

choose Bertram isn't really the central question of the play—as the Countess gives Helen her blessing in the play's third scene, and the King sanctions the union three scenes after that. While class barriers certainly play a huge role in the play, I think Shakespeare is trying to get at something even deeper and more universal, and the barriers between Helen and Bertram are simply a device Shakespeare uses to get at the idea of an “impossible dream.” He seems to be asking, “What do you do when you achieve your dream and it turns out to be something less perfect than you imagined it to be?” Is the thing you have always aspired toward worth pursuing if it reveals itself to be flawed? In this way, Shakespeare seems to be interrogating the idea of a fairy tale quite brilliantly. The world will never live up to our happily-ever-after aspirations, he seems to be saying, so how should we cope with the inevitable disappointments of human existence? In this way, the play's tone becomes almost Shavian: an idealistic and somewhat naive heroine pursues a goal obsessively, only to discover that that goal isn't all that she thought it would be, and as a result, she's forced to mature and develop a more nuanced and pragmatic worldview.

**It has been suggested that *All's Well* is the “lost” Shakespeare play, *Love's Labour's Won*; did you give any credence to this theory and did your production glance at the idea at all?**

**Doran:** No. I know what *Love's Labour's Won* is, I am absolutely certain of it: it's *Much Ado About Nothing*. When I did *Love's Labour's Lost* with David Tennant and Nina Sosanya, the relationship between Rosaline and Berowne is left at the end with the imposition of one year in which they have to be apart from each other. Berowne has to go and tend the sick. So as the relationship ends you don't know when or whether these people are going to get back together.

At the beginning of *Much Ado About Nothing* Beatrice and Benedick have this past history. They have been wounded. Maybe he didn't come back after the year apart, or she believed his promises but he didn't quite live up to them. But he's still a wit and

the relationship between Rosaline and Berowne transmogrifies into Benedick and Beatrice. So I am sure that *All's Well That Ends Well* is not *Love's Labour's Won*, but *Much Ado About Nothing* is. It never occurred to us that this had any relationship to *Love's Labour's Won*, because ultimately the love's labors *aren't* won.

**Fried:** I can't say that I ever thought about this while working on *All's Well That Ends Well*. I had heard a theory that *Much Ado About Nothing* was actually the lost *Love's Labour's Won*, and the similarities between that play and *Love's Labour's Lost*, and particularly between Berowne and Rosaline and Benedick and Beatrice, always gave this theory a little more plausibility for me.

**Helen's often seen as a problematic heroine; many have questioned why someone so clever and lively falls for and then has the bad taste to foist herself on an unattractive spoiled brat, using the morally dubious bed trick. How did you reconcile the different aspects of her character?**

**Doran:** I think she has a certainty about her: she knows this is right. The bed trick is seen from her perspective as a sort of corrective for Bertram's bad behavior. Bertram is immature; he doesn't want to be shackled by marriage or by the society of the French court. Going off and becoming General of the Horse is liberating for him; he wants to sow his wild oats and play the field. Diana realizes how attractive this young man is and although she resists him he has a kind of charisma that is irresistible to somebody like Helen. She firmly believes she is the one who can solve his problems; she will make him fall in love with her. His mother, the Countess, sees that this love is there, does not object to it on class grounds because she sees the virtue and integrity in Helen and therefore allows the depth of her love to prosper.

**Fried:** As I was working on *All's Well That Ends Well*, I frequently found myself defending the play against critics who took issue with Helen's love for the seemingly undeserving Bertram. Without

question, Helen's flight from Rossillion at the end of Act 3 Scene 2, and her continued pursuit of Bertram in Florence even after he has so harshly rejected her, pose a problem for any postfeminist reading of the play. Yet I feel quite strongly that to look at the play as the story of a "clever and lively heroine who falls for an unattractive spoiled brat" denies the possibility that both Helen and Bertram must change and mature over the course of the play. I think it's very important to recognize—as I strove to make clear through my production—that Helen begins the play as a fairly sheltered and somewhat naive girl who confuses childlike obsession and idol worship with mature love. It is only after her idol rejects her that she must then confront reality and mature into the woman who, presented with Bertram at the end of the play, is able to define the terms by which she is to be wed rather than simply giving herself over unquestioningly.

This doesn't completely solve the problem of why Helen continues to pursue Bertram even after he rejects her. Yet I think it's unfair to expect that Helen should behave rationally when it comes to Bertram. How often is love rational? And how frequently has each of us fallen head over heels for someone completely undeserving of that love? Is Helen's love for Bertram easy to watch? Certainly not. But does it reveal a deeply honest truth about the irrational and inexplicable actions of the human heart? Without a doubt. In my production, when Helen mused in Act 4 Scene 4, "But, O strange men, / That can such sweet use make of what they hate," she seemed to recognize both the irrationality and also the inevitability of her love. Fully aware of Bertram's disdain for her, she was nonetheless filled with wonder over the sweetness of their night together.

Regarding the bed trick, by the time it appears in the play we've seen Helen put through so much abuse that I think most audience members are willing to forgive the moral questions that this tactic raises. More importantly, this shockingly cynical and pragmatic approach to winning a husband represents an important stage of Helen's maturation—gone are her more noble fantasies of how a man ought to be won, and she is now willing to face the world with

all of its ugliness, to roll up her sleeves, and to do whatever she needs to do to get what she wants. In her bold disregard for the conventional morality that would stop such actions, there is, ironically, a unique sort of feminism. She doesn't particularly care about the morality behind what she's doing; for better or for worse, she's out to win Bertram, and understands that she must beat him at his own game in order to do so.

**Bertram seems to have no redeeming qualities as a character and when cornered performs a one-line volte-face; how did you handle him and his sudden change of heart?**

**Doran:** I think he is young, and I know that is often an excuse, but I think his youth and his hot temper make him behave impulsively. Such is the strength of Helen's love that I think that Bertram is moved in the final moments to realize that here is a good woman who loves him, and could he really ask for more than that? But there is still at the end a question of whether or not the marriage is going to be happy. Has she tamed him? Is that morally acceptable? That ambiguity is at the heart of the play and is what makes it one of the "problem plays," as they used to be called, of that middle period.

**Fried:** As unpleasantly pragmatic as it sounds, the first advice that I would give to any director of *All's Well That Ends Well* is to be sure when casting Bertram to find a dazzlingly charismatic young man whose charm and allure radiate even when he has nothing to say, and even in spite of the many unpleasant things that Shakespeare has given him to say. Without this, the audience will have a very hard time understanding and sympathizing with Helen's obsession with him, and in order for the play to "work," I think that we must be able to sympathize with Helen.

I also think that it's crucial that, like Helen, Bertram be allowed to mature and develop over the course of the production, and not be played as fully formed at the beginning. We must meet him not as a confirmed cad, but as a young man who still has a huge amount to

learn, whose head is filled with misconceptions as to what “honour” and “nobility” really mean, and who is heading out into the world seeking these ideals having put all of his trust in the hands of a rascal named Parolles. It is easy for a production to dismiss Parolles as simply a clownish jokester, but I think that Bertram’s ultimate redemption (and thus, the play’s resolution and our ability to believe in Helen) is only possible if we understand that Bertram starts the play misguidedly trusting Parolles with his life. For this reason, I pushed Parolles away from a clownish fool and toward a more believably cynical and self-serving young man with great charisma, huge ambitions, and few, if any, scruples. In this way, Bertram’s admiration and trust in him becomes more real and, as a result, Parolles’ betrayal becomes a crushing event for Bertram. It forces him to reassess his estimation of the people around him, and ultimately to transform into a man that we can tolerate Helen ending up with. When Bertram enters into Act 4 Scene 3, since the last time we have seen him he has received news of both Helen’s supposed death and his mother’s approbation, he has slept with a woman he believed to be Diana, and he has also been informed that his best friend has offered to betray the secrets of the camp, so the man who enters into this scene is a very different Bertram than the man we last saw wooing Diana. It was important to me that his speech, “I have tonight dispatched sixteen businesses, a month’s length apiece ...,” be filled with a sort of distracted wonder, as if the sheer volume of life experience he has acquired in the last several hours has forced him to reconsider the life choices he has made thus far in the play. By the end of this scene, his dearest friend will be revealed to him as even more insidious than he previously thought possible, so Bertram leaves Florence a shaken man, eager to create himself anew upon his return to Rossillion.

Bertram’s lies and harsh lines toward Diana in the play’s final scene do seem to problematize his redemption, but in the context of Act 5 Scene 3, these flagrant displays of his still deeply fault-ridden character function as the final purging of his moral recklessness. Here, at the end of the play, Bertram reveals just how repugnant he is capable of being. His ugly display crests in its finale of calling



Diana “that which any inferior might / At market-price have bought.” And yet, as heinous as his behavior is, it is now out in the open. He no longer has Parolles to blame his sins on, and must now take full responsibility for his actions and suffer the disdain of every other character onstage (as well as of the audience) in a way that he hasn’t been forced to until now. The young man who left home five acts ago in pursuit of honor and nobility must now feel what it means to be publicly stripped of both. From this moment in which his lies are revealed and he confesses to having slept with Diana (as he believes himself to have done), Bertram then remains mysteriously silent until the moment when Helen reappears. This silence, I believe, bespeaks his recognition of his own moral failure, so that when Helen reappears, and he is presented, after suffering such public shame, with the woman he believes himself to have killed, his only recourse is to beg the pardon of Helen and everyone else around him. We must believe that his “O, pardon!” comes from the very depths of his soul, as he has now achieved full recognition of his sins and is prepared to reform.



6. Stephen Fried’s 2010 production for the Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey with Clifton Duncan as Bertram, “not ... a confirmed cad, but ... a young man who

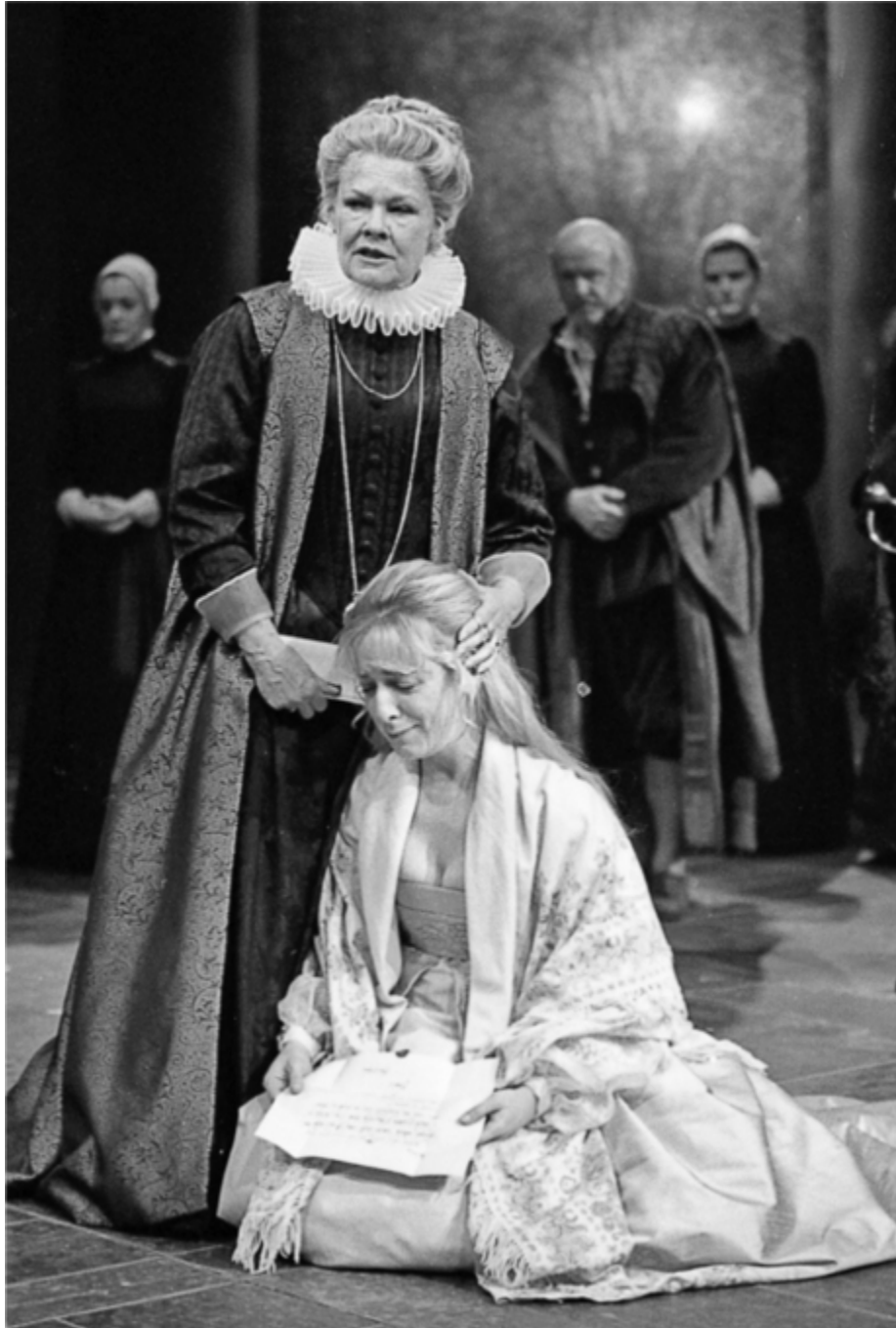
still has a huge amount to learn,” and Ellen Adair as Helen, “a somewhat naive girl” who has to “confront reality” in order to “mature into the woman.”

**George Bernard Shaw famously thought the Countess “the most beautiful old woman’s part ever written”; is that what you found?**

**Doran:** I told Judi Dench that, although I think I left out the “old” part! It is a beautiful part; the Countess is the moral heart of the play. I think Trevor Nunn knew that when he cast Peggy Ashcroft. That production was meant to open the Swan Theatre, although the opening was delayed so it ended up playing in the main house. Judi Dench was attracted to the role partly to come back to Stratford and to the Swan, but the Countess is the still center of the play and of Rossillion, which makes her a deeply attractive character. She found expression even in the silences of the Countess; there was one moment when Helen is revealed at the end to have come back and Judi simply opened her hands, giving a gesture of acceptance, relief, and acknowledgment, which was very, very beautiful. But she also conveyed the rage of the Countess, the sense of fun in the Countess’s relationship with Lavatch, and the depth of her own loss when she loses her son to Court.

**Fried:** I would agree wholeheartedly. At some point during rehearsals we realized that she might be the only example (or at least one of the few) of a truly good parent in all of Shakespeare. Shakespeare’s parental figures generally tend to have some major flaw. Capulet has a violent temper. Eleanor, Elizabeth, and Constance all seem out for political gain. Henry IV is somewhat ineffective. Volumnia (while fabulous) seems a bit manipulative. Even Prospero can seem a little overly protective of Miranda. But the Countess seems to be motivated simply by pure love for both her son and for Helen. And it’s for this reason that it is so incredibly heartbreaking when her son disappoints her. When she laments, in Act 3 Scene 4, that “My heart is heavy and mine age is weak. / Grief

would have tears, and sorrow bids me speak,” we are forced to consider every wound that we have ever inflicted upon our own parents.



7. Gregory Doran's 2003 RSC production in the Swan Theatre with Judi Dench as the Countess of Rossillion and Claudie Blakley as Helena: "The Countess is the still

center of the play and of Rossillion, which makes her a deeply attractive character. She [Judi] found expression even in the silences of the Countess.”

***All's Well That Ends Well* is a comforting thought, but how well does the play end and what does it mean by “end” anyway?**

**Doran:** We always felt that it should be called *All's Well That Ends Well?* with a question mark, because the ending is so ambiguous. There's a chill to the play. It is perhaps not Shakespeare's most congenial play. It fits into that middle period; it doesn't have the snarl of *Troilus and Cressida* or the decadence of *Measure for Measure*, but it does have this ache in it, which fits very much in that period. “All's well that ends well” is an aspiration that rather than a certainty.

**Fried:** I see the title as a somewhat open question that the play asks of its audience: if we find our way toward ultimate redemption, can we forgive the sins committed along the way? Helen seems quite resolute that “all's well that ends well,” as she twice argues to the Widow and Diana, but I think that Shakespeare intended to leave the question of whether the end really does justify the means somewhat ambiguous.

In a more abstract sense, the notion that “all's well that ends well” also gets at the possibility of salvation. It's what we're asked to consider when assessing both Bertram's and Parolles' characters; these two young men both commit gross acts of misjudgment causing great pain to those around them, and yet they each (Bertram through Helen and Parolles through Lafew) find their way toward self-recognition and reformation. They both, in essence, “end well.” So can we forgive them for everything they did along the way? The play forces us to consider how much we believe that a human being is actually capable of change, and how much we are willing to forgive in other people.

GUY HENRY ON PLAYING PAROLLES

**Guy Henry** was born in 1960 and trained at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London. In 1982 he played the title role in ITV's *Young Sherlock Holmes* series. He has since enjoyed wide success as an actor on stage, in radio, film, and television. He first joined the RSC in 1991 and has played many well-known Shakespearean roles, including Sir Andrew Aguecheek (1996), Dr. Caius (*The Merry Wives of Windsor* 1997), Malvolio (2001), and the title role in *King John* (2001), the same year in which he won the TMA/Barclays Best Supporting Actor award for his Mosca in *Volpone* (1999), directed by Lindsay Posner. Guy is probably most widely known for his film role as Pius Thicknesse in the film *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. He has also worked with Cheek by Jowl and at the National Theatre as Turgenev in Tom Stoppard's *The Coast of Utopia* (2002). He is here discussing his much lauded performance as Parolles in the 2003 *All's Well That Ends Well* directed by Gregory Doran.

**Why do you think Parolles is such a large part in the play, second only to Helen in terms of lines? Is it something to do with the play's emphasis on language: the high incidence of rhyming couplets, proverbs, and sayings, "telling" rather than "showing," apart from a character actually called Parolles ("words")?**

I think Shakespeare probably knew when he was on to a good thing. He invented a character that is full of warmth and eccentricity, foibles and failings, and has an extraordinary range of humanity; he must have wanted to put him into all sorts of situations. I think he knew that he'd created a character that was going to be very watchable and very interesting. He is also very different; he's not like anyone else in the play, indeed I suspect he's not like many other characters who have ever been written. He was an invented character and doesn't appear in the source material, so there must have been an element of creating this firework character, who is a catalyst in the play. He loves words. He's a liar and a braggart, a fantasist who lives in his own world. So he can go any which way:

he can say or do almost anything that Shakespeare wants him to. Once that character has come to a writer, it must be rather a gift.

**“Simply the thing I am / Shall make me live.” A fantastic line—how did you deliver it? And what “thing” do you think Parolles is or was and does he change?**



8. Guy Henry in Gregory Doran's 2003 production in the Swan Theatre in his "fantastic costume of rags and tatters." His Parolles "was obsessed with his scarves: that was all part of the pretence—anything to take the eye away from what's really going on. He loved anything flashy, he was like a magpie."

At the time Greg Doran asked me to do it I was working with Trevor Nunn at the National on *The Coast of Utopia*. I told Trevor and he said that if anyone ever doubted that Shakespeare was a great humanitarian and the great understander of human behavior, then he'd only have to point at the character of Parolles to show how Shakespeare believes humans are capable of change and redemption and generosity of spirit. I think that's right. That line comes after he's been beaten and tormented, and his mask has been ripped away. I was on my knees, sat back on my haunches, alone on the stage. Greg Doran quite rightly kept emphasizing the need to make it as simple as possible, because all the lying is gone. He sees a way to be much happier if he no longer piles layers of lies upon what he is and just tells the truth. It's a lovely thing to be able to play a character that has what some people call a journey, a change. He does. He goes very simply back to the court and I think all his lies and nonsense are forgiven. I remember thinking what a relief it must be not to have to bother to pretend anymore. That's one of the great moments in the play. It's interesting that a supposed upstanding and honorable gentleman like Bertram is in fact revealed as less generous-spirited than Parolles turns out to be.

**How does Parolles compare with other Shakespearean parts you've played?**

He is unique. He's not as stupid as Sir Andrew Aguecheek and he's not as wise as Feste. He reminds me more of Mosca in *Volpone*, in that he's a chancer and liar. He's nowhere near as clever as Mosca, but in terms of flashiness and extraordinary braggadocio behavior they are similar.

**There's a lot of discussion in the text of his clothes—how was that realized in production?**

I had a fantastic costume of rags and tatters. He was obsessed with his scarves: that was all part of the pretense—anything to take the eye away from what's really going on. He loved anything flashy: he was like a magpie. The first scene he has, with Helen, has a lot of rather dense, jokey stuff about virginity. I'm quite neurotic and I can get quite inhibited in rehearsal, which is not particularly helpful to the director or anyone else! That's a very naked scene to do, to come on and launch into all that stuff. So Greg Doran gave me something to do. He gave me a great big trunk with scarves hanging out of it. Parolles was going away with the soldiers so he was taking everything he could from his wardrobe. I would pull this trunk onstage and be packing a few things into it and then sit on it. Having something to tie the scene to and then having somewhere to sit naturally on a bare stage gave the scene, and the rehearsal of the scene, an anchor. And I think visually it told quite a bit about Parolles that out of everybody he had the biggest trunk!

**Your Parolles was very funny and widely praised—how did you handle the scenes in which he's captured, blindfolded, and then mercilessly exposed?**

He was brought in blindfolded on a cart. It was a really hard scene to make work. He is changed by it. He's stripped of all his braggadocio behavior. He thinks he's going to die and experiences abject terror. It's a difficult scene to play because you should try to make it as cruel and as unpleasant and frightening for him as possible. Of course it's also funny as well. It needs to be played with nothing held back.

**Do you think the designation of *All's Well* as a “problem” play is justified and why do you think it's so rarely been performed?**



In the same way that *The Taming of the Shrew* has its problems with modern sensibilities, I think people find the character of Bertram and his rejection of Helen difficult. It was very well played by Jamie Glover in our production, although I think he did consider it one of the more thankless parts because everybody hates you! Bertram's fiendishly difficult for a modern audience to like and that might be part of the reason for its comparative rarity in performance. But I've done several plays with Greg [Doran]—*Henry VIII*, *King John*, *All's Well*—that are all very rarely performed but, without wishing to sound arrogant, when we had a go at them and tried to play the truth and the humor of them, you couldn't see why people think they are problematic. Audiences love them and I think it's exciting to explore the plays that are done less frequently.

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\* St. Cloud: a suburb of Paris, known for wealth and high living.

\* The lines of the “conditioned couplet” are: “If she, my liege, can make me know this clearly, / I'll love her dearly, ever, ever dearly” (5.3.347–48).

# SHAKESPEARE'S CAREER IN THE THEATER

## BEGINNINGS

William Shakespeare was an extraordinarily intelligent man who was born and died in an ordinary market town in the English Midlands. He lived an uneventful life in an eventful age. Born in April 1564, he was the eldest son of John Shakespeare, a glove maker who was prominent on the town council until he fell into financial difficulties. Young William was educated at the local grammar in Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, where he gained a thorough grounding in the Latin language, the art of rhetoric, and classical poetry. He married Ann Hathaway and had three children (Susanna, then the twins Hamnet and Judith) before his twenty-first birthday: an exceptionally young age for the period. We do not know how he supported his family in the mid-1580s.

Like many clever country boys, he moved to the city in order to make his way in the world. Like many creative people, he found a career in the entertainment business. Public playhouses and professional full-time acting companies reliant on the market for their income were born in Shakespeare's childhood. When he arrived in London as a man, sometime in the late 1580s, a new phenomenon was in the making: the actor who is so successful that he becomes a "star." The word did not exist in its modern sense, but the pattern is recognizable: audiences went to the theater not so much to see a particular show as to witness the comedian Richard Tarlton or the dramatic actor Edward Alleyn.

Shakespeare was an actor before he was a writer. It appears not to have been long before he realized that he was never going to grow into a great comedian like Tarlton or a great tragedian like Alleyn.

Instead, he found a role within his company as the man who patched up old plays, breathing new life, new dramatic twists, into tired repertory pieces. He paid close attention to the work of the university-educated dramatists who were writing history plays and tragedies for the public stage in a style more ambitious, sweeping, and poetically grand than anything that had been seen before. But he may also have noted that what his friend and rival Ben Jonson would call “Marlowe’s mighty line” sometimes faltered in the mode of comedy. Going to university, as Christopher Marlowe did, was all well and good for honing the arts of rhetorical elaboration and classical allusion, but it could lead to a loss of the common touch. To stay close to a large segment of the potential audience for public theater, it was necessary to write for clowns as well as kings and to intersperse the flights of poetry with the humor of the tavern, the privy, and the brothel: Shakespeare was the first to establish himself early in his career as an equal master of tragedy, comedy, and history. He realized that theater could be the medium to make the national past available to a wider audience than the elite who could afford to read large history books: his signature early works include not only the classical tragedy *Titus Andronicus* but also the sequence of English historical plays on the Wars of the Roses.

He also invented a new role for himself, that of in-house company dramatist. Where his peers and predecessors had to sell their plays to the theater managers on a poorly paid piecework basis, Shakespeare took a percentage of the box-office income. The Lord Chamberlain’s Men constituted themselves in 1594 as a joint stock company, with the profits being distributed among the core actors who had invested as sharers. Shakespeare acted himself—he appears in the cast lists of some of Ben Jonson’s plays as well as the list of actors’ names at the beginning of his own collected works—but his principal duty was to write two or three plays a year for the company. By holding shares, he was effectively earning himself a royalty on his work, something no author had ever done before in England. When the Lord Chamberlain’s Men collected their fee for performance at court in the Christmas season of 1594, three of them went along to the Treasurer of the Chamber: not just Richard

Burbage the tragedian and Will Kempe the clown, but also Shakespeare the scriptwriter. That was something new.

The next four years were the golden period in Shakespeare's career, though overshadowed by the death of his only son, Hamnet, aged eleven, in 1596. In his early thirties and in full command of both his poetic and his theatrical medium, he perfected his art of comedy, while also developing his tragic and historical writing in new ways. In 1598, Francis Meres, a Cambridge University graduate with his finger on the pulse of the London literary world, praised Shakespeare for his excellence across the genres:

As Plautus and Seneca are accounted the best for comedy and tragedy among the Latins, so Shakespeare among the English is the most excellent in both kinds for the stage; for comedy, witness his *Gentlemen of Verona*, his *Errors*, his *Love Labours Lost*, his *Love Labours Won*, his *Midsummer Night Dream* and his *Merchant of Venice*: for tragedy his *Richard the 2*, *Richard the 3*, *Henry the 4*, *King John*, *Titus Andronicus* and his *Romeo and Juliet*.

For Meres, as for the many writers who praised the “honey-flowing vein” of *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*, narrative poems written when the theaters were closed due to plague in 1593–94, Shakespeare was marked above all by his linguistic skill, by the gift of turning elegant poetic phrases.

## PLAYHOUSES

Elizabethan playhouses were “thrust” or “one-room” theaters. To understand Shakespeare's original theatrical life, we have to forget about the indoor theater of later times, with its proscenium arch and curtain that would be opened at the beginning and closed at the end of each act. In the proscenium arch theater, stage and auditorium are effectively two separate rooms: the audience looks from one world into another as if through the imaginary “fourth wall” framed by the proscenium. The picture-frame stage, together with the elaborate scenic effects and backdrops beyond it, created the

illusion of a self-contained world—especially once nineteenth-century developments in the control of artificial lighting meant that the auditorium could be darkened and the spectators made to focus on the lighted stage. Shakespeare, by contrast, wrote for a bare platform stage with a standing audience gathered around it in a courtyard in full daylight. The audience were always conscious of themselves and their fellow spectators, and they shared the same “room” as the actors. A sense of immediate presence and the creation of rapport with the audience were all-important. The actor could not afford to imagine he was in a closed world, with silent witnesses dutifully observing him from the darkness.

Shakespeare’s theatrical career began at the Rose Theatre in Southwark. The stage was wide and shallow, trapezoid in shape, like a lozenge. This design had a great deal of potential for the theatrical equivalent of cinematic split-screen effects, whereby one group of characters would enter at the door at one end of the tiring-house wall at the back of the stage and another group through the door at the other end, thus creating two rival tableaux. Many of the battle-heavy and faction-filled plays that premiered at the Rose have scenes of just this sort.

At the rear of the Rose stage, there were three capacious exits, each over ten feet wide. Unfortunately, the very limited excavation of a fragmentary portion of the original Globe site, in 1989, revealed nothing about the stage. The first Globe was built in 1599 with similar proportions to those of another theater, the Fortune, albeit that the former was polygonal and looked circular, whereas the latter was rectangular. The building contract for the Fortune survives and allows us to infer that the stage of the Globe was probably substantially wider than it was deep (perhaps forty-three feet wide and twenty-seven feet deep). It may well have been tapered at the front, like that of the Rose.

The capacity of the Globe was said to have been enormous, perhaps in excess of three thousand. It has been conjectured that about eight hundred people may have stood in the yard, with two thousand or more in the three layers of covered galleries. The other “public” playhouses were also of large capacity, whereas the indoor

Blackfriars theater that Shakespeare's company began using in 1608—the former refectory of a monastery—had overall internal dimensions of a mere forty-six by sixty feet. It would have made for a much more intimate theatrical experience and had a much smaller capacity, probably of about six hundred people. Since they paid at least sixpence a head, the Blackfriars attracted a more select or “private” audience. The atmosphere would have been closer to that of an indoor performance before the court in the Whitehall Palace or at Richmond. That Shakespeare always wrote for indoor production at court as well as outdoor performance in the public theater should make us cautious about inferring, as some scholars have, that the opportunity provided by the intimacy of the Blackfriars led to a significant change toward a “chamber” style in his last plays—which, besides, were performed at both the Globe and the Blackfriars. After the occupation of the Blackfriars a five-act structure seems to have become more important to Shakespeare. That was because of artificial lighting: there were musical interludes between the acts, while the candles were trimmed and replaced. Again, though, something similar must have been necessary for indoor court performances throughout his career.

Front of house there were the “gatherers” who collected the money from audience members: a penny to stand in the open-air yard, another penny for a place in the covered galleries, sixpence for the prominent “lord's rooms” to the side of the stage. In the indoor “private” theaters, gallants from the audience who fancied making themselves part of the spectacle sat on stools on the edge of the stage itself. Scholars debate as to how widespread this practice was in the public theaters such as the Globe. Once the audience were in place and the money counted, the gatherers were available to be extras onstage. That is one reason why battles and crowd scenes often come later rather than early in Shakespeare's plays. There was no formal prohibition upon performance by women, and there certainly were women among the gatherers, so it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that female crowd members were played by females.

The play began at two o'clock in the afternoon and the theater had to be cleared by five. After the main show, there would be a jig—which consisted not only of dancing but also of knockabout comedy (it is the origin of the farcical “afterpiece” in the eighteenth-century theater). So the time available for a Shakespeare play was about two and a half hours, somewhere between the “two hours’ traffic” mentioned in the prologue to *Romeo and Juliet* and the “three hours’ spectacle” referred to in the preface to the 1647 Folio of Beaumont and Fletcher’s plays. The prologue to a play by Thomas Middleton refers to a thousand lines as “one hour’s words,” so the likelihood is that about two and a half thousand, or a maximum of three thousand lines, made up the performed text. This is indeed the length of most of Shakespeare’s comedies, whereas many of his tragedies and histories are much longer, raising the possibility that he wrote full scripts, possibly with eventual publication in mind, in the full knowledge that the stage version would be heavily cut. The short Quarto texts published in his lifetime—they used to be called “Bad” Quartos—provide fascinating evidence as to the kind of cutting that probably took place. So, for instance, the First Quarto of *Hamlet* neatly merges two occasions when Hamlet is overheard, the “Fishmonger” and the “nunnery” scenes.

The social composition of the audience was mixed. The poet Sir John Davies wrote of “A thousand townsmen, gentlemen and whores, / Porters and servingmen” who would “together throng” at the public playhouses. Though moralists associated female play-going with adultery and the sex trade, many perfectly respectable citizens’ wives were regular attendees. Some, no doubt, resembled the modern groupie: a story attested in two different sources has one citizen’s wife making a post-show assignation with Richard Burbage and ending up in bed with Shakespeare—supposedly eliciting from the latter the quip that William the Conqueror was before Richard III. Defenders of theater liked to say that by witnessing the comeuppance of villains on the stage, audience members would repent of their own wrongdoings, but the reality is that most people went to the theater then, as they do now, for entertainment more than moral edification. Besides, it would be

foolish to suppose that audiences behaved in a homogeneous way: a pamphlet of the 1630s tells of how two men went to see *Pericles* and one of them laughed while the other wept. Bishop John Hall complained that people went to church for the same reasons that they went to the theater: “for company, for custom, for recreation ... to feed his eyes or his ears ... or perhaps for sleep.”

Men-about-town and clever young lawyers went to be seen as much as to see. In the modern popular imagination, shaped not least by *Shakespeare in Love* and the opening sequence of Laurence Olivier’s *Henry V* film, the penny-paying groundlings stand in the yard hurling abuse or encouragement and hazelnuts or orange peel at the actors, while the sophisticates in the covered galleries appreciate Shakespeare’s soaring poetry. The reality was probably the other way around. A “groundling” was a kind of fish, so the nickname suggests the penny audience standing below the level of the stage and gazing in silent open-mouthed wonder at the spectacle unfolding above them. The more difficult audience members, who kept up a running commentary of clever remarks on the performance and who occasionally got into quarrels with players, were the gallants. Like Hollywood movies in modern times, Elizabethan and Jacobean plays exercised a powerful influence on the fashion and behavior of the young. John Marston mocks the lawyers who would open their lips, perhaps to court a girl, and out would “flow / Naught but pure Juliet and Romeo.”

## THE ENSEMBLE AT WORK

In the absence of typewriters and photocopying machines, reading aloud would have been the means by which the company got to know a new play. The tradition of the playwright reading his complete script to the assembled company endured for generations. A copy would then have been taken to the Master of the Revels for licensing. The theater book-holder or prompter would then have copied the parts for distribution to the actors. A partbook consisted of the character’s lines, with each speech preceded by the last three or four words of the speech before, the so-called “cue.” These would



have been taken away and studied or “conned.” During this period of learning the parts, an actor might have had some one-to-one instruction, perhaps from the dramatist, perhaps from a senior actor who had played the same part before, and, in the case of an apprentice, from his master. A high percentage of Desdemona’s lines occur in dialogue with Othello, of Lady Macbeth’s with Macbeth, Cleopatra’s with Antony, and Volumnia’s with Coriolanus. The roles would almost certainly have been taken by the apprentice of the lead actor, usually Burbage, who delivers the majority of the cues. Given that apprentices lodged with their masters, there would have been ample opportunity for personal instruction, which may be what made it possible for young men to play such demanding parts.



9. Hypothetical reconstruction of the interior of an Elizabethan playhouse during a performance.

After the parts were learned, there may have been no more than a single rehearsal before the first performance. With six different plays to be put on every week, there was no time for more. Actors, then, would go into a show with a very limited sense of the whole.

The notion of a collective rehearsal process that is itself a process of discovery for the actors is wholly modern and would have been incomprehensible to Shakespeare and his original ensemble. Given the number of parts an actor had to hold in his memory, the forgetting of lines was probably more frequent than in the modern theater. The book-holder was on hand to prompt.

Backstage personnel included the property man, the tire-man who oversaw the costumes, call boys, attendants, and the musicians, who might play at various times from the main stage, the rooms above, and within the tiring-house. Scriptwriters sometimes made a nuisance of themselves backstage. There was often tension between the acting companies and the freelance playwrights from whom they purchased scripts: it was a smart move on the part of Shakespeare and the Lord Chamberlain's Men to bring the writing process in-house.

Scenery was limited, though sometimes set pieces were brought on (a bank of flowers, a bed, the mouth of hell). The trapdoor from below, the gallery stage above, and the curtained discovery-space at the back allowed for an array of special effects: the rising of ghosts and apparitions, the descent of gods, dialogue between a character at a window and another at ground level, the revelation of a statue or a pair of lovers playing at chess. Ingenious use could be made of props, as with the ass's head in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In a theater that does not clutter the stage with the material paraphernalia of everyday life, those objects that are deployed may take on powerful symbolic weight, as when Shylock bears his weighing scales in one hand and knife in the other, thus becoming a parody of the figure of Justice who traditionally bears a sword and a balance. Among the more significant items in the property cupboard of Shakespeare's company, there would have been a throne (the "chair of state"), joint stools, books, bottles, coins, purses, letters (which are brought onstage, read, or referred to on about eighty occasions in the complete works), maps, gloves, a set of stocks (in which Kent is put in *King Lear*), rings, rapiers, daggers, broadswords, staves, pistols, masks and vizards, heads and skulls, torches and tapers and lanterns which served to signal night scenes on the daylit

stage, a buck's head, an ass's head, animal costumes. Live animals also put in appearances, most notably the dog Crab in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and possibly a young polar bear in *The Winter's Tale*.

The costumes were the most important visual dimension of the play. Playwrights were paid between £2 and £6 per script, whereas Alleyn was not averse to paying £20 for "a black velvet cloak with sleeves embroidered all with silver and gold." No matter the period of the play, actors always wore contemporary costume. The excitement for the audience came not from any impression of historical accuracy, but from the richness of the attire and perhaps the trans-gressive thrill of the knowledge that here were commoners like themselves strutting in the costumes of courtiers in effective defiance of the strict sumptuary laws whereby in real life people had to wear the clothes that befitted their social station.

To an even greater degree than props, costumes could carry symbolic importance. Racial characteristics could be suggested: a breastplate and helmet for a Roman soldier, a turban for a Turk, long robes for exotic characters such as Moors, a gabardine for a Jew. The figure of Time, as in *The Winter's Tale*, would be equipped with hourglass, scythe, and wings; Rumour, who speaks the prologue of *2 Henry IV*, wore a costume adorned with a thousand tongues. The wardrobe in the tiring-house of the Globe would have contained much of the same stock as that of rival manager Philip Henslowe at the Rose: green gowns for outlaws and foresters, black for melancholy men such as Jaques and people in mourning such as the Countess in *All's Well That Ends Well* (at the beginning of *Hamlet*, the prince is still in mourning black when everyone else is in festive garb for the wedding of the new king), a gown and hood for a friar (or a feigned friar like the duke in *Measure for Measure*), blue coats and tawny to distinguish the followers of rival factions, a leather apron and ruler for a carpenter (as in the opening scene of *Julius Caesar*—and in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, where this is the only sign that Peter Quince is a carpenter), a cockle hat with staff and a pair of sandals for a pilgrim or palmer (the disguise assumed by Helen in *All's Well*), bodices and kirtles with farthingales beneath for

the boys who are to be dressed as girls. A gender switch such as that of Rosalind or Jessica seems to have taken between fifty and eighty lines of dialogue—Viola does not resume her “maiden weeds,” but remains in her boy’s costume to the end of *Twelfth Night* because a change would have slowed down the action at just the moment it was speeding to a climax. Henslowe’s inventory also included “a robe for to go invisible”: Oberon, Puck, and Ariel must have had something similar.

As the costumes appealed to the eyes, so there was music for the ears. Comedies included many songs. Desdemona’s willow song, perhaps a late addition to the text, is a rare and thus exceptionally poignant example from tragedy. Trumpets and tuckets sounded for ceremonial entrances, drums denoted an army on the march. Background music could create atmosphere, as at the beginning of *Twelfth Night*, during the lovers’ dialogue near the end of *The Merchant of Venice*, when the statue seemingly comes to life in *The Winter’s Tale*, and for the revival of Pericles and of Lear (in the Quarto text, but not the Folio). The haunting sound of the hautboy suggested a realm beyond the human, as when the god Hercules is imagined deserting Mark Antony. Dances symbolized the harmony of the end of a comedy—though in Shakespeare’s world of mingled joy and sorrow, someone is usually left out of the circle.

The most important resource was, of course, the actors themselves. They needed many skills: in the words of one contemporary commentator, “dancing, activity, music, song, elocution, ability of body, memory, skill of weapon, pregnancy of wit.” Their bodies were as significant as their voices. Hamlet tells the player to “suit the action to the word, the word to the action”: moments of strong emotion, known as “passions,” relied on a repertoire of dramatic gestures as well as a modulation of the voice. When Titus Andronicus has had his hand chopped off, he asks, “How can I grace my talk, / Wanting a hand to give it action?” A pen portrait of “The Character of an Excellent Actor” by the dramatist John Webster is almost certainly based on his impression of Shakespeare’s leading man, Richard Burbage: “By a full and significant action of body, he charms our attention: sit in a full

theatre, and you will think you see so many lines drawn from the circumference of so many ears, whiles the actor is the centre....”

Though Burbage was admired above all others, praise was also heaped upon the apprentice players whose alto voices fitted them for the parts of women. A spectator at Oxford in 1610 records how the audience were reduced to tears by the pathos of Desdemona’s death. The puritans who fumed about the biblical prohibition upon cross-dressing and the encouragement to sodomy constituted by the sight of an adult male kissing a teenage boy onstage were a small minority. Little is known, however, about the characteristics of the leading apprentices in Shakespeare’s company. It may perhaps be inferred that one was a lot taller than the other, since Shakespeare often wrote for a pair of female friends, one tall and fair, the other short and dark (Helena and Hermia, Rosalind and Celia, Beatrice and Hero).

We know little about Shakespeare’s own acting roles—an early allusion indicates that he often took royal parts, and a venerable tradition gives him old Adam in *As You Like It* and the ghost of old King Hamlet. Save for Burbage’s lead roles and the generic part of the clown, all such castings are mere speculation. We do not even know for sure whether the original Falstaff was Will Kempe or another actor who specialized in comic roles, Thomas Pope.

Kempe left the company in early 1599. Tradition has it that he fell out with Shakespeare over the matter of excessive improvisation. He was replaced by Robert Armin, who was less of a clown and more of a cerebral wit: this explains the difference between such parts as Lancelet Gobbo and Dogberry, which were written for Kempe, and the more verbally sophisticated Feste and Lear’s Fool, which were written for Armin.

One thing that is clear from surviving “plots” or storyboards of plays from the period is that a degree of doubling was necessary. *2 Henry VI* has over sixty speaking parts, but more than half of the characters appear only in a single scene and most scenes have only six to eight speakers. At a stretch, the play could be performed by thirteen actors. When Thomas Platter saw *Julius Caesar* at the Globe in 1599, he noted that there were about fifteen. Why doesn’t Paris

go to the Capulet ball in *Romeo and Juliet*? Perhaps because he was doubled with Mercutio, who does. In *The Winter's Tale*, Mamillius might have come back as Perdita and Antigonus been doubled by Camillo, making the partnership with Paulina at the end a very neat touch. Titania and Oberon are often played by the same pair as Hippolyta and Theseus, suggesting a symbolic matching of the rulers of the worlds of night and day, but it is questionable whether there would have been time for the necessary costume changes. As so often, one is left in a realm of tantalizing speculation.

### THE KING'S MAN

On Queen Elizabeth's death in 1603, the new king, James I, who had held the Scottish throne as James VI since he had been an infant, immediately took the Lord Chamberlain's Men under his direct patronage. Henceforth they would be the King's Men, and for the rest of Shakespeare's career they were favored with far more court performances than any of their rivals. There even seem to have been rumors early in the reign that Shakespeare and Burbage were being considered for knighthoods, an unprecedented honor for mere actors—and one that in the event was not accorded to a member of the profession for nearly three hundred years, when the title was bestowed upon Henry Irving, the leading Shakespearean actor of Queen Victoria's reign.

Shakespeare's productivity rate slowed in the Jacobean years, not because of age or some personal trauma, but because there were frequent outbreaks of plague, causing the theaters to be closed for long periods. The King's Men were forced to spend many months on the road. Between November 1603 and 1608, they were to be found at various towns in the south and Midlands, though Shakespeare probably did not tour with them by this time. He had bought a large house back home in Stratford and was accumulating other property. He may indeed have stopped acting soon after the new king took the throne. With the London theaters closed so much of the time and a large repertoire on the stocks, Shakespeare seems to have focused his energies on writing a few long and complex tragedies that could

have been played on demand at court: *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Coriolanus*, and *Cymbeline* are among his longest and poetically grandest plays. *Macbeth* survives only in a shorter text, which shows signs of adaptation after Shakespeare's death. The bitterly satirical *Timon of Athens*, apparently a collaboration with Thomas Middleton that may have failed on the stage, also belongs to this period. In comedy, too, he wrote longer and morally darker works than in the Elizabethan period, pushing at the very bounds of the form in *Measure for Measure* and *All's Well That Ends Well*.

From 1608 onward, when the King's Men began occupying the indoor Blackfriars playhouse (as a winter house, meaning that they only used the outdoor Globe in summer?), Shakespeare turned to a more romantic style. His company had a great success with a revived and altered version of an old pastoral play called *Mucedorus*. It even featured a bear. The younger dramatist John Fletcher, meanwhile, sometimes working in collaboration with Francis Beaumont, was pioneering a new style of tragicomedy, a mix of romance and royalism laced with intrigue and pastoral excursions. Shakespeare experimented with this idiom in *Cymbeline*, and it was presumably with his blessing that Fletcher eventually took over as the King's Men's company dramatist. The two writers apparently collaborated on three plays in the years 1612–14: a lost romance called *Cardenio* (based on the love-madness of a character in Cervantes' *Don Quixote*), *Henry VIII* (originally staged with the title "All Is True"), and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, a dramatization of Chaucer's "Knight's Tale." These were written after Shakespeare's two final solo-authored plays, *The Winter's Tale*, a self-consciously old-fashioned work dramatizing the pastoral romance of his old enemy Robert Greene, and *The Tempest*, which at one and the same time drew together multiple theatrical traditions, diverse reading, and contemporary interest in the fate of a ship that had been wrecked on the way to the New World.

The collaborations with Fletcher suggest that Shakespeare's career ended with a slow fade rather than the sudden retirement supposed by the nineteenth-century Romantic critics who read Prospero's epilogue to *The Tempest* as Shakespeare's personal farewell to his

art. In the last few years of his life Shakespeare certainly spent more of his time in Stratford-upon-Avon, where he became further involved in property dealing and litigation. But his London life also continued. In 1613 he made his first major London property purchase: a freehold house in the Blackfriars district, close to his company's indoor theater. *The Two Noble Kinsmen* may have been written as late as 1614, and Shakespeare was in London on business a little over a year before he died of an unknown cause at home in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1616, probably on his fifty-second birthday.

About half the sum of his works were published in his lifetime, in texts of variable quality. A few years after his death, his fellow actors began putting together an authorized edition of his complete *Comedies, Histories and Tragedies*. It appeared in 1623, in large "Folio" format. This collection of thirty-six plays gave Shakespeare his immortality. In the words of his fellow dramatist Ben Jonson, who contributed two poems of praise at the start of the Folio, the body of his work made him "a monument without a tomb":

And art alive still while thy book doth live

And we have wits to read and praise to give ...

He was not of an age, but for all time!



## SHAKESPEARE'S WORKS: A CHRONOLOGY

1589–91

? *Arden of Faversham* (possible part authorship)

1589–92

*The Taming of the Shrew*

1589–92

? *Edward the Third* (possible part authorship)

1591

*The Second Part of Henry the Sixth*, originally called *The First Part of the Contention betwixt the Two Famous Houses of York and Lancaster* (element of coauthorship possible)

1591

*The Third Part of Henry the Sixth*, originally called *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York* (element of co-authorship probable)

1591–92

*The Two Gentlemen of Verona*

1591–92; perhaps revised 1594

*The Lamentable Tragedy of Titus Andronicus* (probably cowritten with, or revising an earlier version by, George Peele)

1592

*The First Part of Henry the Sixth*, probably with Thomas Nashe and others

1592/94

*King Richard the Third*

1593

*Venus and Adonis* (poem)

1593–94

*The Rape of Lucrece* (poem)

1593–1608

*Sonnets* (154 poems, published 1609 with *A Lover's Complaint*, a poem of disputed authorship)

1592–94/1600–03

*Sir Thomas More* (a single scene for a play originally by Anthony Munday, with other revisions by Henry Chettle, Thomas Dekker, and Thomas Heywood)

1594

*The Comedy of Errors*

1595

*Love's Labour's Lost*

1595–97

*Love's Labour's Won* (a lost play, unless the original title for another comedy)

1595–96

*A Midsummer Night's Dream*

1595–96

*The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*

1595–96

*King Richard the Second*

1595–97

*The Life and Death of King John* (possibly earlier)

1596–97

*The Merchant of Venice*

1596–97

*The First Part of Henry the Fourth*

1597–98

*The Second Part of Henry the Fourth*

1598

*Much Ado About Nothing*

1598–99

*The Passionate Pilgrim* (20 poems, some not by Shakespeare)

1599

*The Life of Henry the Fifth*

1599

“To the Queen” (epilogue for a court performance)

1599

*As You Like It*

1599

*The Tragedy of Julius Caesar*

1600–01

*The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* (perhaps revising an earlier version)

1600–01

*The Merry Wives of Windsor* (perhaps revising version of 1597–99)

1601

“Let the Bird of Loudest Lay” (poem, known since 1807 as “The Phoenix and Turtle” [turtledove])

1601

*Twelfth Night, or What You Will*

1601–02

*The Tragedy of Troilus and Cressida*

1604

*The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice*

1604

*Measure for Measure*

1605

*All's Well That Ends Well*

1605

*The Life of Timon of Athens*, with Thomas Middleton

1605–06

*The Tragedy of King Lear*

1605–08

? contribution to *The Four Plays in One* (lost, except for *A Yorkshire Tragedy*, mostly by Thomas Middleton)

1606

*The Tragedy of Macbeth* (surviving text has additional scenes by Thomas Middleton)

1606–07

*The Tragedy of Antony and Cleopatra*

1608

*The Tragedy of Coriolanus*

1608

*Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, with George Wilkins

1610

*The Tragedy of Cymbeline*

1611

*The Winter's Tale*

1611

*The Tempest*

1612–13

*Cardenio*, with John Fletcher (survives only in later adaptation called *Double Falsehood* by Lewis Theobald)

1613

*Henry VIII (All Is True)*, with John Fletcher

1613–14

*The Two Noble Kinsmen*, with John Fletcher

## FURTHER READING AND VIEWING

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including chapters on the Kemble “Text” and “All’s Well in America.” Part II discusses the critical history to 1964.

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Waller, Gary, “The Critical and Theatrical Emergence of *All’s Well That Ends Well*,” in *All’s Well That Ends Well: New Critical Essays* (2007), pp. 1–56. Excellent, varied collection of essays, covering aspects of the play from structure to genre, religion, gender politics, and performance.

#### AVAILABLE ON DVD

*All’s Well that Ends Well* directed by Elijah Moshinsky for BBC Shakespeare (1981, DVD 2006). Starring Angela Down, Ian Charleson, Michael Hordern, Celia Johnson, and Donald Sinden, it won both BAFTA and RTS awards and was considered one of the best of the BBC Shakespeare series.

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## List of parts

**HELEN** perhaps named after Helen of Troy, reputedly the most beautiful woman in the world and the cause of a great war

**LAFEW** some editions modernize to “**lafeu**” (*feu*, French for “fire”)

### Act 1 Scene 1

**1.1 Location:** *Rossillion (now Roussillon), ancient province in southern France, near the Pyrenees mountains*

**1 delivering** sending forth (plays on the sense of “giving birth”)

**4 attend** obey, heed

**5 in ward** under guardianship (as a minor who has inherited property)

**5 subjection** obedience, servitude as a subject/legal obligation

**6 of** in

**6 husband** i.e. protector

**7 generally** universally/to everyone

**8 hold** maintain

**8 virtue** benevolence

**8 whose** i.e. the Countess and Bertram

**8 stir ... wanted** provoke it even in those who lacked generosity

**9 where ... abundance** i.e. in the king

**11 amendment** recovery

**13 practices** medical treatments

**13 persecuted time** tormented his days/drawn out his suffering

**17 passage** turn of phrase/transition/event/death

**18 honesty** honor, integrity

**20 Would** I wish

**24 Narbon** Narbonne, southern French city near province of Roussillon

27 **still** yet/for ever  
30 **fistula** ulcer  
32 **notorious** widely known/evident  
35 **overlooking** guardianship  
35 **hopes ... good** i.e. high hopes for her  
36 **education** upbringing  
36 **dispositions** natural talents  
37 **unclean** naturally corrupted  
38 **virtuous qualities** fine learned accomplishments  
38 **go with pity** are mingled with regret  
40 **simpleness** unaffected simplicity (i.e. not mixed with vice)  
40 **derives** inherits  
43 **season** preserve/flavor  
45 **livelihood** animation  
46 **Go to** expression of dismissal (i.e. “come come”)  
47 **affect** assume/pretend to have  
47 **than to have** rather than genuinely feel one  
49 **of** due to  
51 **If ... mortal** i.e. if resisted, overabundant grief quickly dies  
53 **holy** sacred/respected  
54 **How ... that?** What does that mean? (some editors suppose the line is displaced and that it may be a response to Helen or the Countess, not Bertram)  
56 **manners** good conduct  
56 **shape** physical appearance  
56 **Thy** may thy  
56 **blood** nobility/parentage  
57 **empire** rule  
58 **birthright** inherited qualities

- 59 **able** ready/powerful enough
- 60 **power** ability, potential
- 60 **keep ... key** value your friend's life as dearly as your own
- 61 **checked** rebuked
- 62 **taxed** censured
- 62 **What** whatever
- 62 **more will** wishes to give you in addition
- 63 **pluck** draw
- 65 **unseasoned** inexperienced
- 67 **want** lack
- 67 **best** i.e. best advice
- 68 **his love** my love for him
- 70 **forged** created, imagined
- 71 **comfortable** comforting, supportive
- 72 **make much of** be attentive to
- 73 **hold** maintain
- 73 **credit** reputation/honor
- 76 **these ... him** i.e. the floods of tears she is shedding because of her unrequited love for Bertram do more honor to her father's memory than did the (fewer) tears wept at his death
- 79 **favour** image, face (puns on the sense of "love token")
- 80 **undone** ruined
- 81 **'Twere ... That** it is the same as if
- 84 **collateral** parallel but distant
- 85 **sphere** orbit (heavenly bodies were thought to be surrounded by hollow spheres that produced beautiful music as they rotated)
- 87 **hind** female deer (puns on sense of "servant")
- 88 **pretty** pleasing
- 90 **hawking** sharp, keen

- 91 **table** notebook, drawing tablet
- 91 **capable** appreciative, sensitive
- 92 **trick** distinguishing feature
- 92 **favour** face
- 93 **fancy** love/infatuation
- 94 **relics** i.e. memory
- 94 **Parolles** i.e. “words,” from French *paroles*
- 95 **his** i.e. Bertram’s
- 97 **great way** complete
- 97 **solely** wholly
- 98 **fixed** certain, established
- 98 **fit** suitably
- 99 **take place** take precedence/are accepted
- 99 **steely** i.e. hard, uncompromising
- 100 **Looks ... wind** are left out in the cold/look pale, unappealing
- 100 **Withal** therefore
- 100 **full oft** very often
- 101 **waiting on** attending, deferring to
- 101 **superfluous** extravagant, overabundant
- 102 **Save** God save
- 102 **queen** may play on “quean” (i.e. prostitute)
- 107 **stain** hint/taint
- 109 **barricado** barricade
- 110 **Keep** ensure he stays (plays on the sense of “build a fortified tower”)
- 112 **Unfold** reveal
- 113 **setting ... you** besieging you (with sexual connotations)
- 114 **undermine** overthrow/dig underneath to lay mines/burrow into sexually



114 **blow you up** cause an explosion/make you pregnant  
115 **Bless** (may God) protect  
116 **policy** stratagem  
118 **be blown up** gain an erection/have an orgasm  
119 **Marry** by the Virgin Mary  
119 **blowing him down** inducing his orgasm, and subsequent loss of erection  
120 **breach** vagina/hole in defenses  
120 **city** i.e. virginity  
120 **politic** prudent/strategic  
122 **rational increase** logical profit-making/an increase in rational beings through reproduction  
122 **got** begotten, conceived  
123 **That** that which  
123 **mettle** substance/coinage (indistinguishable from “metal” in Shakespearean usage)  
125 **found** i.e. duplicated in reproduction (by producing ten virgins)  
125 **cold** chaste  
127 **stand for’t** defend it  
129 **in’t** in its defense  
130 **part** behalf (puns on the sense of “genitals”)  
131 **infallible** certain  
131 **He ... virgin** i.e. like a virgin who refuses to reproduce, a crime likened to suicide  
133 **highways ... limit** traditionally suicides were buried at crossroads, in unconsecrated ground  
134 **desperate** reckless/dangerous  
134 **offendress** female offender  
135 **paring** rind  
136 **his** its

136 **stomach** appetite/pride  
137 **peevish** stubborn, perverse  
138 **inhibited** prohibited  
138 **canon** list of Church laws  
139 **lose** fail to profit (puns on the idea of “losing” one’s virginity)  
139 **Out with’t!** Away with it!/put it out to interest  
139 **make itself two** double in value (by increasing at rate of 10 percent per year)  
140 **principal** initial investment  
142 **How** what  
143 **it** i.e. virginity  
144 **gloss** freshness/shine  
144 **lying** remaining unused (may play on the sense of “lying down”)  
145 **vendible** salable, marketable  
145 **Answer ... request** respond to current consumer demand  
147 **suited** dressed  
147 **unsuitable** unfashionable  
148 **toothpick** ornate toothpicks were fashionable for a period  
148 **wear not** are not in fashion  
148 **date** fruit/age/penis  
149 **pie** with vaginal connotations  
149 **porridge** stew (with vaginal connotations)  
149 **in your cheek** i.e. as sign of increasing age  
151 **pears** with vaginal connotations  
151 **eats dryly** tastes dry  
155 **There** i.e. at court  
156 **mother** here begins a list of names and relationships found in love poetry

157 **phoenix** i.e. paragon, wonder (literally, mythical Arabian bird that was consumed by fire every five hundred years, then resurrected from the ashes; only one existed at a time)

161 **concord** harmony

161 **dulcet** sweet

162 **disaster** unlucky star

163 **fond** affectionate/foolish

163 **adoptious** adopted

163 **christendoms** baptismal (Christian) names

164 **blinking** blind

164 **gossips** is godparent to

165 **well** fortune

170 **body** i.e. something tangible

172 **baser stars** lesser fortunes

172 **shut ... in** confine us to

173 **effects of them** i.e. fulfilled wishes

174 **alone must think** must only think (not do)

175 **Returns us thanks** give us gratitude, reward

180 **Mars** Roman god of war

180 **ay** “I” in Folio, but likely to be heard by the audience as an ironic “yes” (Mars not being not known for charity)

183 **under** down/in a lowly position

185 **predominant** in the ascendant, dominant

186 **retrograde** moving in a contrary direction, backward

188 **backward** i.e. in retreat, fleeing the enemy

189 **advantage** tactical gain (Helen shifts the sense to “personal interest”)

191 **composition** mixture/constitution (plays on the sense of “truce”)

192 **wing** ability to fly swiftly/jacket's shoulder flap (may pun on the sense of "flank of troops")

192 **wear** fashion

194 **perfect** (the) complete

194 **in the which** i.e. in which manner

195 **naturalize** accustom

196 **capable of** receptive to/have (sexual) capacity for

197 **thrust** with sexual connotations

198 **makes thee away** sees you off

199 **leisure** opportunity

201 **use** treat/employ sexually

203 **fated** fateful/with power over destiny

205 **designs** undertakings/plans

205 **dull** sluggish

207 **feed** satisfy (my longing)

208 **The** across the

208 **space in fortune** gap in social status/difference in fortunes

209 **like likes** kindred affections

209 **native** closely related/of similar rank/natural

210 **strange attempts** extraordinary endeavors (to be united)

211 **weigh ... sense** evaluate their efforts according to common sense

213 **miss** fail to achieve

Act 1 Scene 2

1.2 **Location: Paris**

1.2 **Flourish** fanfare, usually accompanying a person in authority

1.2 **divers** various

1 **Florentines** people from Florence (northern Italian city, capital of Tuscany)

- 1 **Senoy**s people from Siena
- 1 **by th'ears** at odds, fighting
- 3 **braving** defiant
- 6 **cousin** fellow monarch of
- 7 **move** urge, appeal to
- 8 **dearest friend** i.e. Austria
- 9 **Prejudicates** prejudices
- 10 **make denial** i.e. deny aid to the Florentines
- 12 **Approved** established, proved
- 13 **credence** trust
- 14 **armed** fortified (against entreaties)
- 15 **Florence** ruler of Florence
- 16 **for** as for
- 16 **see** i.e. take part in
- 17 **service** military service
- 18 **stand** serve, fight
- 18 **part** side
- 20 **nursery** training ground
- 20 **sick** longing
- 21 **breathing and exploit** active military employment
- 26 **Frank** generous
- 26 **rather ... haste** more fastidious than hasty
- 27 **parts** qualities
- 30 **corporal soundess** good physical health
- 32 **tried** tested
- 32 **did ... service** had deep knowledge of military matters
- 33 **was Discipled of** taught/was taught by
- 34 **bravest** boldest/finest/noblest
- 35 **haggish** haglike, repulsive/frosty

36 **out of act** down beyond action  
36 **repairs** restores, revives  
40 **scorn** mockery  
40 **return ... unnoted** goes unheeded/is visited back upon them  
41 **Ere** before  
41 **levity in honour** lightheartedness in honorable action  
42 **contempt** neither contempt  
44 **equal** i.e. social equal  
44 **awaked** provoked  
45 **Clock to itself** true to itself, reliable, self-governing  
45 **true** exact  
46 **Exception** grievance/disapproval  
47 **hand** hand of action/hand of his honor's clock, showing the appropriate time  
47 **Who** those who  
48 **used** treated  
48 **another place** different (higher) rank  
49 **top** head  
51 **humbled** humbled himself  
52 **copy** example/model  
53 **them ... backward** men of today to be merely inferior  
57 **So ... epitaph** his epitaph is nowhere so profoundly confirmed  
57 **aproof** proof, experience/approbation  
60 **plausive** praising  
61 **scattered not** did not disperse randomly  
61 **grafted** cultivated deliberately  
62 **bear** i.e. bear fruit  
64 **On ... heel** at the conclusion and end  
64 **pastime** entertainment, leisure activity

65 **out** over  
66 **snuff** burnt-out wick/hindrance  
67 **apprehensive** perceptive/quick-witted  
69 **Mere ... garments** only capable of inventing new fashions  
69 **constancies** loyalties  
71 **I ... too** I, surviving him, also wish (plays on idea of following into death)  
72 **nor** neither  
73 **were** would be  
73 **dissolvèd** released  
74 **labourers** productive worker bees  
76 **lend** show, give  
76 **it** i.e. love  
76 **lack** miss  
82 **the rest** i.e. other physicians  
83 **several** various  
83 **applications** treatments  
84 **Debate** contend over  
84 **it** i.e. his health

#### Act 1 Scene 3

**1.3 Location: Rossillion Lavatch** probably from the French *la vache* ("the cow")

1 **gentlewoman** i.e. Helen  
2 **even your content** please you  
3 **calendar** record  
4 **clearness** purity  
5 **of ... them** we speak openly of our own merits  
5 **deservings** merits, deserts

- 6 **sirrah** sir (used to a social inferior)
- 11 **poor** wretched, humble (sense then shifts to “impoverished”)
- 12 **Well** i.e. go on (Lavatch shifts the sense to “satisfactory”)
- 15 **go ... world** i.e. get married
- 15 **Isbel** typical name for a whore
- 15 **woman** female servant/whore
- 16 **do** act/have sex
- 17 **needs** of necessity
- 20 **case** puns on the sense of “vagina”
- 20 **Service** employment as a servant (plays on the sense of “sex”)
- 20 **heritage** inheritance (for children)
- 22 **issue ... body** i.e. children
- 22 **bairns** children
- 25 **go** puns on the sense of “have sex”
- 26 **your worship** title of mock respect
- 27 **holy** i.e. sanctioned by marriage (puns on “holey,” i.e. vaginal)
- 29 **world** mankind, i.e. secular people
- 32 **repent** regret marrying/atone for sex out of wedlock
- 35 **for ... sake** to keep my wife company (with suggestion of sexual activity)
- 37 **shallow** lacking in judgment
- 37 **in** of
- 38 **do** with sexual connotations
- 39 **ears** plows/has sex with/impregnates
- 39 **land** i.e. wife
- 39 **spares my team** takes the load off my sexual organs
- 39 **gives me leave** allows/enables
- 39 **in** harvest/bring in
- 40 **crop** i.e. of children



- 40 **cuckold** man with an unfaithful wife
- 40 **drudge** slave/menial worker
- 40 **comforts** pleasures (sexually)
- 41 **cherisher** nourisher/sustainer (in procreative sense)
- 43 **ergo** “therefore” (Latin)
- 44 **what they are** i.e. cuckolds
- 45 **Charbon the Puritan** meat-eating puritan (from French *chair bonne*: “good flesh,” eaten on fast-days)
- 46 **Poysam the Papist** fish-eating Catholic (from French *poisson*: “fish,” eaten on fast-days)
- 46 **howsome’er** howsoever/although
- 47 **both one** alike (in being cuckolds)
- 47 **jowl** dash, knock
- 49 **ever** always
- 49 **calumnious** slanderous
- 52 **next** nearest/most direct
- 56 **kind** nature, i.e. to be a cuckold (which sounds like “cuckoo”) is natural
- 57 **anon** at another time
- 62 **fair face** i.e. of Helen of Troy, the most beautiful woman in the world, whose abduction by Paris caused the Trojan war
- 62 **she** perhaps Hecuba, wife of **Priam**
- 63 **sackèd** plundered
- 63 **Troy** ancient city of West Turkey, besieged for ten years during the Trojan war
- 64 **Fond** foolishly
- 65 **King Priam** King of Troy, killed during the conflict
- 68 **sentence** maxim, wise saying
- 69 **Among** along with

**72 corrupt the song** presumably Lavatch has inverted the words of a well-known song; it may have originally read “Among nine good if one be bad, / There’s yet nine good in ten”

**75 purifying** cleansing, improving

**75 serve the world** i.e. by consistently providing one good woman in ten

**76 tithe-woman** tenth woman (i.e. one in ten); the tithe was the tenth of one’s farm produce able to be claimed by the parson

**77 An** if

**78 but ... earthquake** i.e. rarely

**78 blazing star** comet

**79 mend ... well** improve the odds

**79 draw** pull

**80 one** i.e. a good woman

**82 That** to think that

**83 honesty** truth/virtue

**84 wear ... heart** i.e. conform by hiding pride beneath an outward appearance of obedience, just as Puritans wore the prescribed Anglican surplice over the more extreme Calvinist black gown

**85 forsooth** in truth

**89 bequeathed** left (by will)/entrusted

**90 advantage** financial interest/additional personal benefits

**90 make title** lay claim

**93 late** recently

**96 stranger sense** other person’s or stranger’s hearing

**96 matter** subject, theme

**98 estates** stations in life

**99 no** i.e. unworthy of being a

**99 only where qualities** except where ranks

**100 Dian** Diana, Roman goddess of chastity, the moon, and hunting

100 **suffer** allow  
101 **surprised** to be captured/attacked  
102 **touch** feeling/expression/note  
104 **withal** with  
104 **sithence** since  
104 **loss** harm  
105 **something** somewhat  
106 **discharged** performed  
107 **likelihoods** indications  
109 **misdoubt** disbelieve  
109 **Stall** confine, lodge, hide  
113 **these** difficulties/pangs of love  
115 **blood** passion  
116 **show** appearance/display  
116 **seal** sign/confirmation  
117 **impressed** imprinted, stamped  
119 **or** or rather/but  
120 **observe** see through/note  
125 **Methought** it seemed to me  
126 **start** flinch  
128 **enwombèd mine** carried in my womb  
129 **Adoption** i.e. (love for) adopted children  
129 **strives** competes  
129 **nature** i.e. (love for) one's own children  
129 **choice ... seeds** we choose to graft a cutting from another plant onto our stock, and thus make it into our own  
131 **mother's groan** i.e. in labor  
133 **curd** curdle  
135 **distempered** distressed/unseasonal, inclement

136 **iris** Greek goddess of the rainbow  
136 **rounds** encircles  
138 **not** i.e. not your daughter-in-law  
143 **note** mark of distinction  
143 **parents** ancestors  
145 **vassal** subject/servant  
149 **So** provided that  
150 **both our mothers** mother of us both  
151 **no ... than** as much as  
152 **can't no other** can it be no other way  
155 **shield** ensure/forbid  
157 **catched** caught  
157 **fondness** foolishness/affection  
158 **loveliness** many editors emend to "loneliness" (solitary melancholy)  
159 **head** source  
159 **sense** perception  
159 **gross** obvious  
160 **Invention** (your) devising of excuse  
161 **Against** in the face of  
166 **kind** natural way (i.e. by weeping)  
168 **That ... suspected** for fear that truth will be regarded with suspicion/to ensure that truth will not be guessed at  
169 **clew** ball (of thread)  
170 **forswear't** deny it (under oath)  
170 **howe'er** in any case  
170 **charge** command  
171 **avail** benefit  
178 **Go not about** don't be roundabout (in answering)

178 **bond** i.e. maternal bond  
179 **takes note** recognizes  
181 **appeached** informed against (you)  
184 **before** more than  
186 **friends** relatives  
189 **token** sign, evidence, indication (plays on the sense of “love token”)  
189 **presumptuous suit** unwarranted aim/expectant courtship  
193 **captious** capacious/eager to take in/deceptive  
193 **intenable** incapable of holding  
194 **still** continually  
195 **lack ... still** yet do not run out of more to pour in and waste/do not run out of more to keep continuously pouring in and losing  
196 **Religious** ardent/worshipful  
198 **no more** nothing other (than to look on him)  
199 **encounter with** contest, fight  
201 **cites** confirms, acknowledges  
204 **herself** i.e. chastity  
206 **lend ... lose** i.e. bestow affection where it is sure of no success  
207 **that** what  
207 **implies** involves, seeks  
208 **lives ... dies** i.e. in loving Bertram, Helen is doomed to eternal disappointment  
212 **Wherefore? Why?**  
213 **grace** God’s grace  
214 **prescriptions** ancient customs/instructions/doctor’s prescriptions  
216 **manifest** evident  
217 **sovereignty** efficacy/healing

218 In ... **them** to reserve them for use with the greatest care  
219 **notes** instructions/doctor's prescriptions  
219 **faculties inclusive** comprehensive capabilities  
220 in **note** recognized to be  
221 **approved** tested, proven  
222 **desp'rate** despairing, hopeless  
223 **rendered lost** deemed incurable  
227 **conversation** processes, reflections  
228 **Haply** perhaps  
230 **tender** offer  
232 **a mind** the same opinion  
233 **credit** believe/trust  
234 **schools** universities, medical faculties  
235 **Embowelled** disemboweled, emptied  
235 **doctrine** learning, science  
235 **left off** abandoned  
239 **receipt** prescription/remedy  
240 **sanctified** blessed  
242 **try success** find out what happens  
242 **venture** risk  
243 **well-lost** i.e. lost for a good cause  
244 **such a** a specific  
246 **knowingly** i.e. securely with confidence  
247 **leave** permission  
250 **into** unto/upon  
252 **miss** lack

Act 2 Scene 1

**2.1 Location: Paris**

- 1 **principles** i.e. advice
- 2 **throw from you** forget
- 4 **gift** i.e. of advice
- 7 **well-entered** (becoming) experienced
- 10 **owes** owns
- 13 **higher italy** highranking Italians/northern Italy (Tuscany)
- 14 **Those ... monarchy** except those who merely inherit their places from what is left of the Holy Roman Empire/they that are cast down by having merely the remains of the Holy Roman Empire
- 16 **woo** court, flirt with
- 16 **wed** i.e. own, be bound to
- 17 **questant** seeker, one on a quest
- 17 **shrinks** recoils (plays on the sense of “loses his erection”)
- 18 **cry** proclaim
- 21 **lack ... deny** i.e. cannot say no
- 22 **captives** i.e. to the girls’ charms
- 23 **serve** fight (plays on the sense of “have sex”)
- 27 **spark** young man about town
- 28 **brave** splendid
- 30 **here** to stay here
- 30 **kept a coil** fussed over
- 32 **bravely** boldly/worthily
- 33 **forehorse ... smock** lead horse in a team led by a woman
- 34 **masonry** stonework floor (i.e. not a battlefield)
- 35 **bought up** won by others
- 36 **one ... with** i.e. an ornamental weapon
- 36 **steal** sneak (the First Lord plays on the sense of “rob”)
- 40 **grow to** become attached to
- 40 **a tortured body** like a body being torn apart

44 **a word** in a word  
44 **metals** blades/spirits (“mettles”)  
45 **Spurio** “counterfeit” (Italian)  
46 **cicatrice** scar  
46 **sinister** left  
47 **entrenched** gashed, grooved  
48 **reports** response  
50 **Mars** may Mars  
50 **novices** recruits  
52 **Stay** wait on/obey (Second Folio repunctuates “Stay:” which changes the sense to “Wait: the king is coming”)  
53 **spacious ceremony** ample courtesy  
54 **list** boundary  
55 **wear ... time** i.e. are fashionable/notable  
56 **muster true gait** display correct bearing/behavior  
58 **received** fashionable  
58 **measure** stately dance  
59 **dilated** extended  
62 **like** likely  
63 **sinewy** muscular, energetic  
64 **tidings** news  
65 **fee** pay  
66 **brought his pardon** i.e. something to earn it  
69 **broke thy pate** given you a blow to the skull  
71 **across** i.e. a clumsy hit (in jousting, to break a lance across rather than striking directly with the point showed poor skill)  
74 **will ... fox** in Aesop’s fable the fox declared the grapes were sour because he couldn’t reach them; the king dismisses the idea of recovery because he thinks it impossible



75 **will** will eat/want  
75 **an if** if  
76 **medicine** doctor  
78 **Quicken** give life to  
78 **canary** a lively Spanish dance  
79 **simple** minimal/herbal/medicinal  
80 **araise** raise from the dead/sexually arouse  
80 **King Pippin** eighth-century French king, father of Charlemain (Charlemagne)  
81 **pen** plays on the sense of “penis”  
87 **light** lighthearted/sexually suggestive  
87 **deliverance** delivery, reporting  
88 **profession** claims of skill  
90 **blame** attribute to  
90 **weakness** partiality, susceptibility  
94 **admiration** object of wonder  
95 **spend** expend  
95 **take off** reduce, remove  
96 **took’st** conceived of, caught  
97 **fit** satisfy  
99 **special nothing** particular trifles  
99 **ever prologues** always introduces  
99 **Enter Helen** some editors suppose that she is disguised, since in Act 2 Scene 3 Lafew appears surprised at her identity, despite having met her in Act 1 Scene 1; this is possible, but it seems more likely that he is complicit with her plan (hence **Cressid’s uncle**) and that the later surprise is feigned  
100 **come your ways** come along  
105 **Cressid’s uncle** Pandarus, go-between for the lovers Troilus and Cressida

107 **follow** relate to  
110 **profess** practice, make a profession of  
110 **well found** of established skill  
114 **receipts** recipes for medical cures  
115 **issue** product  
116 **th'only** the foremost/peerless  
117 **triple** third  
118 **Safer** more safely  
120 **cause ... power** disease (**cause**) for which the worth of my father's gift is most effective  
122 **tender** offer  
122 **appliance** remedy/treatment  
123 **bound** prepared/dutiful  
125 **credulous** readily believing  
127 **congregated college** i.e. of doctors  
128 **art** skill/scholarship/science  
129 **inaidible** unable to be assisted  
131 **prostitute** submit (basely)  
132 **empirics** quack doctors  
132 **dissever** divide  
133 **great self** kingly person  
133 **credit** reputation  
133 **esteem** give merit to, believe in  
134 **senseless** foolish  
134 **sense** rational hope  
134 **deem** judge (it to be)  
135 **duty** i.e. as a subject (having tried to help you)  
135 **pains** efforts  
136 **office** services, duty

138 **modest one** slight thought/thought that confirms my modest, seemingly behavior

138 **to ... again** for me to return with/to conduct me home

139 **to** than to

142 **at full** in detail

142 **no part** not at all

143 **art** (sufficient) medical skill

145 **set ... rest** stake everything (derived from the card game primero)

146 **He** i.e. God

148 **holy writ** the Bible, which contains several examples of the young being wiser than their elders

148 **babes** foolish/inexperienced

149 **great ... sources** Moses struck rock from which water flowed for the thirsty Israelites (Exodus 17)

150 **simple** small

150 **great ... dried** Moses led the Israelites through the Red Sea, which parted, allowing them to pass on dry ground (Exodus 14)

151 **great'st** great persons, such as Pharaoh, who complained about God's power

153 **hits** succeeds

154 **shifts** operates

156 **by ... paid** be their own reward

157 **Proffers** offers

157 **for** as

158 **Inspirèd** divinely inspired (plays on the sense of "inhaled")

158 **breath** words

160 **square** shape

160 **shows** appearances

162 **count** consider

164 **experiment** trial  
165 **impostor** swindler  
165 **proclaim ... aim** declare my success before attempting to hit the target/claim skill that is greater than my ability  
169 **space** period of time  
171 **greatest** i.e. God's  
173 **torch** torchbearer, the sun god, who was carried across the sky in a horse-drawn chariot  
173 **diurnal ring** daily circuit  
174 **occidental** western (i.e. sunset)  
175 **Hesperus** the evening star (Venus)  
176 **pilot's glass** nautical hourglass  
181 **venture** risk/wager  
182 **Tax** accusation  
183 **strumpet's** harlot's/whore's  
184 **Traduced** slandered  
185 **Seared** branded  
185 **extended** stretched on a rack  
189 **slay** deny, extinguish  
190 **sense** higher wisdom/natural feeling, instinct  
191 **rate** value  
192 **estimate** value  
194 **prime** youth  
195 **Thou ... hazard** your willingness to risk this  
195 **needs** necessarily  
196 **monstrous desperate** unnaturally reckless  
197 **practicer** practitioner  
197 **physic** medical advice/medicine  
198 **ministers** delivers (plays on the sense of "dispenses healing")

199 **break time** miss my deadline  
199 **property** any particular respect  
201 **Not** in not  
204 **make it even** fulfill it  
207 **What** whatever  
208 **Exempted** far removed  
214 **premises observed** conditions noted/fulfilled  
215 **performance** carrying out (of the request)  
216 **of** in  
217 **resolved** determined  
217 **still** always  
220 **tended on** attended  
221 **Unquestioned** unquestionably  
223 **high as word** amply as promised

Act 2 Scene 2

## 2.2 *Location: Rossillion*

1 **put ... height** thoroughly test  
2 **breeding** education/upbringing  
3 **highly fed** overfed  
3 **lowly** inadequately  
5 **make you** do you think  
6 **put off** dismiss  
8 **put** pass  
9 **make a leg** bow  
12 **answer** throughout the exchange this word seems to have phallic connotations (**question** thus suggests “vagina”)  
16 **pin** narrow/sharp  
16 **quatch** probably squat/fat

- 16 **brawn** meaty/well-rounded
- 18 **fit** suitably
- 19 **groats** fourpenny coins
- 20 **French crown** gold coin/bald head (symptom of syphilis)
- 20 **taffety punk** finely dressed whore
- 20 **Tib** typical name for lower-class girl/whore (diminutive of “Isabel”)
- 20 **rush** ring made of reeds/vagina
- 21 **Tom** typical name for a rogue
- 21 **forefinger** with phallic connotations
- 21 **pancake** traditionally eaten on Shrove Tuesday, the feasting day before Lent
- 21 **morris** morris dance
- 22 **nail** with phallic connotations
- 22 **his** its
- 22 **hole** with vaginal connotations
- 22 **cuckold** man with an unfaithful wife
- 22 **horn** traditionally cuckolds were supposed to sprout horns
- 23 **quean** prostitute (puns on “queen”)
- 23 **wrangling knave** quarrelsome servant/rogue
- 24 **pudding** sausage (perhaps with phallic connotations)
- 24 **his** its
- 31 **neither** on the contrary
- 34 **fool in question** ignorant/inexperienced in questioning (you)
- 37 **putting off** evasion
- 40 **O lord, sir!** a fashionable phrase amongst affected courtiers
- 40 **Thick** quickly
- 41 **homely meat** plain food
- 46 **is very sequent** follows logically

47 **answer** reply cleverly/respond well  
48 **bound to't** obliged to reply/tied up for it  
51 **noble** used ironically, as she is wasting time  
55 **present** immediate  
55 **Commend me** convey my regards  
59 **fruitfully** abundantly  
59 **before my legs** i.e. very quickly  
60 **again** back again

Act 2 Scene 3

### 2.3 *Location: Paris*

2 **philosophical persons** scholars of “natural philosophy”  
2 **modern** everyday  
2 **things** things that seem  
3 **causeless** inexplicable by natural causes  
4 **ensconcing ourselves into** fortifying ourselves with  
5 **unknown fear** fear of the unknown  
6 **rarest** most extraordinary  
5 **argument** topic, issue  
7 **shot out** suddenly appeared  
7 **latter** most recent  
9 **relinquished of** abandoned by  
9 **artists** scholars, medical practitioners  
10 **Galen** famous second-century Greek physician  
10 **Paracelsus** famous sixteenth-century Swiss physician  
11 **authentic fellows** accredited members of the medical profession  
13 **gave him out** proclaimed him to be  
18 **Just** exactly  
20 **showing** visible/printed form

- 25 **dolphin** puns on “dauphin” (i.e. heir to the French throne)
- 25 **'Fore me** before me; mild oath, like “upon my soul”
- 27 **brief ... tedious** short and the long
- 28 **facinerious** extremely wicked
- 33 **debile minister** feeble agent
- 36 **Generally** universally
- 39 **Lustig** lusty vigorous (from the German *lustig*)
- 39 **Dutchman** German
- 40 **tooth** sweet tooth, i.e. appetite for pleasure
- 41 **coranto** lively dance
- 42 **Mor du vinager!** pseudo-French oath, literally “death of/by vinegar”
- 46 **banished sense** loss of feeling
- 47 **repealed** recalled, given a second chance
- 49 **attends** awaits
- 50 **parcel** group
- 51 **my bestowing** my power to give in marriage
- 53 **frank election** free choice
- 54 **forsake** refuse
- 57 **bay ... furniture** my bay horse with a docked tail (**curtal**), and all his trappings
- 58 **My ... boys'** to have as many teeth/to be as little broken to the bit (i.e. youthful) as these boys
- 59 **writ** to be able to claim/exhibit
- 62 **She ... Lord** some editors suppose that this direction is misplaced and belongs with the later line spoken to First Lord
- 66 **protest** declare
- 68 **whisper** whisper to
- 70 **white death** pallor of death



73 **Who** he who  
73 **his ... me** my love for him  
74 **Dian** Diana, Roman goddess of chastity  
75 **Love** i.e. Cupid, **god** of love  
78 **All. mute** there is no more to be said  
80 **ames-ace** double ace, lowest throw in dice  
80 **for my life** were my life at stake  
81 **honour** high status/willingness to marry/admiration  
83 **Love** may Love  
84 **Her ... wishes** i.e. myself, Helen  
85 **No better** i.e. I wish for nothing better than your **humble love**  
90 **th'Turk** i.e. non-Christian barbarian  
96 **Sure** surely  
97 **got** conceived  
98 **happy** fortunate  
101 **grape** i.e. fruit of good lineage  
102 **drunk wine** i.e. to give you good blood  
103 **known** seen through  
115 **bring me down** i.e. by making me marry a social inferior (with associations of bringing into the marriage bed, and, possibly, of losing one's erection)  
117 **breeding** upbringing  
117 **charge** order/expense  
119 **corrupt** debase/contaminate  
119 **ever** forever  
120 **title** lack of title  
123 **confound distinction** be indistinguishable  
123 **stands off** separate  
128 **proceed** come forth

130 **great ... none** titles puff us up rather than virtue (**swell's**:  
“swell is,” elided for meter)

131 **dropsied** swollen/proud/diseased

133 **property** inherent quality

133 **go** i.e. be known

135 **heir** because the qualities are inherited from nature

136 **That ... sire** true honor is scornful of inherited title when  
accompanying behavior not worthy of it

140 **foregoers** ancestors

141 **Deboshed** debauched, corrupted

142 **trophy** memorial

144 **honoured bones indeed** i.e. the remains of those who were  
truly honorable

147 **dower** dowry

148 **strive** attempt

149 **choose** assert your own choice

150 **restored** cured

152 **at the stake** tied up like a bear to be baited, under attack

152 **which** which threat

154 **this** of this

155 **misprision** scorn

156 **desert** right/recompense

156 **That** you who

157 **We** the royal plural

157 **poising** weighing

157 **defective** i.e. lighter (as she is humble)

158 **weigh ... beam** outweigh you and tip your scale up to the  
crossbar

159 **in us** within my royal power

160 **Check** restrain  
161 **travails in** labors for  
162 **Believe not** deny  
162 **presently** immediately  
166 **the staggers** giddiness, unsteadiness (also, a horse disease affecting balance)  
166 **careless** untended/reckless/irresponsible  
166 **lapse** decline  
168 **Loosing** being loosed, inflicted  
169 **all terms** any form  
171 **fancy** desire  
172 **great creation** creation of greatness  
172 **dole** portion  
173 **which late** who recently  
175 **who** i.e. Helen  
179 **counterpoise** equal weight (i.e. in dowry)  
179 **not** not equal  
180 **replete** complete/perfect/abundant  
183 **whose ... brief** the formal accomplishment of which (i.e. marriage) shall quite properly follow the present agreement  
186 **more ... space** have to wait for a time  
187 **Expecting** waiting for (the arrival of)  
187 **As** as long as  
188 **religious** sacred/true/dutiful  
188 **err** go astray  
196 **succeeding** consequences (i.e. a fight)  
197 **companion** comrade/rascal  
198 **man** manly/mankind (Lafew shifts the sense to “servant”)  
201 **too old** i.e. for a duel

201 **satisfy** appease (in place of a duel)  
202 **write** claim to be  
204 **dare ... do** have the courage to accomplish only too well, I dare not because of your old age  
205 **ordinaries** standard meals  
206 **vent** utterance  
207 **scarfs** military sashes  
207 **bannerets** small banners  
208 **vessel** ship, adorned with flags  
209 **burden** cargo  
209 **found** seen through  
209 **thee** i.e. your company  
210 **taking up** arresting/calling to account  
212 **antiquity** old age  
215 **trial** testing of supposed courage  
215 **hen** i.e. not a bold cock; perhaps also refers to Parolles' "plumage"  
216 **window of lattice** ale-house (whose red lattice windows signified its function)  
216 **casement** window  
218 **egregious** outrageous  
221 **dram** small amount  
221 **bate** lessen  
222 **scruple** tiny amount  
223 **wiser** i.e. in future  
224 **pull ... contrary** swallow a good quantity of your foolishness  
227 **bondage** what binds you (i.e. the scarves of which he is **proud**)  
227 **hold** maintain  
228 **in the default** when you fail

229 **know** understand/see through  
231 **poor doing** inadequate ability to inflict **vexation**  
232 **doing** action (plays on the sense of “having sex”)  
232 **will** will pass (puns on **past** as “passed”)  
232 **in ... leave** with what movement age will allow me  
234 **shall ... me** upon whom I will vent my anger for these insults  
235 **scurvy** contemptible  
236 **fettering** imprisoning  
237 **with any convenience** on a suitable occasion  
237 **an** even if  
243 **reservation** concealment  
243 **wrongs** insults  
243 **good lord** i.e. patron (rather than employer)  
243 **Whom** he whom  
248 **garter** tie (with scarves)  
248 **hose** stockings, usually tied up with garters  
249 **set ... stands** put your penis where your nose should be/smell  
your bottom  
253 **breathe** exercise (through fighting)  
254 **measure** treatment/judgment  
255 **Go to** expression of dismissive impatience  
255 **picking ... pomegranate** i.e. a small offense, as an excuse  
256 **vagabond** itinerant vagrant, traveling without license  
257 **true** honest/licensed  
257 **saucy** insolent  
258 **commission** warrant, allowance  
259 **heraldry** i.e. authority, entitlement  
263 **Undone** ruined  
263 **cares** troubles, sorrows

272 **import** content, sense  
275 **box** container/vagina  
276 **kicky-wicky** woman  
277 **Spending** expending/wasting/ejaculating  
277 **marrow** vitality/sexual energy/semen  
278 **curvet** horse's leap  
280 **jades** worn-out horses  
286 **furnish me to** equip me for  
286 **fields** battlefields  
288 **To** compared to  
288 **dark house** gloomy house/lunatic asylum  
289 **capriccio** "whim" (Italian)  
289 **Art** are you  
291 **straight** immediately  
293 **balls bound** tennis balls bounce (i.e. are spirited, to be reckoned with; plays on the sense of "testicles")  
294 **marred** ruined (plays on **married**)

#### Act 2 Scene 4

1 **kindly** affectionately/as a mother  
2 **well** i.e. at rest, dead  
4 **wants** lacks  
14 **them** i.e. your **good fortune**  
15 **them** i.e. my prayers  
16 **So** provided that  
17 **did** may pun on "died"  
19 **man's** servant's  
20 **shakes out** brings about

22 **title** status as man or servant/name (“Parolles,” or “words”; also puns on “tittle”—i.e. “tiny amount”)

25 **Before** in the presence of

26 **Before me** i.e. upon my soul

28 **Go to** i.e. enough of that

28 **found thee** found you out, found you to be a fool

29 **me** i.e. folly

31 **even to** i.e. enough for

33 **well fed** probably refers to “better fed than taught” (proverbial); possibly “energetic, spirited”

36 **rite of love** i.e. sexual consummation of marriage

38 **to** owing to

39 **Whose ... delay** the delay and absence of which

39 **sweets** sweet-scented flowers

40 **they** i.e. **want** and **delay**

40 **curbèd** restrained

42 **drown** overflow

43 **else** besides

45 **make** represent

45 **as** as if it were

45 **proceeding** course of action/idea

46 **apology** excuse

47 **probable need** plausible necessity

50 **Attend** await

50 **pleasure** command, will

Act 2 Scene 5

2 **approof** proven quality/testimony

3 **deliverance** utterance

5 **dial** timepiece/compass

5 I ... **bunting** i.e. I underestimated him; reversal of “to take a bunting for a lark” (proverbial; the **lark** was the superior bird)

8 **accordingly** suitably

10 **state** i.e. condition of my soul

11 **find** find it

15 **tailor** refers to Parolles’ garments; “the tailor makes the man” is proverbial

22 **you’ll have** you wanted

27 **something** i.e. an asset, with plenty of stories to tell the guests

28 **three thirds** i.e. all the time

31 **unkindness** ill will

35 **made shift** contrived

36 **him ... custard** the jester who traditionally jumped into **custard** at the Lord Mayor’s annual feast in London

37 **suffer question** endure questioning

38 **residence** i.e. why you are there

39 **mistaken** misjudged/misidentified (Lafew shifts the sense to “been offended by him”)

43 **heavy** serious/not **light**

44 **them tame** such creatures as pets

45 **to deserve** deserve

47 **idle** foolish

49 **know** i.e. rather than merely **think**

51 **pass** reputation

51 **clog** hindrance (block of wood tied to man or animal to prevent escape)

54 **present parting** immediate departure

58 **colour** appropriate character

58 **time** i.e. the immediate aftermath of marriage



59 **ministration ... particular** duty and obligation of me as husband  
64 **muse** wonder  
65 **respects** reasons  
66 **appointments** purposes, affairs  
75 **observance** dutiful service  
75 **eke out** supplement, increase  
76 **homely stars** humble origins  
77 **great fortune** i.e. as your wife  
79 **Hie** hurry  
82 **owe** own  
84 **fain** willingly  
85 **vouch** affirm to be  
88 **would** want  
90 **sunder** part  
91 **stay** delay  
98 **corragio** “courage” (Italian)

## Act 3 Scene 1

### 3.1 *Location: Florence*

1 from ... point in every detail

3 Whose great decision the deciding of which

6 black wicked

7 opposer enemy's part

8 cousin i.e. fellow sovereign

9 bosom heart

10 borrowing prayers entreaties for assistance

12 yield give up, share

13 But except as

13 common ... man ordinary external observer

14 figure scheme, devisings

14 frames constructs, guesses at

15 self-unable motion inadequate conjectures

19 his pleasure as he (the King of France) wishes

20 younger ... nature young men of our temperament, outlook  
(some editors emend "nature" to "nation")

21 surfeit ... ease grow sick of overindulgence in leisure

22 physic cure, perhaps by letting blood through war

24 fly from be bestowed by

26 better fall better places fall vacant

26 avails advantages (as you may fill them)

## Act 3 Scene 2

### 3.2 *Location: Rossillion*

3 troth faith

5 observance observation, signs

6 mend adjust

8 **sold** who sold

12 **mind to** inclination for

13 **lings** salt cod, slang for “vaginas/whores” (similar play possible in **country**)

14 **brains** plays on the sense of “semen” (thus making **Cupid** a personified penis and giving **knocked out** sexual connotations)

16 **stomach** appetite

18 **E’en** just, the same as

19 **recovered** cured

21 “**not**” with a pun on the marital knot

23 **hold** remain at

26 **fly** flee

28 **misprizing** despising/undervaluing

29 **of empire** even of an emperor

30 **heavy** sad/serious

30 **within** inside

38 **standing to’t** standing one’s ground/having an erection (both courses of action may lead to death—literally and in the sense of “orgasm”)

39 **getting** begetting, conception

41 **Save** God save

45 **quirks** turns

46 **face** appearance

46 **on the start** at its sudden arrival

47 **woman** make behave like a woman, i.e. weep

49 **thitherward** on his way there

49 **thence** from there

50 **dispatch in hand** settlement of business

51 **bend** direct our steps

52 **passport** license to travel  
56 **sentence** statement/judgment  
60 **have ... cheer** bear a happier countenance/be encouraged  
61 **engrossest** monopolize  
61 **are** that are  
62 **moiety** share/half  
64 **all my my only**  
69 **convenience** propriety  
76 **haply** perhaps  
81 **rude** ignorant/unkind/rough  
88 **a well-derived** his own well-descended  
89 **his inducement** Parolles' bad influence  
91 **deal** quantity  
91 **that** influence  
92 **holds ... have** maintains and benefits him considerably  
97 **Written** in writing  
100 **but ... courtesies** only insofar as I am able to repay your courtesy  
100 **change** exchange  
101 **draw near** come along (with me)  
104 **Rossillion** i.e. Bertram  
107 **event** outcome  
109 **sportive** playful/lighthearted/amorous  
110 **mark** target  
111 **laden messengers** i.e. bullets  
113 **move** part/stir (to pity) (sometimes emended to "cleave" or "wound")  
113 **still-peering** ever watchful (some editors emend to "still-piecing")

**114 sings** i.e. whistles as a bullet pierces it/cries in pain/sings in indifference

**115 set him there** put him in the position

**116 forward** in the front line/facing the enemy

**117 caitiff** wretch

**120 ravin** ravenous

**121 constraint** compulsion

**122 owes** owns

**124 Whence ... scar** from where honor merely earns a scar by undergoing danger

**125 oft** often as

**125 all** i.e. life

**127 do't** i.e. keep you away

**127 although** even if

**129 officed all** carried out all household duties

**130 pitiful** compassionate

**131 console** console

**132 steal** creep (plays on the sense of "rob")

Act 3 Scene 3

**3.3 Location: Florence Drum and Trumpets** i.e. a drummer and a trumpeter

**2 Great** pregnant/swelling

**2 lay** wager

**2 credence** trust, faith

**7 th'extreme edge** the utmost limit

**9 helm** helmet

**12 file** rank of soldiers

**13 like my thoughts** i.e. valiant

## Act 3 Scene 4

### 3.4 *Location: Rossillion*

1 **of** from

4 “I ... **free**” this letter is cast in the form of a sonnet

4 **Saint Jaques** Saint James, whose shrine was at Compostella, in northwest Spain

7 **sainted** holy/dedicated to a saint

9 **hie** hasten

12 **taken** undertaken

13 **despiteful** cruel, malicious

13 **Juno** supreme goddess, who imposed twelve labors on Hercules

14 **camping** tent-dwelling (i.e. army)

17 **Whom** i.e. death

19 **advice** judgment

22 **prevented** forestalled

24 **at overnight** last night

29 **whom** i.e. both Helen and her prayers

32 **unworthy husband** husband unworthy

33 **weigh heavy of** emphasize

37 **When haply** perhaps when

41 **sense** perception

42 **Provide** equip

## Act 3 Scene 5

### 3.5 *Location: Florence tucket* trumpet fanfare

3.5 **Diana** significantly, given her role, the name of the goddess of chastity and hunting; the Folio entry direction calls her “Violenta,” which was perhaps Shakespeare’s first thought for the name

2 **lose all** entirely miss

5 **their** i.e. Siena’s

10 **suffice** satisfy  
11 **earl** i.e. Bertram  
12 **name** reputation  
13 **honesty** chastity  
15 **solicited** entreated, courted  
17 **officer** agent  
17 **suggestions** promptings toward evil/entreaties  
17 **for** on behalf of  
19 **engines** devices/plots  
19 **go under** appear to be  
21 **wreck of maidenhood** loss of virginity  
22 **succession** (others from) doing the same  
23 **that** for all that  
23 **limed** trapped (like birds caught in lime, a sticky substance smeared on **twigs**)  
25 **grace** virtue  
25 **though** even if  
26 **further ... lost** worse risk than the loss of virginity (i.e. pregnancy)  
27 **fear** fear for  
29 **lie** lodge  
32 **palmers** pilgrims  
33 **Saint Francis** inn with the sign of Saint Francis  
33 **port** city gate  
36 **tarry** wait  
39 **for** because  
40 **ample** well, fully  
43 **stay upon** await  
43 **leisure** convenience

52 **Whatsome'er** whoever  
53 **bravely taken** highly regarded  
54 **for** because  
56 **mere** absolutely  
61 **believe** agree  
62 **argument** any issue  
62 **to** in comparison with  
63 **mean** lowly/unworthy  
64 **All her deserving** her only merit  
65 **reservèd honesty** well-guarded chastity  
66 **examined** called into question  
70 **write** style her (some editors emend to “warrant”)  
72 **shrewd** malicious  
77 **brokes** bargains, negotiates  
77 **suit** endeavor, request  
80 **honestest** most chaste  
80 **colours** battle flags  
81 **else** (that it should be) otherwise  
88 **honester** more honorable  
95 **jackanapes** monkey  
98 **shrewdly** sorely  
101 **courtesy** curtsy (i.e. bow)  
101 **ring-carrier** pimp  
103 **host** lodge  
103 **enjoined penitents** those bound by oath to undertake pilgrimage as penance for sin  
107 **Please it** if it please  
108 **charge** expense  
109 **for me** mine



110 **precepts** of advice on

112 **kindly** gratefully

Act 3 Scene 6

**3.6 Location: battlefield**

1 **to't** to the test

3 **hilding** good-for-nothing

5 **bubble** i.e. nothing/showy/easily destroyed

8 **as** as if he were

11 **entertainment** patronage

12 **reposing** trusting, relying

13 **trusty** requiring trustworthiness

15 **try** test

16 **fetch off** rescue/retrieve

19 **surprise** ambush, attack

19 **knows not** cannot distinguish

20 **hoodwink** blindfold/deceive

21 **leaguer** military camp

25 **intelligence** secret information

27 **oath** i.e. the vow he took never to divulge the intelligence

30 **bottom** extent

31 **ore** precious metal

31 **give ... entertainment** i.e. beat him/cast him out (proverbial)

32 **inclining** partiality, liking (for Parolles)

36 **in any hand** in any case

37 **sticks** stabs

37 **sticks ... disposition** is really upsetting you

39 **pox** plague

42 **wings** flanks, on either side of the main body of troops

- 42 **rend** tear apart, devastate
- 43 **in** upon
- 43 **command ... service** military orders
- 51 **But** were it not
- 53 **hic jacet** i.e. I shall die—literally “here lies” (Latin), phrase found on tombstones
- 54 **stomach** appetite/courage
- 55 **mystery** skill
- 56 **his** its
- 57 **grace** honor
- 58 **speed** fare/succeed
- 59 **becomes** befits
- 62 **slumber in it** i.e. delay
- 63 **presently** immediately
- 63 **pen** write
- 64 **dilemmas** choices of action
- 65 **mortal preparation** spiritual readiness either for my death or those of the men I kill
- 71 **possibility** competence, capacity
- 72 **subscribe** vouch
- 76 **damns himself** i.e. by swearing falsely
- 81 **have** have a true understanding of
- 82 **make no deed** perform no part/make no attempt
- 85 **probable** plausible
- 86 **embossed** hunted down/driven to exhaustion
- 87 **for** worthy of
- 88 **case** skin, unmask
- 89 **smoked** smoked out, exposed
- 90 **sprat** small fish (i.e. contemptible person)

92 **look my twigs** see to my bird-trap

93 **Your ... me** i.e. Bertram pulls rank and orders the Second Lord to accompany him in his pursuit of Diana, leaving the First Lord to undertake the ambush on Parolles

100 **coxcomb** fool (literally, fool's cap)

100 **have i'th'wind** have scented, are tracking

Act 3 Scene 7

### 3.7 *Location: Florence*

1 **misdoubt** disbelieve, suspect

3 **But ... upon** without losing the foundations my plans rely on

4 **estate** worldly fortune

10 **sworn counsel** private hearing that you have vowed to keep secret

11 **so ... word** true in every word

12 **By** with respect to

15 **approves** proves, demonstrates

20 **found it** received your help

21 **wanton** lascivious

22 **carry** win

22 **in fine** in the end/to sum up

23 **bear** manage

24 **important blood** urgent sexual passion

25 **county** count

29 **rich choice** high esteem

29 **idle fire** foolish ardor

30 **will** sexual desire

33 **bottom** essence

34 **lawful** to be lawful

36 **appoints ... encounter** arranges a meeting with him

39 **marry her** enable her to marry  
40 **is passed** has been given  
42 **persever** proceed  
44 **coherent** fitting  
45 **musics** musicians/instruments/music  
46 **unworthiness** humble status/because convincing her to do an unworthy deed  
46 **steads** profits  
47 **chide** scold, drive away  
48 **lay** depended  
50 **assay** try  
50 **speed** succeed  
51 **meaning** intention (on Bertram's part)  
51 **lawful deed** i.e. marital sex  
53 **fact** i.e. Bertram's belief that he is having sex with another woman

Act 4 Scene 1

4.1 **Location: battlefield**

2 **sally** burst out  
2 **terrible** terrifying  
4 **unless** except for  
10 **linsey-woolsey** cloth made of flax and wool (i.e. verbal mixture, nonsense)  
11 **again** in response  
13 **strangers** foreigners  
14 **entertainment** employment  
14 **smack** taste, smattering  
16 **fancy** creativity  
16 **to know** knowing

17 **so** so long as  
17 **know straight** directly achieve  
18 **choughs** jackdaws, plays on “chuff,” meaning “rustic, clown”  
19 **politic** cunning  
19 **couch** lie down, hide  
20 **beguile** while away  
24 **plausive** plausible  
24 **it** it off  
24 **smoke** smoke out, suspect  
27 **creatures** i.e. soldiers  
27 **not ... tongue** and I am afraid to carry out my boasts  
34 **hurts** wounds  
37 **instance** motive (for doing this)/proof (of my supposed exploits)  
37 **Tongue ... mouth** with sexual connotations  
37 **butter-woman** dairywoman/whore (i.e. chatty/lecherous)  
38 **of** from  
38 **Bajazet’s mule** mules were proverbially silent and sometimes associated with Turks, but emperors such as Bajazet had “mute” slaves, so some editors emend accordingly; or there may be a garbled allusion to Balaam’s ass in the Bible, which only spoke at God’s command  
42 **serve the turn** suffice  
44 **afford** allow/let (you) off  
45 **baring** shaving  
45 **in stratagem** an act of cunning, for disguise  
51 **citadel** presumably the enemy fortress  
53 **Thirty fathom** 180 feet  
59 **Alarum** call to arms  
64 **Muskos** probably Muscovites

66 **low Dutch** Dutch; **German** was known as “high Dutch”  
68 **discover** reveal  
70 **betake thee** entrust thyself  
71 **poniards** daggers  
76 **hoodwinked** blindfolded  
76 **lead thee on** take you elsewhere/direct the conversation  
77 **gather** gain information  
86 **space** time/a temporary reprieve  
88 **woodcock** proverbially stupid bird  
88 **muffled** blindfolded  
91 **A he**  
92 **Inform on** report

Act 4 Scene 2

#### 4.2 *Location: Florence*

1 **Fontybell** i.e. “beautiful fountain”  
3 **goddess** Diana was the goddess of chastity and hunting  
4 **worth** worthy of  
4 **addition** additional distinction  
5 **frame** being, shape  
5 **quality** part  
6 **quick** lively  
7 **monument** statue  
11 **got** conceived  
12 **honest** chaste (i.e. married; Bertram shifts the sense to “frank, open”)  
18 **vows** i.e. of love for Diana/to have nothing to do with Helen  
20 **constraint** compulsion  
21 **rights** duties

- 23 **serve** gratify sexually
- 23 **roses** virginites/vaginas
- 24 **barely** in a naked state/only just
- 24 **thorns ... ourselves** i.e. with shame (quibbles on the idea that this is in place of a man's **prick**)
- 25 **bareness** loss of the rose of virginity/defenselessness
- 30 **high'st** i.e. God
- 30 **to** as our
- 31 **Jove** supreme Roman god
- 33 **ill** imperfectly/immorally
- 33 **holding** consistency (i.e. is untenable)
- 34 **protest** profess
- 36 **words** mere words
- 36 **conditions** contracts
- 36 **unsealed** i.e. not valid legally
- 38 **it** i.e. your opinion
- 39 **holy-cruel** cruel by being holy
- 40 **crafts** skills/deceits
- 42 **sick** i.e. needing cure
- 43 **Who** which will
- 43 **recovers** recover
- 45 **scar** perhaps in the sense of "precipice," i.e. dangerous place or "sore/fault, blemish" or "fear/panic" (modern "scare"); the general sense is that men create dangerous situations for women in which they may lose their sense of propriety and behave recklessly; some editors emend to "snare"
- 50 **honour** object of distinction
- 52 **obloquy** disgrace
- 54 **honour's** virginity's
- 54 **ring** with vaginal connotations

58 **proper** personal  
63 **bid** commanded  
65 **order take** make arrangements  
66 **band** bond  
67 **yet maiden** still virgin  
72 **proceeds** comes to pass  
73 **token** betoken, signify  
75 **wife** i.e. by having sex  
75 **hope** i.e. of marrying Bertram  
75 **be done** ends  
81 **like** same  
83 **braid** i.e. twisted, deceitful  
84 **Marry** let those marry  
85 **disguise** deceptive role  
86 **cozen** trick

Act 4 Scene 3

#### 4.3 *Location: battlefield*

2 **since** ago  
5 **worthy** deserved  
8 **his bounty** (the instrument of) his generosity  
10 **darkly** secretly  
13 **perverted** seduced/corrupted  
14 **fleshes** rewards with meat (as hounds were given a piece of the kill; sexual connotations)  
15 **will** sexual desire/penis  
15 **spoil** plundered loot/despoiling/meat given to hounds  
16 **monumental** i.e. serving as a reminder of his ancestry  
16 **made** successful



17 **composition** bargain (plays on the sense of “something made”)  
18 **delay** subdue  
18 **rebellion** rebellious, lustful appetites  
18 **ourselves** i.e. human  
20 **Merely** entirely  
21 **still** always  
21 **themselves** i.e. their true, treacherous natures  
22 **attain to** reach  
22 **ends** objectives/deaths  
22 **he** i.e. Bertram  
23 **contrives** conspires  
23 **proper stream** own current of desire  
25 **Is ... meant** does it not show (as)  
28 **dieted ... hour** restricted to his appointed time  
29 **apace** quickly  
30 **company** companion  
30 **anatomized** dissected, revealed  
31 **curiously ... counterfeit** elaborately he has displayed this false jewel (Parolles)  
33 **him** i.e. Parolles  
33 **he ... his** i.e. Bertram  
34 **the other** i.e. Parolles  
36 **overture** opening, move toward  
39 **higher** further  
40 **demand** question  
40 **of his council** in his confidence  
42 **deal ... act** partaker in his affairs  
45 **pretence** purpose  
46 **sanctimony** holiness

50 **justified** proved  
53 **office** role  
54 **rector** priest/ruler  
57 **arming** establishment, strengthening  
57 **verity** truth  
59 **make ... of** take comfort in  
63 **encountered** met  
68 **cherished** comforted, pitied  
71 **solemn** formal  
71 **for** leave for  
72 **offered** given  
74 **needful** necessary  
74 **if** even if  
75 **more ... commend** stronger commendations than Bertram deserves  
79 **dispatched** settled  
80 **by ... success** quickly and successfully/here follows a summary of my success  
81 **conged with** taken ceremonious leave of  
81 **nearest** closest company  
83 **entertained my convoy** hired my means of transport  
84 **parcels of dispatch** major items of business  
84 **nicer** more delicate/lascivious  
89 **hear of it** i.e. because Diana may be pregnant and/or may claim him as her husband  
92 **module** model (of a soldier)  
92 **double-meaning prophesier** ambiguous, equivocal oracle  
94 **stocks** instrument of public punishment in which the arms, head, or legs were confined

94 **gallant** showy, ostentatious  
95 **usurping** laying false claim to  
96 **spurs** symbols of knightly valor  
96 **carry** bear, conduct (the Second Lord puns on the sense of “transport”)  
99 **shed** spilled  
101 **time ... remembrance** beginning of his memory  
101 **instant disaster** current misfortune  
103 **a** he  
109 **Hoodman** term for the blindfolded player in the game Blind Man’s Bluff  
112 **constraint** force  
113 **pasty** meat pie with pinched crusts  
117 **note** memorandum/list  
119 **horse** cavalry  
120 **is strong** i.e. has  
126 **take the sacrament** i.e. swear most religiously  
126 **how and which** however and whichever  
128 **All’s one** it’s all the same  
128 **past-saving** beyond redemption  
131 **theoric** theory  
132 **chape** metal plate covering the point of the sheath  
134 **clean** free from blood/polished  
140 **con** i.e. give  
140 **in the nature** considering the way in which  
145 **marvellous** extremely  
147 **a-foot** in terms of foot soldiers  
148 **live** i.e. live only for  
150 **so** as

- 153 **muster-file** official list of soldiers
- 153 **rotten and sound** (of those both) sick and healthy
- 154 **poll** heads, i.e. soldiers
- 155 **cassocks** soldier's cloaks/coats
- 159 **condition** (military) character
- 164 **well-weighing** heavy/persuasive
- 167 **particular** individual points
- 168 **inter'gatories** questions
- 170 **botcher** mender (of clothes and shoes)
- 170 **'prentice** apprentice
- 171 **shrieve's fool** idiot girl in the sheriff's care
- 172 **innocent** fool
- 173 **him nay** no to him
- 175 **his ... falls** i.e. he is in danger of a sudden death
- 178 **lousy** lice-infested/contemptible
- 184 **o'th'band** of the military company
- 186 **good sadness** all seriousness
- 194 **advertisement** advice, warning
- 194 **proper** respectable
- 196 **ruttish** lustful
- 196 **up** back
- 198 **favour** permission
- 202 **fry** young fish
- 203 **both-sides** two-faced
- 204 **drop** offer, pay with
- 205 **scores** incurs a bill
- 206 **Half ... it** one is halfway there if the bargain is well-made, so set out your terms clearly (or "be even") and succeed
- 207 **after-debts** outstanding bills

207 **it** i.e. payment  
209 **mell** mingle/have sex  
210 **For count** on account/so be sure  
211 **before** in advance  
214 **in's** on his  
215 **manifold linguist** speaker of many languages  
216 **armipotent** powerful in arms  
220 **fain** obliged  
223 **nature** my natural life  
229 **egg ... cloister** i.e. trifling thing, even from a holy place  
230 **Nessus** centaur who tried to rape Hercules' wife  
230 **professes not** does not make a practice of  
232 **Hercules** Greek hero famed for feats of strength  
234 **swine-drunk** drunk as a pig (i.e. excessively drunk—and thus likely to wet his bed-clothes)  
235 **they** i.e. the servants who put him to bed  
235 **conditions** habits  
243 **led ... tragedians** drums announced a performance by actors  
244 **belie** tell lies about  
246 **Mile-end** field outside the city of London where citizen militia were trained  
247 **doubling of files** simple military marching maneuver  
254 **cardecue** *quart d'écu*, small French silver coin  
254 **fee-simple** absolute possession (legal term used of land or property)  
255 **cut ... perpetually** prevent inheritance to all subsequent heirs forever  
262 **for** as  
263 **lackey** errand-running servant

264 **coming on** advancing  
267 **captain ... horse** cavalry commander  
270 **no more** have nothing more to do with  
271 **beguile the supposition** deceive the opinion  
276 **discovered** revealed  
277 **pestiferous** malicious, pestilent  
278 **held** regarded  
286 **you** you send  
287 **for** bound for  
289 **in** on  
290 **a very** an absolute  
292 **undone** ruined/undressed  
295 **but** only  
297 **impudent** shameless, immodest  
299 **great** big/noble  
303 **Who** he who  
307 **fooled** made a fool of/tricked

Act 4 Scene 4

**4.4 Location: Florence**

2 **One ... world** i.e. the French king  
3 **surety** guarantor  
6 **which gratitude** gratitude for which  
7 **Through** even through  
7 **Tartar** inhabitant of Central Asia, considered pitiless and savage  
10 **convenient convoy** suitable means of transport  
11 **breaking** disbanding  
12 **hies him** hastens  
14 **our welcome** i.e. we are expected

- 21 **be** i.e. provide
- 21 **dower** dowry
- 22 **motive** agent/means
- 25 **saucy trusting** lecherous acceptance
- 25 **cozened** deluded
- 26 **Defiles** blackens/pollutes
- 26 **pitchy** dark (pitch is a tar-like substance)
- 27 **loathes** i.e. Helen
- 27 **for ... away** i.e. in place of Diana
- 29 **yet** further
- 31 **death and honesty** i.e. a chaste death
- 32 **Go with** i.e. result from
- 32 **impositions** commands
- 33 **Upon** at
- 34 **Yet** for a while
- 35 **But ... word** through the power of word alone: either a metaphysical reference to the “word of God” or a meta-theatrical reference to the power of theater
- 38 **revives** will reinvigorate
- 39 **fine’s end’s**
- 40 **renown** i.e. important thing

Act 4 Scene 5

#### 4.5 *Location: Rossillion*

- 1 **with** by
- 1 **snipt-taffeta** in slashed silk, indicative of showiness
- 2 **saffron** orange-red dye used to color ruffs and food
- 3 **unbaked** uncooked/immature/impressionable
- 3 **doughy** dough-like/malleable

- 4 **Your** i.e. had it not been for Parolles, your
- 6 **humble-bee** bumble-bee
- 10 **dearest** direst/most precious
- 10 **groans ... mother** i.e. in labor
- 11 **rooted** established/planted (Lafew develops this sense)
- 13 **light on** come across
- 14 **sweet marjoram** type of herb
- 15 **herb of grace** rue, herb associated with repentance (suggests Helen's spiritual **grace**)
- 16 **herbs** edible salad plants
- 16 **nose-herbs** scented plants for smelling
- 17 **Nebuchadnezzar** Babylonian king, forced from his kingdom and made to eat grass
- 18 **grace** puns on "grass"
- 19 **Whether** which of the two
- 20 **fool** supposedly fools had big penises
- 20 **service** employment/sexual service
- 23 **cozen** cheat
- 23 **service** duty, i.e. sex
- 25 **bauble** fool's baton with a carved head on one end/penis
- 25 **do** with sexual connotations
- 27 **subscribe** vouch/answer
- 34 **maine** mane, like that of a royal English lion/meinie, family, retinue
- 34 **fisnomy** physiognomy, facial features
- 35 **hotter in France** choleric, angry, warlike (to the French)/susceptible to the "French disease" (syphilis)
- 37 **black prince** Edward the Black Prince of England, son of Edward III
- 39 **Hold thee** be quiet



40 **suggest** tempt  
42 **woodland** rustic, i.e. simple  
43 **fire** also “hellfire”  
44 **prince ... world** another title for the devil  
45 **narrow gate** according to the Bible, the route to salvation (Matthew 7:13)  
46 **pomp** proud, showy people  
47 **many** majority  
47 **chill** faint-hearted/sensitive to cold (thus preferring the warmth of hellfire)  
47 **tender** fond of comfort  
50 **Go thy ways** be off  
51 **before** now, before I grow truly fed up with you  
52 **tricks** i.e. tampering with the horses’ feed to save hay  
53 **jades’ tricks** mischief caused by badly behaved horses  
55 **shrewd** cunning, mischievous  
55 **unhappy** unlucky/discontented/mischievous  
56 **gone** dead (i.e. her husband the count)  
59 **pace** restraint, obedient movement (horse-training term)  
61 **lady’s** i.e. Helen’s  
62 **moved** urged, persuaded  
64 **minority** youth, when they were minors  
64 **self-gracious remembrance** his own thoughtfulness, without prompting  
65 **propose** i.e. for marriage to Bertram  
71 **post** rapidly  
72 **numbered** was aged  
73 **him** i.e. a messenger  
73 **intelligence** information

78 **with ... admitted** how I might with propriety be allowed to be present (at the meeting of Bertram and the king)

80 **but** only

80 **your honourable privilege** the privilege due your honored self

81 **charter** claim

83 **patch of velvet** used to cover either battle scars or those resulting from syphilis treatment

85 **knows** plays on **no**

86 **two ... half** i.e. covered with thick velvet

86 **worn bare** without a velvet patch/hairless (from syphilis)

88 **liv'ry** badge

89 **belike** probably

90 **carbonadoed** slashed (like meat for cooking)/cut in the manner of incisions made for syphilis treatment

Act 5 Scene 1

### 5.1 *Location: Marseilles*

1 **exceeding posting** exceptional haste

2 **wear** wear out

5 **bold** confident

5 **my requital** the reward I shall give you

6 **In happy time** fortunately met

6 ***Gentle Astringer*** gentleman keeper of hawks

8 **spend** exert

12 **fall'n** less than/altered

14 **sharp** urgent

14 **occasions** needs

15 **nice** overscrupulous

15 **put** urge/compel

20 **petition** request

- 26 **hence removed** departed from here
- 27 **use** custom
- 28 **pains** efforts
- 35 **like** likely
- 36 **commend** commit
- 37 **presume** assure (you)
- 40 **means ... means** resources will enable us
- 43 **falls more** else happens
- 44 **provide** prepare

Act 5 Scene 2

## 5.2 *Location: Rossillion*

- 1 **Lavache** Parolles clarifies the name's probable derivation (*vache* is French for "cow")
- 4 **mood** anger/temper (puns on "mud")
- 6 **sluttish** a whore/dirty
- 8 **butt'ring** preparation/cooking
- 8 **allow the wind** i.e. stand downwind of me, so I don't have to smell you
- 9 **stop** block
- 14 **me** for me
- 15 **paper** i.e. soiled with excrement
- 16 **close-stool** toilet/chamber-pot enclosed in a stool
- 18 **purr** knave, jack in a card game/cat noise/animal dung
- 19 **musk-cat** i.e. perfume, the musky substance obtained from the anal glands of the civet cat
- 20 **withal** with it
- 21 **carp** fish bred in ponds/chatterer
- 22 **ingenious** wily/un-genious, i.e. stupid
- 23 **smiles of comfort** gloating (ironic usage)

- 27 **pare** trim
- 30 **cardecue** small silver coin
- 30 **justices** magistrates, responsible for dealing with beggars under Elizabethan law
- 36 “**word**” a single word, as Parolles’ name means “words”
- 36 **Cox** cock’s (i.e. God’s)
- 36 **Cox my passion!** By God’s passion! (i.e. Christ’s suffering)
- 38 **me** me out
- 39 **sooth** truth
- 39 **lost** parted with/abandoned
- 40 **in** into
- 40 **grace** favor
- 41 **out** of favor
- 42 **Out upon thee** expression of frustration and condemnation
- 45 **inquire ... me** ask for me later

#### Act 5 Scene 3

- 1 **of** in
- 1 **our esteem** my worth
- 4 **home** fully, truly
- 6 **make** consider
- 7 **Natural** i.e. of the passions
- 7 **i’t’h’blade** in the greenness, immaturity (sometimes emended to “blaze” for consistency with subsequent fire imagery)
- 12 **high bent** pulled fully taut for action (like a bow)
- 13 **watched** awaited
- 15 **my pardon** i.e. you to pardon me
- 19 **astonish** stun/dazzle
- 19 **survey** sight, gaze

- 20 **richest** most noble/most experienced
- 25 **view** sight (of him)
- 25 **kill All repetition** put an end to going over past wrongs
- 27 **dead** forgotten (also a reminder that Helen is supposed dead)
- 29 **incensing relics** anger-rousing memories
- 30 **stranger** i.e. person whose story is unknown
- 32 **GENTLEMAN** i.e. an attendant
- 35 **hath reference to** is at the disposal of
- 39 **day of season** i.e. inclined to one unchanging disposition
- 39 **season** time of year/weather
- 42 **Distracted** breaking/agitated
- 44 **high-repentèd blames** bitterly regretted faults
- 45 **to** in
- 46 **whole** mended/well
- 47 **consumèd** used up/passed
- 48 **take ... top** tug occasion by the forelock (hair at the front of the head)
- 49 **quick'st** most lively/urgent
- 54 **stuck** fixed
- 55 **Durst** dared
- 55 **herald** messenger
- 56 **Where** i.e. in **my heart**
- 56 **impression** image (of Lafew's daughter)
- 56 **infixing** was implanted/fastened onto
- 57 **perspective** optical glass that produced a distorted image
- 58 **favour** (woman's) face
- 59 **fair colour** beautiful appearance/pale complexion (considered attractive)
- 59 **expressed** deemed (it to be)

- 59 **stol'n** i.e. falsely created with cosmetics
- 60 **Extended or contracted** (the **perspective**) distorted by elongating or shortening
- 61 **object** spectacle/sight
- 62 **she** i.e. Helen
- 66 **scores** debts
- 67 **great count** large account/judgment day
- 68 **remorseful** compassionate
- 68 **pardon** reprieve from death
- 68 **slowly carried** i.e. delivered too late
- 69 **turns** becomes
- 71 **Make trivial price** undervalue
- 72 **knowing** acknowledging
- 72 **know their grave** i.e. lose them
- 73 **displeasures** wrongs
- 74 **weep** weep over, mourn
- 74 **dust** remains
- 76 **out** through
- 77 **knell** funeral bell
- 78 **Maudlin** Magdalen, Lafew's daughter; means "sorrowful" (may recall Mary Magdalene)
- 79 **main consents** i.e. agreements of the most important parties
- 82 **they meet** Bertram and Maudlin marry/the first and second marriages become similar
- 82 **cesse** variant form of "cease" (some editors assign the closing couplet to the countess, though with no warrant from the Folio)
- 84 **digested** incorporated
- 84 **favour** love token
- 86 **come** yield/come forth

90 **last** last time  
90 **took her leave** said farewell to her  
96 **bade** told  
97 **Necessitied to** in dire need of  
98 **reave** deprive/rob  
99 **stead** help, support  
104 **reckoned** valued  
105 **At** as highly as  
105 **rate** worth  
108 **casement** window  
111 **engaged** pledged (to her)  
111 **subscribed To** acknowledged  
113 **answer ... overture** respond honorably to her advances  
115 **heavy satisfaction** sad resignation  
117 **Plutus** Greek god of wealth  
118 **tinct** tincture, elixir  
118 **multiplying med'cine** alchemical formula for turning base metals into gold  
119 **science** knowledge  
124 **to surety** as witness  
128 **upon ... disaster** in the event of some terrible misfortune befalling her  
131 **conjectural** speculative  
132 **fain** willingly  
138 **fore-past** former  
138 **fall** turn out  
139 **Shall ... vanity** will not reprove my fears for being foolish; rather my fears have foolishly not been apprehensive enough  
140 **vainly** stupidly/wrongly

141 **sift** examine carefully

141 **Gentleman** [*the Astringer*] though no mention is made here of his status as a hawk-keeper

150 **for** on account of

150 **removes** stages in a royal progress (Helen kept missing the king)

150 **short** i.e. too late

151 **tender** offer

152 **vanquished** won

153 **this** this time

154 **looks** manifests itself

155 **importing visage** countenance full of urgency

156 **brief** summary

161 **honour's paid** i.e. virginity's surrendered

161 **taking no leave** without saying goodbye

165 **in** at

165 **fair** i.e. where stolen or poor-quality goods were for sale; Lafew reasons that even there he would receive a better deal than in accepting Bertram for his daughter

165 **toll for this** sell Bertram at a market (where vendors paid a fee and entered their goods in the toll-book)

168 **suitors** petitioners

170 **afeard** afraid

171 **fouly snatched** i.e. that she was murdered (on Bertram's orders)

173 **sith** since

174 **that** since

174 **fly ... lordship** flee them as soon as you promise to marry them

177 **Derivèd** descended

182 **both shall cease** i.e. she will die in dishonor



186 **strange** like a stranger  
189 **this hand** i.e. Bertram's  
192 **embodied yours** made part of your body/united as one  
197 **fond** foolish  
201 **you ... friend** they are not friendly toward you  
202 **gain them** win them over again  
208 **impudent** shameless, immodest  
209 **gamester** sexual player, prostitute  
213 **validity** value  
214 **parallel** equal  
215 **commoner** prostitute  
217 **'tis hit** the mark is hit, this is true  
218 **Of** by  
219 **testament** will  
219 **th'sequent issue** the successive heir  
220 **owed** owned  
225 **instrument** agent, means  
229 **quoted for** regarded as  
229 **perfidious** treacherous  
230 **with** by  
230 **spots** stains, vices  
230 **taxed** censured  
230 **deboshed** debauched, corrupted  
231 **but** merely  
232 **or ... for** (to be judged) one or the other according to  
236 **boarded** accosted sexually  
236 **wanton** playful/lascivious  
237 **knew her distance** knew her inferiority of rank/knew how to  
tease from a distance

238 **Madding** maddening, provoking  
239 **fancy's** love's/desire's  
241 **insuite** possibly "unusual" (some editors emend to "infinite")  
241 **modern** commonplace  
242 **subdued me** made me submit  
242 **rate** price  
246 **turned** cast  
247 **diet** restrain (from what I deserve)  
256 **goes** is  
260 **boggle** shy away (like a horse)  
260 **shrewdly** sharply, greatly  
260 **starts** startles  
265 **just proceeding** honest speaking  
266 **By** about  
268 **Tricks** lustful tendencies  
275 **He ... not** i.e. wanted to have sex with her, but didn't want to marry her  
277 **companion** fellow/rascal  
279 **drum** drummer  
279 **naughty** wicked/unskilled  
285 **Limbo** region on the border of hell for unbaptized infants and those born before the time of Christ  
285 **Furies** three classical goddesses of vengeance  
286 **in ... them** so trusted by  
288 **motions** proposals/sexual movements  
289 **derive** bring  
292 **fine** subtle  
304 **easy** loose-fitting/sexually compliant  
304 **glove** plays on the sense of "vagina"

304 **goes ... on** plays on the sense of “orgasms and has sex”  
305 **at pleasure** at will/for sexual pleasure  
307 **aught** anything  
314 **put in** provide  
315 **customer** prostitute  
316 **if ... you** i.e. my virginity is intact  
316 **knew** had sex with  
325 **owes** owns  
326 **surety** act as guarantor for  
326 **for** as for  
328 **quit** acquit/repay  
332 **quick** alive  
335 **Beguiles** tricks  
335 **truer office** accurate function  
338 **shadow** ghost/image/poor reflection/illusion  
341 **like** disguised as  
347 **know** understand  
350 **Deadly divorce** divorcing death  
353 **handkercher** handkerchief  
354 **Wait on** accompany  
354 **make sport** joke  
355 **court'sies** polite gestures/bows  
357 **even** plain, exact  
362 **progress ... less** greater and lesser details of events  
363 **Resolvedly** in a way that resolves all questions  
364 **meet** fittingly  
365 **past** being past  
368 **express content** i.e. with applause and calls of approval  
369 **strife** striving, endeavor

369 **exceeding** after

370 **Ours ... parts** i.e. let us reverse roles: the actors will listen patiently while the audience applaud actively

371 **Your ... us** i.e. applaud

371 **hearts** gratitude