

William Shakespeare's

All's Well that Ends Well

cuts by Nic Helms

1.1. Rousillon. The Count's palace.

Enter young Bertram, his mother the Countess of Rossillion, and Helena, Lord Lafew, all in black.

COUNT.

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

BER.

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

LAFEW.

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

COUNT.

What hope is there of his Majesty's amendment?

LAFEW.

He hath abandon'd his physicians, madam, under whose practices he hath persecuted time with hope, and finds no other advantage in the process but only the losing of hope by time.

COUNT.

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

LAFEW.

How call'd you the man you speak of, madam?

COUNT.

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

LAFEW.

He was excellent indeed, madam. The King very lately spoke of him admiringly and mourningly. He was skillful enough to have liv'd still, if knowledge could be set up against mortality.

BER.

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

LAFEW.

A fistula, my lord.

BER.

I heard not of it before.

LAFEW.

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

COUNT.

His sole child, my lord, and bequeath'd to my overlooking. I have those hopes of her good that her education promises her dispositions she inherits, which makes fair gifts fairer. In her they are the better for their simpleness; she derives her honesty, and achieves her goodness.

LAFEW.

Your commendations, madam, get from her tears.

COUNT.

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

—

HEL.

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

LAFEW.

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

COUNT.

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

BER.

Madam, I desire your holy wishes.

COUNT.

Be thou blest, Bertram, and succeed thy father
 In manners as in shape! Thy blood and virtue
 Contend for empire in thee, and thy goodness
 Share with thy birthright! What heaven more will,
 That thee may furnish, and my prayers pluck down,
 Fall on thy head! — Farewell, my lord.
 'Tis an unseason'd courtier, good my lord,
 Advise him.

LAFEW.

He cannot want the best
 That shall attend his love.

COUNT.

Heaven bless him!

Farewell, Bertram.

BER.

The best wishes that can
Be forged in your thoughts be servants to you!

Exit Countess. To Helena.

Be comfortable to my mother, your mistress,
And make much of her.

LAFEW.

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

Exeunt Bertram and Lafew.

HEL.

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

Enter Parolles. Aside.

One that goes with him.

PAR.

'Save you, fair queen!

HEL.

And you, monarch!

PAR.

No.

HEL.

And no.

PAR.

Are you meditating on virginity?

HEL.

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

PAR.

Keep him out.

HEL.

But he assails, and our virginity though valiant, in the defense yet is weak. Unfold to us some warlike resistance.

PAR.

There is none. Man, setting down before you, will undermine you and blow you up.

HEL.

Bless our poor virginity from underminers and blowers-up! Is there no military policy how virgins might blow up men?

PAR.

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

HEL.

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

PAR.

There's little can be said in't, 'tis against the rule of nature. To speak on the part of virginity is to accuse your mothers, which is most infallible disobedience. He that hangs himself is a virgin; virginity murthers itself, and should be buried in highways out of all sanctified limit, as a desperate offendress against nature. Virginity breeds mites, much like a cheese, consumes itself to the very paring, and so dies with feeding his own stomach. Keep it not, you cannot choose but lose by't. Out with't! Within t' one year it will make itself two, which is a goodly increase. Away with't!

HEL.

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

PAR.

Let me see. Marry, ill, to like him that ne'er it likes. 'Tis a commodity will lose the gloss with lying: the longer kept, the less worth. Off with't while 'tis vendible; answer the time of request. Your date is better in your pie and your porridge than in your cheek; and your virginity, your old virginity, is like one of our French wither'd pears, it looks ill, it eats drily, marry, 'tis a wither'd pear; it was formerly better, marry, yet 'tis a wither'd pear. Will you any thing with it?

HEL.

Not my virginity yet:

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

PAR.

What one, i' faith?

HEL.

That I wish well. 'Tis pity—

PAR.

What's pity?

HEL.

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

Enter Steward.

STEW.

Monsieur Parolles, my lord calls for you.

Exit.

PAR.

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

HEL.

Monsieur Parolles, you were born under a charitable star.

PAR.

Under Mars, I.

HEL.

I especially think, under Mars.

PAR.

Why under Mars?

HEL.

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

PAR.

When he was predominant.

HEL.

When he was retrograde, I think rather.

PAR.

Why think you so?

HEL.

You go so much backward when you fight.

PAR.

That's for advantage.

HEL.

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

PAR.

I am so full of businesses, I cannot answer thee acutely. I will return perfect courtier, in the which my instruction shall serve to naturalize thee, so thou wilt be capable of a courtier's counsel, and understand what advice shall thrust upon thee, else thou diest in thine

unthankfulness, and thine ignorance makes thee away. Farewell. When thou hast leisure, say thy prayers; when thou hast none, remember thy friends. Get thee a good husband, and use him as he uses thee. So farewell.

Exit.

HEL.

Our remedies oft in ourselves do lie,
Which we ascribe to heaven. The fated sky
Gives us free scope, only doth backward pull
Our slow designs when we ourselves are dull.
The King's disease—my project may deceive me,
But my intents are fix'd, and will not leave me.

Exit.

1.2. Paris. The King's palace.

Flourish cornets. Enter the King of France with letters, Lords

KING.

The Florentines and Senoys are by th' ears,
Have fought with equal fortune, and continue
A braving war.

1. LORD.

So 'tis reported, sir.

KING.

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

1. LORD.

His love and wisdom,
Approv'd so to your Majesty, may plead
For amplest credence.

KING.

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

2. LORD.

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

KING.

What's he comes here?

Enter Bertram, Lafew, and Parolles.

1. LORD.

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

KING.

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

BER.

My thanks and duty are your Majesty's.

KING.

I would I had that corporal soundness now
As when thy father and myself in friendship
First tried our soldiership! He did look far
Into the service of the time, and was
Discipled of the bravest. He lasted long,
But on us both did haggish age steal on,
And wore us out of act.

BER.

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

KING.

Would I were with him! He would always say—
“Let me not live,
After my flame lacks oil, to be the snuff
Of younger spirits.” This he wish'd.
I, after him, do after him wish too.

2. LORD.

You're loved, sir;
They that least lend it you shall lack you first.

KING.

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

BER.

Some six months since, my lord.

KING.

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

BER.

Thank your Majesty.

Exeunt. Flourish.

1.3. Rousillon. The Count's palace.

Enter Countess and Steward Rinaldo.

STEW.

May it please you, madam, that one bid Helen come to you. Of her I am to speak.

COUNT. *To offstage*

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

STEW.

I know, madam, you love your gentlewoman entirely.

COUNT.

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

STEW.

Madam, I was very late more near her than I think she wish'd me. Alone she was, and did communicate to herself her own words to her own ears. Her matter was, she lov'd your son. Fortune, she said, was no goddess, that had put such difference betwixt their two estates; Love no god, that would not extend his might only where qualities were level. This she

deliver'd in the most bitter touch of sorrow that e'er I heard virgin exclaim in, which I held my duty speedily to acquaint you withal, sithence in the loss that may happen, it concerns you something to know it.

COUNT.

You have discharg'd this honestly, keep it to yourself. Many likelihoods inform'd me of this before, which hung so tott'ring in the balance that I could neither believe nor misdoubt. Pray you leave me.

Exit Steward. Enter Helen.

Even so it was with me when I was young.
Her eye is sick on't; I observe her now.

HEL.

What is your pleasure, madam?

COUNT.

You know, Helen,

I am a mother to you.

HEL.

Mine honorable mistress.

COUNT.

Nay, a mother,

Why not a mother? When I said "a mother,"
Methought you saw a serpent. What's in "mother,"
That you start at it? I say I am your mother,
And put you in the catalogue of those
That were enwombed mine.
You ne'er oppress'd me with a mother's groan,
Yet I express to you a mother's care.
God's mercy, maiden! does it curd thy blood
To say I am thy mother?
—Why, that you are my daughter?

HEL.

That I am not.

COUNT.

I say I am your mother.

HEL.

Pardon, madam;
 The Count Rossillion cannot be my brother:
 I am from humble, he from honored name;
 No note upon my parents, his all noble.
 My master, my dear lord he is, and I
 His servant live, and will his vassal die.
 He must not be my brother.

COUNT.

Nor I your mother?

HEL.

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

COUNT.

Yes, Helen, you might be my daughter-in-law.
 God shield you mean it not! “daughter” and “mother”
 So strive upon your pulse. What, pale again?
 My fear hath catch'd your fondness! Now I see
 The myst'ry of your loneliness, and find
 Your salt tears' head, now to all sense 'tis gross:
 You love my son. Invention is ashamed,
 Against the proclamation of thy passion,
 To say thou dost not: therefore tell me true,
 Speak, is't so?

HEL.

Good madam, pardon me!

COUNT.

Do you love my son?

HEL.

Your pardon, noble mistress!

COUNT.

Love you my son?

HEL.

Do not you love him, madam?

COUNT.

Go not about; my love hath in't a bond
Whereof the world takes note. Come, come, disclose
The state of your affection.

HEL.

Then I confess

Here on my knee, before high heaven and you,
That before you, and next unto high heaven,
I love your son.
My friends were poor, but honest, so's my love.
Be not offended, for it hurts not him
That he is lov'd of me;
I know I love in vain, strive against hope;
Yet in this captious and intenible sieve
I still pour in the waters of my love
And lack not to lose still. My dearest madam,
Let not your hate encounter with my love
For loving where you do.

COUNT.

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

HEL.

Madam, I had.

COUNT.

Wherefore? tell true.

HEL.

You know my father left me some prescriptions
Of rare and prov'd effects, such as his reading
And manifest experience had collected
For general sovereignty; Amongst the rest,
There is a remedy, approv'd, set down,
To cure the desperate languishings whereof
The King is render'd lost.

COUNT.

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

HEL.

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

COUNT.

But think you, Helen,
If you should tender your supposed aid,
He would receive it? He and his physicians
Are of a mind; he, that they cannot help him,
They, that they cannot help.

HEL.

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

COUNT.

Dost thou believe't?

HEL.

Ay, madam, knowingly.

COUNT.

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

Exeunt.

2.1. Paris. The King's palace.

Enter the King, with divers young Lords, Bertram, and Parolles.

KING.

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

1. LORD.

'Tis our hope, sir,
After well-ent'red soldiers, to return
And find your Grace in health.

KING.

No, no, it cannot be; and yet my heart
Will not confess he owes the malady
That doth my life besiege. Farewell, young lords,
Whether I live or die, be you the sons
Of worthy Frenchmen. Let higher Italy
see that you come not to woo honor, but to wed it.
Find what you seek, that fame may cry you loud..

2. LORD.

Health, at your bidding, serve your Majesty!

KING.

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

BOTH LORDS.

Our hearts receive your warnings.

KING.

Farewell.

1. LORD.

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

PAR.

'Tis not his fault, the spark.

2. LORD.

O, 'tis brave wars!

PAR.

Most admirable! I have seen those wars.

BER.

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

PAR.

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

BER.

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

1. LORD.

There's honor in the theft.

PAR.

Commit it, Count.

2. LORD.

I am your accessory, and so farewell.

BER.

I grow to you, and our parting is a tortur'd body.

1. LORD.

Farewell, captain.

2. LORD.

Sweet Monsieur Parolles!

PAR.

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

1. LORD.

We shall, noble captain.

PAR.

Mars dote on you for his novices!

Exeunt Lordes.

What will ye do?

BER.

Stay the King.

PAR.

Use a more spacious ceremony to the noble lords; you have restrain'd yourself within the list of too cold an adieu. Be more expressive to them, for they wear themselves in the cap of the time. After them, and take a more dilated farewell.

BER.

And I will do so.

PAR.

Worthy fellows, and like to prove most sinewy swordmen.

Exeunt Bertram and Parolles. Enter Lafew. The King comes forward.

LAFEW. *Kneeling.*

Pardon, my lord, for me and for my tidings.

My good lord, 'tis thus: will you be cur'd

Of your infirmity?

KING.

No.

LAFEW.

O, will you eat
No grapes, my royal fox? Yes, but you will
My noble grapes, and if my royal fox
Could reach them. I have seen a medicine
That's able to breathe life into a stone,
Quicken a rock, and make you dance canary
With spritely fire and motion, whose simple touch
Is powerful to araise King Pippen, nay,
To give great Charlemain a pen in 's hand
And write to her a love-line.

KING.

What her is this?

LAFEW.

Why, Doctor She! My lord, there's one arriv'd,
 If you will see her. Now by my faith and honor,
 In this my light deliverance, I have spoke
 With one, that in her sex, her years, profession,
 Wisdom, and constancy, hath amaz'd me more
 Than I dare blame my weakness. Will you see her —
 For that is her demand — and know her business?
 That done, laugh well at me.

KING.

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

LAFEW.

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

Goes to the door.
Enter Helen.

LAFEW.

Nay, come your ways;
 This is his Majesty, say your mind to him.
Exit.

KING.

Now, fair one, does your business follow us?

HEL.

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

KING.

I knew him.

HEL.

The rather will I spare my praises towards him,
 Knowing him is enough. On 's bed of death
 Many receipts he gave me; chiefly one,
 Which as the dearest issue of his practice,
 He bade me store up, as a triple eye,
 Safer than mine own two, more dear. I have so,

And hearing your high Majesty is touch'd
 With that malignant cause wherein the honor
 Of my dear father's gift stands chief in power,
 I come to tender it, and my appliance,
 With all bound humbleness.

KING.

We thank you, maiden,
 But may not be so credulous of cure,
 When our most learned doctors leave us, and
 The congregated college have concluded
 That laboring art can never ransom nature
 From her inaidible estate.

HEL.

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

KING.

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

HEL.

What I can do can do no hurt to try,
 Since you set up your rest 'gainst remedy.
 Oft expectation fails, and most oft there
 Where most it promises; and oft it hits
 Where hope is coldest, and despair most fits.

KING.

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

HEL.

Dear sir, to my endeavors give consent,
 Of heaven, not me, make an experiment.
 I am not an imposture that proclaim
 Myself against the level of mine aim,
 But know I think, and think I know most sure,
 My art is not past power, nor you past cure.

KING.

Art thou so confident? Within what space
Hop'st thou my cure?

HEL.

The greatest grace lending grace,
Ere twice the horses of the sun shall bring
Their fiery torcher his diurnal ring,
What is infirm from your sound parts shall fly,
Health shall live free, and sickness freely die.

KING.

Upon thy certainty and confidence
What dar'st thou venter?

HEL.

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

KING.

Thy life is dear, for all that life can rate
Worth name of life in thee hath estimate:
Youth, beauty, wisdom, courage, all
That happiness and prime can happy call.
Sweet practicer, thy physic I will try,
That ministers thine own death if I die.

HEL.

If I break time, or flinch in property
Of what I spoke, unpitied let me die,
And well deserv'd. Not helping, death's my fee,
But if I help, what do you promise me?

KING.

Make thy demand.

HEL.

But will you make it even?

KING.

Ay, by my sceptre and my hopes of heaven.

HEL.

Then shalt thou give me with thy kingly hand
What husband in thy power I will command,
Such a one thy vassal, whom I know
Is free for me to ask, thee to bestow.

KING.

Here is my hand, the premises observ'd,
Thy will by my performance shall be serv'd.
So make the choice of thy own time, for I,
Thy resolv'd patient, on thee still rely.
Give me some help here ho! — If thou proceed
As high as word, my deed shall match thy deed.

Flourish. Exeunt.

2.3. Paris. The King's palace.

Enter count Bertram, Lafew, and Parolles.

LAFEW.

They say miracles are past, and we have our philosophical persons, to make modern and familiar, things supernatural and causeless.

PAR.

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

BER.

And so 'tis.

LAFEW.

To be relinquish'd of the artists —

PAR.

So I say, both of Galen and Paracelsus.

LAFEW.

Of all the learned and authentic fellows —

PAR.

Right, so I say.

LAFEW.

That gave him out incurable —

PAR.

Why, there 'tis, so say I too.

LAFEW.

Not to be help'd—

PAR.

Right, as 'twere a man assur'd of a—

LAFEW.

Uncertain life, and sure death.

PAR.

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

LAFEW.

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

Enter King, Helen, and Attendants.

PAR.

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

LAFEW.

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

PAR.

Mort du vinaigre! is not this Helen?

LAFEW.

'Fore God, I think so.

KING.

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

Enter Lords.

Fair maid, send forth thine eye. This youthful parcel
Of noble bachelors stand at my bestowing,
O'er whom both sovereign power and father's voice

I have to use. Thy frank election make;
Thou hast power to choose, and they none to forsake.

HEL.

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

LAFEW.

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

KING.

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

HEL.

Gentlemen,
Heaven hath through me restor'd the King to health.

ALL.

We understand it, and thank heaven for you.

HEL.

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

KING.

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

HEL.

Now, Dian, from thy altar do I fly,
And to imperial Love, that god most high,
Do my sighs stream.

She addresses her to a Lord.

Sir, will you hear my suit?

1. LORD.
And grant it.

HEL.
Thanks, sir; all the rest is mute.

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

HEL. *To a second Lord.*
The honor, sir, that flames in your fair eyes,
Before I speak, too threat'ningly replies.
Love make your fortunes twenty times above
Her that so wishes, and her humble love!

2. LORD.
No better, if you please.

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

LAFEW.
Do all they deny her? And they were sons of mine, I'd have them whipt, or I would send them
to th' Turk to make eunuchs of.

HEL. *To Bertram.*
I dare not say I take you, but I give
Me and my service, ever whilst I live,
Into your guiding power.—This is the man.

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

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

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

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

KING.

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

BER.

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

KING.

'Tis only title thou disdain'st in her, the which
I can build up. If she be
All that is virtuous—save what thou dislik'st,
A poor physician's daughter—thou dislik'st
Of virtue for the name. But do not so.
Good alone
Is good, without a name; vileness is so:
She is young, wise, fair,
In these to nature she's immediate heir;
And these breed honor. What should be said?
If thou canst like this creature as a maid,
I can create the rest. Virtue and she
Is her own dower; honor and wealth from me.

BER.

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

KING.

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

HEL.

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

KING.

My honor's at the stake, which to defeat,
I must produce my power. Here, take her hand,
Proud scornful boy, unworthy this good gift,
That dost in vile misprision shackle up
My love and her desert; Check thy contempt;
Obey our will, which travails in thy good;
Believe not thy disdain, but presently
Do thine own fortunes that obedient right
Which both thy duty owes and our power claims,
Or I will throw thee from my care for ever

Into the staggers and the careless lapse
 Of youth and ignorance; both my revenge and hate
 Loosing upon thee, in the name of justice,
 Without all terms of pity. Speak, thine answer.

BER.

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

KING.

Take her by the hand,
 And tell her she is thine.

BER.

I take her hand.

KING.

Good fortune and the favor of the King
 Smile upon this contract, whose ceremony
 Shall seem expedient on the now-born brief,
 And be perform'd tonight. As thou lov'st her,
 Thy love's to me religious; else, does err.

Exeunt. Lafew and Parolles stay behind.

LAFEW.

Do you hear, monsieur? A word with you.

PAR.

Your pleasure, sir?

LAFEW.

Your lord and master did well to make his recantation.

PAR.

Recantation? My lord? My master?

LAFEW.

Ay; is it not a language I speak?

PAR.

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

LAFEW.

Are you companion to the Count Rossillion?

PAR.

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

LAFEW.

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

PAR.

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

LAFEW.

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

PAR.

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

LAFEW.

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

PAR.

Hadst thou not the privilege of antiquity upon thee—

LAFEW.

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

PAR.

My lord, you give me most egregious indignity.

LAFEW.

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

PAR.

I have not, my lord, deserv'd it.

LAFEW.

Yes, good faith, ev'ry dram of it, and I will not bate thee a scruple.

PAR.

Well, I shall be wiser.

LAFEW.

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

PAR.

My lord, you do me most insupportable vexation.

LAFEW.

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

Exit.

PAR.

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

Enter Lafew.

LAFEW.

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

PAR.

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

LAFEW.

Who? God?

PAR.

Ay, sir.

LAFEW.

The devil it is that's thy master. By mine honor, if I were but two hours younger, I'd beat thee. Methink'st thou art a general offense, and every man should beat thee. I think thou wast created for men to breathe themselves upon thee.

PAR.

This is hard and undeserv'd measure, my lord.

LAFEW.

Go to, sir, you are a vagabond and no true traveller. You are more saucy with lords and honorable personages than the commission of your birth and virtue gives you heraldry. You are not worth another word, else I'd call you knave. I leave you.

Exit. Enter Bertram Count Rossillion.

PAR.

Good, very good, it is so then. Good, very good, let it be conceal'd awhile.

BER.

Undone, and forfeited to cares for ever!

PAR.

What's the matter, sweet heart?

BER.

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

PAR.

What, what, sweet heart?

BER.

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

PAR.

France is a dog-hole, and it no more merits
The tread of a man's foot. To th' wars!

BER.

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

PAR.

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

BER.

It shall be so. I'll send her to my house,
 Acquaint my mother with my hate to her,
 And wherefore I am fled; write to the King
 That which I durst not speak. His present gift
 Shall furnish me to those Italian fields
 Where noble fellows strike. Wars is no strife
 To the dark house and the detested wife.

PAR.

Will this capriccio hold in thee, art sure?

BER.

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

PAR.

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

Exeunt.

2.4.

Enter Helena and Parolles.

PAR.

Bless you, my fortunate lady!

HEL.

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

PAR.

You had my prayers to lead them on, and to keep them on, have them still.
 Madam, my lord will go away tonight,
 A very serious business calls on him.

HEL.

What's his will else?

PAR.

That you will take your instant leave a' th' King,
And make this haste as your own good proceeding,
Strength'ned with what apology you think
May make it probable need.

HEL.

What more commands he?

PAR.

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

HEL.

In every thing I wait upon his will.

PAR.

I shall report it so.

Exeunt.

2.5.

Enter Lafew and Bertram.

LAFEW.

But I hope your lordship thinks not him a soldier.

BER.

Yes, my lord, and of very valiant approof.

LAFEW.

You have it from his own deliverance.

BER.

And by other warranted testimony.

LAFEW.

Then my dial goes not true.

BER.

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

LAFEW.

I have then sinn'd against his experience, and transgress'd against his valor, and my state that way is dangerous, since I cannot yet find in my heart to repent. Here he comes. I pray you make us friends, I will pursue the amity.

Enter Parolles.

PAR. *To Bertram.*

These things shall be done, sir.

LAFEW.

Pray you, sir, who's his tailor?

PAR.

Sir!

LAFEW.

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

BER. *Aside to Parolles.*

Is she gone to the King?

PAR.

She is.

BER.

Will she away tonight?

PAR.

As You'll have her.

BER.

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

LAFEW.

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

BER.

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

PAR.

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

BER.

It may be you have mistaken him, my lord.

LAFEW.

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

Exit.

PAR.

An idle lord, I swear.

BER.

I think so.

PAR.

Why, do you not know him?

BER.

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

Enter Helena.

HEL.

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

BER.

I shall obey his will.

You must not marvel, Helen, at my course.

Prepar'd 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 than ask why I entreat you.
This to my mother.
Giving a letter.

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

HEL.

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

BER.

Come, come, no more of that.

HEL.

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

BER.

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

HEL.

Pray, sir, your pardon.

BER.

Well, what would you say?

HEL.

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

BER.

What would you have?

HEL.

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

BER.

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

HEL.

I shall not break your bidding, good my lord.

BER.

Where are my other men, monsieur? — Farewell.

Exit Helena.

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

PAR.

Bravely, coraggio!

Exeunt.

3.2. Rousillon. The Count's palace.

Enter Countess.

COUNT. *Reads a letter.*

"I have sent you a daughter-in-law; she hath recover'd the King, and undone me. I have wedded her, not bedded her, and sworn to make the "not" eternal. You shall hear I am run away; know it before the report come. If there be breadth enough in the world, I will hold a long distance. My duty to you.

Your unfortunate son, Bertram."

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

Enter Helen and two Gentlemen, the French Lords.

2. LORD.

'Save you, good madam.

HEL.

Madam, my lord is gone, for ever gone.

1. LORD.

Do not say so.

COUNT.

Think upon patience. Where is my son, I pray you?

1. LORD.

Madam, he's gone to serve the Duke of Florence.
We met him thitherward, for thence we came.

HEL.

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

Reads.

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

COUNT.

Brought you this letter, gentlemen?

1. LORD.

Ay, madam,

And for the contents' sake are sorry for our pains.

COUNT.

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

1. LORD.

Ay, madam.

COUNT.

And to be a soldier?

1. LORD.

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

COUNT.

Return you thither?

2. LORD.

Ay, madam, with the swiftest wing of speed.

HEL. *Reads.*

"Till I have no wife, I have nothing in France." 'Tis bitter.

COUNT.

Find you that there?

HEL.

Ay, madam.

2. LORD.

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

COUNT.

Nothing in France, until he have no wife!
There's nothing here that is too good for him
But only she, and she deserves a lord
That twenty such rude boys might tend upon,
And call her hourly mistress. Who was with him?

2. LORD.

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

COUNT.

Parolles, was it not?

2. LORD.

Ay, my good lady, he.

COUNT.

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

2. LORD.

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

COUNT.

Y' are welcome, gentlemen.
I will entreat you, when you see my son,
To tell him that his sword can never win
The honor that he loses. More I'll entreat you
Written to bear along.

1. LORD.

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

Exit with Lords.

HEL.

"Till I have no wife, I have nothing in France."
Nothing in France, until he has no wife!
Thou shalt have none, Rossillion, none in France;
Then hast thou all again. Poor lord, is't I
That chase thee from thy country, and expose
Those tender limbs of thine to the event
Of the none-sparing war? And is it I
That drive thee from the sportive court, where thou
Wast shot at with fair eyes, to be the mark
Of smoky muskets? O you leaden messengers,
That ride upon the violent speed of fire,
Fly with false aim, move the still-peering air
That sings with piercing, do not touch my lord.
Whoever shoots at him, I set him there;
Whoever charges on his forward breast,
I am the caitiff that do hold him to't;
And though I kill him not, I am the cause
His death was so effected.
No, come thou home, Rossillion,
Whence honor but of danger wins a scar,
As oft it loses all. I will be gone.
My being here it is that holds thee hence.
Shall I stay here to do't? No, no, although
The air of paradise did fan the house,
And angels offic'd all. I will be gone,
That pitiful rumor may report my flight
To console thine ear. Come night, end day!
For with the dark, poor thief, I'll steal away.

Exit.

3.5. Florence. Without the walls. A tucket far off.

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

WID.

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

DIA.

They say the French count has done most honorable service.

WID.

It is reported that he has taken their great'st commander, and that with his own hand he slew the Duke's brother.

Tucket.

We have lost our labor, they are gone a contrary way. Hark!

MAR.

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

WID.

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

MAR.

I know that knave, hang him! one Parolles, a filthy officer he is in those suggestions for the young earl. Beware of them, Diana; their promises, enticements, oaths, tokens, and all these engines of lust, are not the things they go under.

DIA.

You shall not need to fear me.

Enter Helen habited like a pilgrim.

WID.

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

HEL.

To Saint Jaques le Grand.

Where do the palmers lodge, I do beseech you?

WID.

At the Saint Francis here beside the port.

HEL.

Is this the way?

A march afar.

WID.

Ay, marry, is't. Hark you, they come this way.
 If you will tarry, holy pilgrim,
 But till the troops come by,
 I will conduct you where you shall be lodg'd,
 The rather for I think I know your hostess
 As ample as myself.

HEL.

Is it yourself?

WID.

If you shall please so, pilgrim.

HEL.

I thank you, and will stay upon your leisure.

WID.

You came I think from France?

HEL.

I did so.

WID.

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

HEL.

His name, I pray you?

DIA.

The Count Rossillion. Know you such a one?

HEL.

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

DIA.

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

HEL.

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

DIA.

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

HEL.

What's his name?

DIA.

Monsieur Parolles.

HEL.

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

DIA.

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

WID.

I warr'nt, good creature, wheresoe'er she is,
Her heart weighs sadly. This young maid might do her
A shrewd turn, if she pleas'd.

HEL.

How do you mean?

May be the amorous Count solicits her
In the unlawful purpose.

WID.

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

Drums.

MAR.

The gods forbid else!

WID.

So, now they come.

That is Antonio, the Duke's eldest son,

That, Escalus.

HEL.

Which is the Frenchman?

DIA.

He,

That with the plume; 'tis a most gallant fellow.

I would he lov'd his wife. If he were honester

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

HEL.

I like him well.

DIA.

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

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

I would poison that vile rascal.

HEL.

Which is he?

DIA.

That jack-an-apes with scarfs. Why is he melancholy?

HEL.

Perchance he's hurt i' th' battle.

PAR. (*offstage*)

Lose our drum! Well.

MAR.

He's shrewdly vex'd at something.

WID.

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

Where you shall host.

HEL.

I humbly thank you.

Exeunt.

3.6. Camp before Florence.

Enter (Bertram) Count Rossillion and the two French Lords.

2. LORD.

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

1. LORD.

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

2. LORD.

On my life, my lord, a bubble.

BER.

Do you think I am so far deceiv'd in him?

2. LORD.

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

1. LORD.

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

BER.

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

1. LORD.

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

2. LORD.

I, with a troop of Florentines, will suddenly surprise him; such I will have, whom I am sure he knows not from the enemy. We will bind and hoodwink him so, that he shall suppose no other but that he is carried into the leaguer of the adversaries, when we bring him to our own tents.

1. LORD.

O, for the love of laughter, let him fetch his drum; he says he has a stratagem for't. Here he comes.

Enter Parolles.

BER.

How now, monsieur? This drum sticks sorely in your disposition.

1. LORD.

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

PAR.

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

1. LORD.

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

BER.

Well, we cannot greatly condemn our success. Some dishonor we had in the loss of that drum, but it is not to be recover'd.

PAR.

It might have been recover'd.

BER.

It might, but it is not now.

PAR.

It is to be recover'd. I would have that drum.

BER.

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

PAR.

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

BER.

But you must not now slumber in it.

PAR.

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

BER.

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

PAR.

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

BER.

I know th' art valiant, and to the possibility of thy soldiership will subscribe for thee.
Farewell.

PAR.

I love not many words.

Exit.

2. LORD.

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

1. LORD.

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

2. LORD.

I must go look my twigs. He shall be caught.

Exit.

BER.

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

1. LORD.

But you say she's honest.

BER.

That's all the fault. I spoke with her but once,
And found her wondrous cold, but I sent to her
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?

1. LORD.

With all my heart, my lord.

Exeunt.

3.7. Florence. The widow's house.

Enter Helen and Widow.

HEL.

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

WID.

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

HEL.

Nor would I wish you.

First give me trust, the Count he is my husband,
And what to your sworn counsel I have spoken
Is so from word to word; and then you cannot,
By the good aid that I of you shall borrow,
Err in bestowing it.

WID.

I should believe you,
For you have show'd me that which well approves
Y' are great in fortune.

HEL.

The Count he woos your daughter,
Lays down his wanton siege before her beauty,
Resolv'd to carry her. Let her in fine consent,
As we'll direct her how 'tis best to bear it.
Now his important blood will nought deny
That she'll demand. A ring the County wears,
That downward hath succeeded in his house
From son to son, some four or five descents,
Since the first father wore it. This ring he holds
In most rich choice; yet in his idle fire,
To buy his will, it would not seem too dear,
How'er repented after.

WID.

Now I see
The bottom of your purpose.

HEL.

You see it lawful then. It is no more
 But that your daughter, ere she seems as won,
 Desires this ring; appoints him an encounter;
 In fine, delivers me to fill the time,
 Herself most chastely absent.

WID.

I have yielded.
 Instruct my daughter how she shall persevere.

HEL.

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

Exeunt.

4.1. Without the Florentine camp.

Enter two Lords in ambush.

2. LORD.

He can come no other way but by this hedge-corner. When you sally upon him, speak what terrible language you will. He must think us some band of strangers i' th' adversary's entertainment. But couch ho, here he comes.

They stand aside. Enter Parolles.

PAR.

Ten a' clock: within these three hours 'twill be time enough to go home. What shall I say I have done? It must be a very plausible invention that carries it. What the devil should move me to undertake the recovery of this drum, being not ignorant of the impossibility, and knowing I had no such purpose? I must give myself some hurts, and say I got them in exploit. Yet slight ones will not carry it. They will say, "Came you off with so little?" And great ones I dare not give; wherefore what's the instance?

2. LORD. *Aside.*

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

PAR.

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

2. LORD. *Aside.*

We cannot afford you so.

PAR.

Or the baring of my beard, and to say it was in stratagem.

2. LORD. *Aside.*

'Twould not do.

PAR.

Or to drown my clothes, and say I was stripp'd.

2. LORD. *Aside.*

Hardly serve.

PAR.

Though I swore I leapt from the window of the citadel—

2. LORD. *Aside.*

How deep?

PAR.

Thirty fadom.

2. LORD. *Aside.*

Three great oaths would scarce make that be believ'd.

PAR.

I would I had any drum of the enemy's. I would swear I recover'd it.

2. LORD. *Aside.*

You shall hear one anon.

PAR.

A drum now of the enemy's—

Alarum within.

2. LORD.

Throca movousus, cargo, cargo, cargo.

PAR.

O, ransom, ransom!

They seize him.

Do not hide mine eyes.

They blindfold him.

1. LORD. AS INTERPRETER.

Boskos thromuldo boskos.

PAR.

I know you are the Muskos' regiment,
And I shall lose my life for want of language.

INTERP.

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

PAR.

O!

INTERP.

O, pray, pray, pray! Manka revania dulche.

2. LORD.

Oscorbidulchos volivorco.

INTERP.

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

PAR.

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.

INTERP.

But wilt thou faithfully?

PAR.

If I do not, damn me.

INTERP.

Acordo linta.

Come on, thou art granted space.

Exeunt with Parolles guarded. A short alarum within.

4.2. Florence. The widow's house.

Enter Bertram and Diana.

BER.

They told me that your name was Fontibell.

DIA.

No, my good lord, Diana.

BER.

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

DIA.

She then was honest.

BER.

So should you be.

DIA.

No;

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

BER.

No more a' that.

I prithee do not strive against my vows.
I was compell'd to her, but I love thee
By love's own sweet constraint, and will for ever
Do thee all rights of service.

DIA.

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

BER.

How have I sworn!

DIA.

'Tis not the many oaths that makes the truth,
But the plain single vow that is vow'd true.

BER.

Be not so holy-cruel. Love is holy.
Say thou art mine, and ever
My love, as it begins, shall so persever.

DIA.

Give me that ring.

BER.

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

DIA.

Will you not, my lord?

BER.

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

DIA.

Mine honor's such a ring,
My chastity's the jewel of our house,
Bequeathed down from many ancestors,
Which were the greatest obloquy i' th' world
In me to lose.

BER.

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

DIA.

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

BER.

A heaven on earth I have won by wooing thee.

Exeunt.

4.3. The Florentine camp.

Enter the two French Lords and a Soldier. Enter Bertram.

1. 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?

BER.

I have tonight dispatch'd sixteen businesses, a month's length a-piece, by an abstract of success: I have congied with the Duke, done my adieu with his nearest; buried a wife, mourn'd for her, writ to my lady mother I am returning, entertain'd my convoy, and between these main parcels of dispatch effected many nicer needs. The last was the greatest, but that I have not ended yet. But shall we have this dialogue between the fool and the soldier?

2. LORD.

Bring him forth, h'as sate i' th' stocks all night, poor gallant knave.

Exit 1 Lord. Reenter 1 Lord with Parolles.

BER.

A plague upon him! Muffled! He can say nothing of me.

2. LORD.

Hush, hush! Hoodman comes! Porto-tartarossa.

INTERP. (1 LORD)

He calls for the tortures. What will you say without 'em?

PAR.

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

INTERP.

Bosko chimurcho.

2. LORD.

Boblibindo chicurmurco.

INTERP.

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

PAR.

And truly, as I hope to live.

INTERP. Reads.

"First demand of him, how many horse the Duke is strong." What say you to that?

PAR.

Five or six thousand, but very weak and unserviceable. The troops are all scatter'd, and the commanders very poor rogues, upon my reputation and credit and as I hope to live.

INTERP.

Shall I set down your answer so?

PAR.

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

BER.

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

PAR.

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

INTERP.

Well, that's set down

PAR.

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

INTERP. *Reads.*

"Demand of him, of what strength they are afoot." What say you to that?

PAR.

By my troth, sir, if I were to live this present hour, I will tell true. Let me see: Spurio, a hundred and fifty; Sebastian, so many; Corambus, so many; Jaques, so many; Guiltian, 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, upon my life, amounts not to fifteen thousand pole, half of the which dare not shake the snow from off their cassocks, lest they shake themselves to pieces.

BER.

What shall be done to him?

2. LORD.

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

INTERP.

Well, that's set down.

Reads.

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

PAR.

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

INTERP.

Do you know this Captain Dumaine?

PAR.

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

BER.

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

INTERP.

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

PAR.

Upon my knowledge, he is, and lousy.

2. LORD.

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

INTERP.

What is his reputation with the Duke?

PAR.

The Duke knows him for no other but a poor officer of mine, and writ to me this other day to turn him out a' th' band. I think I have his letter in my pocket.

INTERP.

Marry, we'll search.

PAR.

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

INTERP.

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

PAR.

I do not know if it be it or no.

BER.

Our interpreter does it well.

2. LORD.

Excellently.

INTERP. Reads.

"Dian, the Count's a fool, and full of gold"—

PAR.

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

INTERP.

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

PAR.

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

BER.

Damnable both-sides rogue!

INTERP. *Reads the letter.*

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

Thine, as he vow'd to thee in thine ear,
Parolles."

BER.

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

2. LORD.

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

BER.

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

INTERP.

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

PAR.

My life, sir, in any case! Not that I am afraid to die, but that my offenses being many, I would repent out the remainder of nature. Let me live, sir, in a dungeon, i' th' stocks, or any where, so I may live.

INTERP.

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

PAR. *Aside.*

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

INTERP.

There is no remedy, sir, but you must die. The general says, you that have so traitorously discover'd the secrets of your army, and made such pestiferous reports of men very nobly held, can serve the world for no honest use; therefore you must die. Come, headsman, off with his head.

PAR.

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

INTERP.

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

Unblinding him.

So, look about you. Know you any here?

BER.

Good Morrow, noble captain.

2. LORD.

God bless you, Captain Parolles.

1. LORD.

God save you, noble captain.

2. LORD.

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

1. LORD.

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

Exeunt Bertram and Lords.

PAR.

Who cannot be crush'd with a plot?
 Yet am I thankful. If my heart were great,
 'Twould burst at this. Captain I'll be no more,
 But I will eat and drink, and sleep as soft
 As captain shall. Simply the thing I am
 Shall make me live. Who knows himself a braggart,
 Let him fear this; for it will come to pass
 That every braggart shall be found an ass.
 Rust sword, cool blushes, and, Parolles, live
 Safest in shame! Being fool'd, by fool'ry thrive!
 There's place and means for every man alive.
 I'll after them.

Exit.

4.5. Rousillon. The Count's palace.

Enter Lady Countess and Lafew.

LAFEW.

No, no, no, your son was misled with a snipt-taffata fellow there, whose villainous saffron would have made all the unbak'd and doughy youth of a nation in his color. Your daughter-in-law had been alive at this hour, and your son here at home, more advanc'd by the King than by that red-tail'd humble-bee I speak of.

COUNT.

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

LAFEW.

'Twas a good lady, 'twas a good lady. My lord your son was upon his return home, I mov'd the King my master to speak in the behalf of my daughter, which in the minority of them both, his Majesty, out of a self-gracious remembrance, did first propose. His Highness hath promis'd me to do it, and to stop up the displeasure he hath conceiv'd against your son, there is no fitter matter. How does your ladyship like it?

COUNT.

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

LAFEW.

His Highness comes post from Marsellis, of as able body as when he number'd thirty. 'A will be here tomorrow, or I am deceiv'd by him that in such intelligence hath seldom fail'd.

COUNT.

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

LAFEW.

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

Exeunt.

5.2. Rousillon. Before the count's palace.

Enter 2 LORD and Parolles.

PAR.

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

2 LORD.

Truly, Fortune's displeasure is but sluttish if it smell so strongly as thou speak'st of. Prithee allow the wind.

PAR.

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

2 LORD.

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

PAR.

Pray you, sir, deliver me this paper.

2 LORD.

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

Enter Lafew. Exit Lord.

PAR.

My lord, I am a man whom Fortune hath cruelly scratch'd.

LAFEW.

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

PAR.

I beseech your honor to hear me one single word.

LAFEW.

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

PAR.

My name, my good lord, is Parolles.

LAFEW.

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

PAR.

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

LAFEW.

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

PAR.

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

LAFEW.

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

Trumpets sound.

The King's coming. Sirrah, inquire further after me. I had talk of you last night; though you are a fool and a knave, you shall eat. Go to, follow.

PAR.

I praise God for you.

Exeunt.

5.3. Rousillon. The Count's palace.

Flourish. Enter King, Lady Countess, Lafew, the 2 Lord.

KING.

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

COUNT.

'Tis past, my liege,
And I beseech your Majesty to make it
Natural rebellion, done i' th' blade of youth,
When oil and fire, too strong for reason's force,
o'erbears it, and burns on.

KING.

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

LAFEW.

This I must say—
But first I beg my pardon—the young lord
Did to his Majesty, his mother, and his lady
Offense of mighty note; but to himself
The greatest wrong of all. He lost a wife

Whose beauty did astonish the survey
 Of richest eyes, whose words all ears took captive,
 Whose dear perfection hearts that scorn'd to serve
 Humbly call'd mistress.

KING.

Praising what is lost

Makes the remembrance dear. Well, call him hither,
 We are reconcil'd, and the first view shall kill
 All repetition. Let him not ask our pardon,
 The nature of his great offense is dead,
 And deeper than oblivion we do bury
 Th' incensing relics of it. Let him approach
 A stranger, no offender; and inform him
 So 'tis our will he should.

LORD.

I shall, my liege.

Exit.

KING.

What says he to your daughter? Have you spoke?

LAFEW.

All that he is hath reference to your Highness.

KING.

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

Enter Count Bertram.

LAFEW.

He looks well on't.

KING.

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

BER.

My high-repent'd blames,
 Dear sovereign, pardon to me.

KING.

All is whole,
Not one word more of the consumed time.
You remember the daughter of this lord?

BER.

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

KING.

Well excus'd.

That thou didst love her, strikes some scores away
From the great compt; but love that comes too late,
Like a remorseful pardon slowly carried,
To the great sender turns a sour offense.
The main consents are had, and here we'll stay
To see our widower's second marriage-day.

COUNT.

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

LAFEW.

Come on, my son, in whom my house's name
Must be digested; give a favor from you
To sparkle in the spirits of my daughter,
That she may quickly come.

Bertram gives a ring.

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

BER.

Hers it was not.

KING.

Now pray you let me see it; for mine eye,
While I was speaking, oft was fasten'd to't.
This ring was mine, and I gave it Helen,

BER.

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

COUNT.

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

LAFEW.

I am sure I saw her wear it.

BER.

You are deceiv'd, my lord, she never saw it.
In Florence was it from a casement thrown me,
Wrapp'd in a paper, which contain'd the name
Of her that threw it. Noble she was, and thought
I stood engag'd; but when I had subscrib'd
To mine own fortune, and inform'd her fully
I could not answer in that course of honor
As she had made the overture, she ceas'd
In heavy satisfaction, and would never
Receive the ring again.

KING.

'twas mine, 'twas Helen's,
Whoever gave it you. Then if you know
That you are well acquainted with yourself,
Confess 'twas hers, and by what rough enforcement
You got it from her. She call'd the saints to surety
That she would never put it from her finger,
Unless she gave it to yourself in bed,
Where you have never come, or sent it us
Upon her great disaster.

BER.

She never saw it.

KING.

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

2 Lord seizes Bertram.

BER.

If you shall prove
 This ring was ever hers, you shall as easy
 Prove that I husbanded her bed in Florence,
 Where yet she never was.

Exit guarded. Enter 1 LORD.

KING.

I am wrapp'd in dismal thinkings.

LORD.

Gracious sovereign,
 Here's a petition from a Florentine,
 Her business looks in her
 With an importing visage, and she told me,
 In a sweet verbal brief, it did concern
 Your Highness with herself.

KING. *Reads a letter.*

"Upon his many protestations to marry me when his wife was dead, I blush to say it, he won me. Now is the Count Rossillion a widower, his vows are forfeited to me, and my honor's paid to him. He stole from Florence, taking no leave, and I follow him to his country for justice. Grant it me, O King, in you it best lies; otherwise a seducer flourishes, and a poor maid is undone. Diana Capilet."

LAFEW.

I will buy me a son-in-law in a fair. I'll none of him.

KING.

The heavens have thought well on thee, Lafew,
 To bring forth this discov'ry. Seek these suitors.
 Go speedily, and bring again the Count.

Exeunt I Lord.

I am afeard the life of Helen, lady,
Was foully snatch'd.

COUNT.

Now, justice on the doers!

Enter Bertram guarded by Lords.

KING.

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

Enter Diana.

DIA.

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

KING.

Come hither, Count, do you know this woman?

BER.

My lord, I neither can nor will deny
But that I know her. Does she charge me further?

DIA.

Why do you look so strange upon your wife?

BER.

She's none of mine, my lord.

DIA.

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

LAFEW.

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

BER.

My lord, this is a fond and desp'rate creature,
Whom sometime I have laugh'd with. Let your Highness
Lay a more noble thought upon mine honor
Than for to think that I would sink it here.

KING.

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

DIA.

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

KING.

What say'st thou to her?

BER.

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

DIA.

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

COUNT.

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

KING.

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

DIA.

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

LAFEW.

I saw the man today, if man he be.

KING.

Find him, and bring him hither.

Exit 1 Lord.

BER.

What of him?

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

KING.

She hath that ring of yours.

BER.

I think she has. Certain it is I lik'd her,
And boarded her i' th' wanton way of youth.
She knew her distance, and did angle for me,
Madding my eagerness with her restraint,
As all impediments in fancy's course
Are motives of more fancy, and in fine,
Her inf'nite cunning, with her modern grace,
Subdu'd me to her rate. She got the ring,
And I had that which any inferior might
At market-price have bought.

DIA.

I must be patient.

You that have turn'd off a first so noble wife,
May justly diet me. I pray you yet
Send for your ring, I will return it home,
And give me mine again.

BER.

I have it not.

KING.

What ring was yours, I pray you?

DIA.

Sir, much like

The same upon your finger.

KING.

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

DIA.

And this was it I gave him, being a-bed.

KING.

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

DIA.

I have spoke the truth.

Enter Parolles.

BER.

My lord, I do confess the ring was hers.

KING.

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

DIA.

Ay, my lord.

KING.

Tell me, sirrah—but tell me true, I charge you—
By him and by this woman here what know you?

PAR.

So please your Majesty, my master hath been an honorable gentleman. Tricks he hath had in
him, which gentlemen have.

KING.

Come, come, to th' purpose. Did he love this woman?

PAR.

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

KING.

How, I pray you?

PAR.

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

KING.

How is that?

PAR.

He lov'd her, sir, and lov'd her not.

KING.

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

PAR.

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

LAFEW.

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

DIA.

Do you know he promis'd me marriage?

PAR.

Faith, I know more than I'll speak.

KING.

But wilt thou not speak all thou know'st?

PAR.

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

KING.

Thou hast spoken all already, unless thou canst say they are married. But thou art too fine in thy evidence, therefore stand aside.

This ring you say was yours?

DIA.

Ay, my good lord.

KING.

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

DIA.

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

KING.

Who lent it you?

DIA.

It was not lent me neither.

KING.

Where did you find it then?

DIA.

I found it not.

KING.

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

DIA.

I never gave it him.

LAFEW.

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

KING.

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

DIA.

It might be yours or hers for aught I know.

KING.

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

DIA.

I'll never tell you.

KING.

Take her away.

DIA.

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

KING.

Wherefore hast thou accus'd him all this while?

DIA.

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

KING.

She does abuse our ears. To prison with her!

Exit Widow.

DIANA

Stay, royal sir.
The jeweller that owes the ring is sent for,
And he shall surety me. But for this lord,
Who hath abus'd me, as he knows himself,
Though yet he never harm'd me, here I quit him.
He knows himself my bed he hath defil'd,
And at that time he got his wife with child.
Dead though she be, she feels her young one kick.
So there's my riddle: one that's dead is quick—
And now behold the meaning.

Enter Helen.

KING.

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

HEL.

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

BER.

Both, both. O, pardon!

HEL.

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

BER.

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

HEL.

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

LAFEW.

Mine eyes smell onions, I shall weep anon.

To Parolles.

Good Tom Drum, lend me a handkercher. So, I thank thee; wait on me home, I'll make sport
 with thee. Let thy curtsies alone, they are scurvy ones.

KING.

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

To Diana.

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