Dramatis Personae

KING OF FRANCE. (KING)
DUKE OF FLORENCE. (DUKE)
BERTRAM Count of Rousillon.
LAFEU an old lord.
PAROLLES a follower of Bertram.

STEWARDS servants to the Countess of Rousillon.

A Page (PAGE)

COUNTESS OF ROUSILLON mother to Bertram. (COUNTESS)

HELENA a gentlewoman protected by the Countess.

Lords, Officers, Soldiers, &c., French and Florentine.

(VIOLENTA) neighbours and friends to the Widow.

MARIANA (SECOND GENTLEMAN), (SECOND SOLDIER), (GENTLEMAN)

Scene: Rousillon; Paris; Florence; Marseilles.
SCENE I
Rousillon. The COUNT’s palace.

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

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

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

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

COUNTESS What hope is there of his majesty’s amendment?

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

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

COUNTESS What hope is there of his majesty’s amendment?

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

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

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

LAFEU A fistula, my lord.

BERTRAM I heard not of it before.

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

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

LAFEU Your commendations, madam, get from her tears.

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

HELENA I do affect a sorrow indeed, but I have it too.
All's Well That Ends Well: ACT I

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

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

BERTRAM  Madam, I desire your holy wishes.

LAFEU  How understand we that?

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

LAFEU  He cannot want the best That shall attend his love.

COUNTESS  Heaven bless him! Farewel, Bertram.

[Exit]

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

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

[Exeunt BERTRAM and LAFEU]

HELENA  O, were that all! I think not on my father; And these great tears grace his remembrance more Than those I shed for him. What was he like? I have forgot him: my imagination Carries no favour in't but Bertram's. I am undone; there is no living, none, If Bertram be away. 'Twere all one That I should love a bright particular star And think to wed it, he is so above me: In his bright radiance and collateral light Must I be comforted, not in his sphere. The ambition in my love thus plagues itself: The hind that would be mated by the lion Must die for love. 'Twas pretty, though plague, To see him every hour; to sit and draw His arched brows, his hawking eye, his curls, But I will stand for 't a little, though therefore I die a virgin.
PAROLLES There's little can be said in 't; 'tis against the rule of nature. To speak on the part of virginity, is to accuse your mothers; which is most infallible disobedience. He that hangs himself is a virgin; virginity murders itself and should be buried in highways out of all sanctified limit, as a desperate offended against nature. Virginity breeds mites, much like a cheese; consumes itself to the very paring, and so dies with feeding his own stomach. Besides, virginity is peevish, proud, idle, made of self-love, which is the most inhibited sin in the canon. Keep it not; you cannot choose but loose by't; out with 't within ten year it will make itself ten, which is a goodly increase; and the principal itself not much the worse away with 't!

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

PAROLLES Let me see: marry, ill, to like him that ne'er it likes. 'Tis a commodity will lose the gloss with lying; the longer kept, the less worth: off with 't while 't is vendible; answer the time of request. Virginity, like an old courtier, wears her cap out of fashion: richly suited, but unsuitable; just like the brooch and the tooth-pick, which wear not now. Your date is better in your pie and your porridge than in your cheek; and your virginity, your old virginity, is like one of our French withered pears, it looks ill, it eats drily; marry, 'tis a withered pear; it was formerly better; marry, yet 'tis a withered pear: will you anything with it?

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

PAROLLES What one, I' faith?

HELENA That I wish well. 'Tis pity—

PAROLLES What's pity?

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

[Enter Page]

PAGE Monsieur Parolles, my lord calls for you.

[Exit]

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

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

PAROLLES Under Mars, I.

HELENA I especially think, under Mars.

PAROLLES Why under Mars?

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

PAROLLES When he was predominant.

HELENA When he was retrograde, I think, rather.

PAROLLES Why think you so?

HELENA You go so much backward when you fight.

PAROLLES That's for advantage.

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

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

[Exit]

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

[Exit]

SCENE II
Paris. The King's palace.

[Flourish of cornets. Enter King of France, with letters, and divers Attendants]

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

First Lord. So'tis reported, sir.

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

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

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

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

King. What's he comes here?

[Enter Bertram, Lafeu, and Parolles]

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

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

Bertram. My thanks and duty are your majesty's.
BERTRAM  Some six months since, my lord.
KING  If he were living, I would try him yet.
     Lend me an arm; the rest have worn me out
     With several applications; nature and sickness
     Debate it at their leisure. Welcome, count;
     My son's no dearer.
BERTRAM  Thank your majesty.

[Exeunt. Flourish]

SCENE III
Rousillon. The COUNT’s palace.

[Enter COUNTESS, Steward, and Clown]

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

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

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

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

COUNTESS  Well, sir.

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

COUNTESS  Wilt thou needs be a beggar?

CLOWN  I do beg your good will in this case.

COUNTESS  In what case?

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

COUNTESS  Tell me thy reason why thou wilt marry.

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

CLOWN  Is this all your worship’s reason?

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

COUNTESS  May the world know them?

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

COUNTESS  Thy marriage, sooner than thy wickedness.

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

COUNTESS  Such friends are thine enemies, knave.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**COUNTESS** Well, now.

**STEWARD** I know, madam, you love your gentlewoman entirely.

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

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

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

[Exit Steward]

[Enter HELENA ]

Even so it was with me when I was young:
If ever we are nature's, these are ours; this thorn
Doth to our rose of youth rightly belong;
Our blood to us, this to our blood is born;
It is the show and seal of nature's truth,
Where love's strong passion is impress'd in youth:
By our remembrances of days foregone,
Such were our faults, or then we thought them none.
Her eye is sick on't: I observe her now.

**HELENA** What is your pleasure, madam?

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

**HELENA** Mine honourable mistress.

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

**HELENA** That I am not.

**COUNTESS** I say, I am your mother.

**HELENA** Pardon, madam;  
The Count Roussillon cannot be my brother:  
I am from humble, he from honour'd name;  
No note upon my parents, his all noble:  
My master, my dear lord he is; and I  
H is servant live, and will his vassal die:  
He must not be my brother.

**COUNTESS** Nor I your mother?
HELENA You are my mother, madam; would you were—
So that my lord your son were not my brother,—
Indeed my mother! Or were you both our mothers,
I care no more for than I do for heaven,
So I were not his sister. Can’t no other,
But, I your daughter, he must be my brother?

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

HELENA Good madam, pardon me!
COUNTESS Do you love my son?
HELENA Your pardon, noble mistress!
COUNTESS Love you my son?
HELENA Do not you love him, madam?
COUNTESS Go not about; my love hath in’t a bond,
Whereof the world takes note: come, come, disclose
The state of your affection; for your passions
Have to the full appeach’d.

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

COUNTESS Had you not lately an intent,—speak truly,—To go to Paris?
HELENA Madam, I had.
COUNTESS Wherefore? Tell true.
HELENA I will tell truth; by grace itself I swear.
You know my father left me some prescriptions
Of rare and proved effects, such as his reading
And manifest experience had collected
For general sovereignty; and that he will’d me
In heedfully’st reservation to bestow them,
As notes whose faculties inclusive were
More than they were in note: amongst the rest,
To cure the desperate languishings whereof
The king is render’d lost.

COUNTESS This was your motive
For Paris, was it? Speak.
HELENA My lord your son made me to think of this;
Else Paris and the medicine and the king
Had from the conversation of my thoughts
Haply been absent then.
COUNTESS But think you, Helen,
If you should tender your supposed aid,
He would receive it? He and his physicians
Are of a mind; he, that they cannot help him,
They, that they cannot help: how shall they credit
A poor unlearned virgin, when the schools,
Embowell’d of their doctrine, have left off
The danger to itself?
HELENA There’s something in’t,
More than my father’s skill, which was the greatest
Of his profession, that his good receipt
Shall for my legacy be sanctified
All's Well That Ends Well: ACT II

By the luckiest stars in heaven: and, would your honour
But give me leave to try success, I'd venture
The well-lost life of mine on his grace's cure
By such a day and hour.

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

[Exeunt]

ACT II

SCENE I
Paris. The KING's palace.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

FIRST LORD There's honour in the theft.

PAROLLES Commit it, count.

SECOND LORD I am your accessory; and so, farewell.

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

FIRST LORD Farewell, captain.

SECOND LORD Sweet Monsieur Parolles!

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

FIRST LORD We shall, noble captain.

[Exeunt Lords]
PAROLLES Mars dote on you for his novices! What will ye do?

BERTRAM Stay: the king.

[Re-enter KING. BERTRAM and PAROLLES retire]

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

BERTRAM And I will do so.

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

[Exeunt BERTRAM and PAROLLES]

[Enter LAFEU]

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

KING I'll fee thee to stand up.

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

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

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

KING No.

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

KING What "her" is this?

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

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

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

[Exit]

KING Thus he his special nothing ever prologues.

[Re-enter LAFEU, with HELENA]

LAFEU Nay, come your ways.

KING This haste hath wings indeed.

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

[Exit]

KING Now, fair one, does your business follow us?

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

KING I knew him.

HELENA The rather will I spare my praises towards him: Knowing him is enough. On's bed of death Many receipts he gave me: chiefly one. Which, as the dearest issue of his practise, And of his old experience the oily darling, He bade me store up, as a triple eye, Safer than mine own two, more dear; I have so; And hearing your high majesty is touch'd With that malignant cause wherein the honour Of my dear father's gift stands chief in power, I come to tender it and my appliance With all bound humbleness.
KING  We thank you, maiden;  
But may not be so credulous of cure, 
When our most learned doctors leave us and 
The congregated college have concluded 
That labouring art can never ransom nature 
From her invincible estate; I say we must not 
So stain our judgment, or corrupt our hope, 
To prostitute our past-cure malady 
To empirics, or to dissever so 
Our great self and our credit, to esteem 
A senseless help when help past sense we deem.

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

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

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

KING  Upon thy certainty and confidence 
What darest thou venture?

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

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

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

KING  Make thy demand.

HELENA  But will you make it even?

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

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

KING  Here is my hand; the premises observed, 
Thy will by my performance shall be served: 
So make the choice of thy own time, for I, 
Thy resolved patient, on thee still rely. 
More should I question thee, and more I must, 
Though more to know could not be more to trust,
All's Well That Ends Well: ACT II

From whence thou camest, how tended on: but rest
Unquestion'd welcome and undoubted blest.
Give me some help here, ho! If thou proceed
As high as word, my deed shall match thy meed.

[Flourish. Exeunt]

SCENE II

Rousillon. The COUNT’s palace.

[Enter COUNTESS and Clown]

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

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

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

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

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

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

COUNTESS Will your answer serve fit to all questions?

CLOWN As fit as ten groats is for the hand of an
attorney,
as your French crown for your taffeta punk, as Tib's
rush for Tom's forefinger, as a pancake for Shrove
Tuesday, a morris for May-day, as the nail to his
hole, the cuckold to his horn, as a scolding queen
to a wrangling knife, as the nun's lip to the
friar's mouth, nay, as the pudding to his skin.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CLOWN O Lord, sir! spare not me.

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

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

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

CLOWN O Lord, sir! why, there's serves well again.

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

CLOWN Not much commendation to them.

COUNTESS Not much employment for you: you
understand me?

CLOWN Most fruitfully: I am there before my legs.

COUNTESS Haste you again.

[Exeunt severally]
SCENE III
Paris. The KING's palace.

[Enter BERTRAM, LAFEU, and PAROLLES]

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

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

BERTRAM And so 'tis.

LAFEU To be relinquish'd of the artists,—

PAROLLES So I say.

LAFEU Both of Galen and Paracelsus.

PAROLLES So I say.

LAFEU Of all the learned and authentic fellows,—

PAROLLES Right; so I say.

LAFEU That gave him out incurable,—

PAROLLES Why, there 'tis; so say I too.

LAFEU Not to be helped,—

PAROLLES Right; as 'twere, a man assured of a—

LAFEU Uncertain life, and sure death.

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

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

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

LAFEU A showing of a heavenly effect in an earthly actor.

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

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

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

LAFEU Very hand of heaven.

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

[Enter three or four Lords]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

FIRST LORD And grant it.

HELENA Thanks, sir; all the rest is mute.

LAFEU I had rather be in this choice than throw 
an ace for my life.

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

SECOND LORD No better, if you please.

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

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

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

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

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

FOURTH LORD Fair one, I think not so.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

KING Thou wrong'rt thyself, if thou shouldst strive 
to choose.
HELENA That you are well restored, my lord, I’m glad: Let the rest go.

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

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

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

BERTRAM I take her hand.

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

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

PAROLLES Your pleasure, sir?

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

PAROLLES Recantation! My lord! My master!

LAFEU Ay; is it not a language I speak?

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

LAFEU Are you companion to the Count Rousillon?

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

LAFEU To what is count’s man: count’s master is of another style.

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

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

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

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

PAROLLES Hadst thou not the privilege of antiquity upon thee,—

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

PAROLLES My lord, you give me most egregious indignity.

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

PAROLLES I have not, my lord, deserved it.

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

PAROLLES Well, I shall be wiser.

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

PAROLLES My lord, you do me most insupportable vexation.
LAFeU I would it were hell-pains for thy sake, and my poor doing eternal: for doing I am past: as I will by thee; in what motion age will give me leave.

[Exit]

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

[Re-enter LAFEU]

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

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

LAFeU Who? God?

PAROLLES Ay, sir.

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

PAROLLES This is hard and undeserved measure, my lord.

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

[Exit]

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

[Re-enter BERTRAM]

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

PAROLLES What, what, sweet-heart?

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

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

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

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

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

PAROLLES Will this capriccio hold in thee? Art sure?

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

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

[Exeunt]

SCENE IV
Paris. The KING's palace.

[Enter HELENA and Clown]

HELENA My mother greets me kindly; is she well?

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

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

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

HELENA What two things?

CLOWN One, that she’s not in heaven, whither God
send her quickly! The other that she’s in earth, from
whence God send her quickly!

[Enter PAROLLES]

PAROLLES Bless you, my fortunate lady!

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

PAROLLES You had my prayers to lead them on; and to
keep them on, have them still. O, my knave, how does
my old lady?

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

PAROLLES Why, I say nothing.

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

PAROLLES Away! Thou’rt a knave.

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

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

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

PAROLLES A good knave, i’ faith, and well fed.
M adam, my lord will go away to-night;
A very serious business calls on him.
The great prerogative and rite of love,
Which, as your due, time claims, he does acknowledge;
But puts it off to a compell’d restraint;
Whose want, and whose delay, is strew’d with sweets,
Which distil now in the curbed time,
To make the coming hour o’erflow with joy
And pleasure drown the brim.

HELENA What’s his will else?

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

HELENA What more commands he?

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

HELENA In every thing I wait’d, you presently
Attend his further pleasure.

PAROLLES I shall report it so.

HELENA I pray you.

[Exit PAROLLES]

Come, sirrah.

[Exeunt]

SCENE V
Paris. The KING’s palace.

[Enter LAFEU and BERTRAM ]

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

BERTRAM Yes, my lord, and of very valiant approof.

LAFEU You have it from his own deliverance.

BERTRAM And by other warranted testimony.

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

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

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

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

LAFEU Pray you, sir, who’s his tailor?

PAROLLES Sir?

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

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

PAROLLES She is.

BERTRAM Will she away to-night?

PAROLLES As you’ll have her.

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

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

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

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

LAFEU You have made shift to run into ’t, boots and spurs and all, like him that leaped into the custard; and out of it you’ll run again, rather than suffer question for your residence.

BERTRAM It may be you have mistaken him, my lord.

LAFEU You have made shift to run into ’t, boots and spurs and all, like him that leaped into the custard; and out of it you’ll run again, rather than suffer question for your residence.

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

[Exit]

PAROLLES An idle lord. I swear.

BERTRAM I think so.

PAROLLES Why, do you not know him?

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

[Enter HELENA]

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

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

[Giving a letter]

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

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

BERTRAM Come, come, no more of that.

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

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

HELENA Pray, sir, your pardon.

BERTRAM Well, what would you say?

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

BERTRAM What would you have?

HELENA Something; and scarce so much: nothing, indeed. I would not tell you what I would, my lord:
Faith yes; 
Strangers and foes do sunder, and not kiss.
BERTRAM I pray you, stay not, but in haste to horse.
HELENA I shall not break your bidding, good my lord.
BERTRAM Where are my other men, monsieur? Farewell.

[Exit HELENA]

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

[Exeunt]

ACT III

SCENE I
Florence. The DUKE’s palace.

[Flourish. Enter the DUKE of Florence attended; the two Frenchmen, with a troop of soldiers.
DUKE So that from point to point now have you heard 
The fundamental reasons of this war, 
Whose great decision hath much blood let forth 
And more thirsts after.
FIRST LORD Holy seems the quarrel 
Upon your grace’s part; black and fearful 
On the opposer.
DUKE Therefore we marvel much our cousin France 
Would in so just a business shut his bosom 
Against our borrowing prayers.
SECOND LORD Good my lord, 
The reasons of our state I cannot yield, 
But like a common and an outward man, 
That the great figure of a council frames 
By self-unable motion: therefore dare not 
Say what I think of it, since I have found 
Myself in my uncertain grounds to fail 
As often as I guess’d.
DUKE Be it his pleasure.
FIRST LORD But I am sure the younger of our nature, 
That surfet on their ease, will day by day 
Come here for physic.
DUKE Welcome shall they be; 
And all the honours that can fly from us 
Shall on them settle. You know your places well; 
When better fall, for your avails they fell: 
To-morrow to the field.

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

[Re-enter Clown]

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

COUNTESS  What is the matter?

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

COUNTESS  Why should he be killed?

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

[Exit]

[Enter HELENA, and two Gentlemen]

FIRST GENTLEMAN  Ay, madam; And for the contents’ sake are sorry for our pain.
COUNTESS  I prithee, lady, have a better cheer;
If thou engrossest all the griefs are thine,
Thou robb’st me of a moiety: he was my son;
But I do wash his name out of my blood,
And thou art all my child. Towards Florence is he?
SECOND GENTLEMAN  Ay, madam.
COUNTESS  And to be a soldier?
SECOND GENTLEMAN  Such is his noble purpose;
and believe ‘t,
The duke will lay upon him all the honour
That good convenience claims.
COUNTESS  Return you thither?
FIRST GENTLEMAN  Ay, madam, with the swiftest wing
of speed.
HELENA  [Reads] Till I have no wife I have nothing
in France.
’Tis bitter.
COUNTESS  Find you that there?
HELENA  Ay, madam.
FIRST GENTLEMAN  ’Tis but the boldness of his hand,
haply, which his heart was not consenting to.
COUNTESS  Nothing in France, until he have no wife!
There’s nothing here that is too good for him
But only she; and she deserves a lord
That twenty such rude boys might tend upon
And call her hourly mistress. Who was with him?

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

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

[Reads]

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

COUNTESS  Brought you this letter, gentlemen?
The honour that he loses: more I’ll entreat you
Written to bear along.

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

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

[Exeunt COUNTESS and Gentlemen]

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

[Exit]

SCENE III
Florence. Before the DUKE’s palace.

[Flourish. Enter the DUKE of Florence,
BERTHAM, PAROLLES, Soldiers, Drum,
and Trumpets]

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

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

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

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

[Exeunt]

SCENE IV
Rousillon. The COUNT’s palace.

[Enter COUNTESS and Steward]

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

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

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

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

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

[Exeunt]

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

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

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

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

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

[Tucket]
We have lost our labour; they are gone a contrary
way: Hark! You may know by their trumpets.

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

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

MARIANA I know that knave; hang him! One Parolles: a
filthy officer he is in those suggestions for the
young earl. Beware of them, Diana; their promises,
enticements, oaths, tokens, and all these engines of
lust, are not the things they go under: many a maid
hath been seduced by them; and the misery is,
example, that so terrible shows in the wreck of
maidenhood, cannot for all that dissuade succession,
but that they are limed with the twigs that threaten
them. I hope I need not to advise you further; but
I hope your own grace will keep you where you are,
though there were no further danger known but the
modesty which is so lost.

DIANA You shall not need to fear me.

WIDOW I hope so.

[Enter HELENA, disguised like a Pilgrim]

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

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

WIDOW At the Saint Francis here beside the port.

HELENA Is this the way?

WIDOW Ay, marry, is't.

[A march afar]

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

HELENA Is it yourself?

WIDOW If you shall please so, pilgrim.

HELENA I thank you, and will stay upon your leisure.

WIDOW You came, I think, from France?

HELENA I did so.

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

HELENA His name, I pray you.

DIANA The Count Rousillon: know you such a one?

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

DIANA Whatsoe' er he is,
He's bravely taken here. He stole from France,
As 'tis reported, for the king had married him
Against his liking: think you it is so?
HELENA  Ay, surely, mere the truth: I know his lady.
DIANA  There is a gentleman that serves the count
Reports but coarsely of her.
HELENA  What's his name?
DIANA  Monsieur Parolles.
HELENA  O, I believe with him,
In argument of praise, or to the worth
Of the great count himself, she is too mean
To have her name repeated: all her deserving
Is a reserved honesty, and that
I have not heard examined.
DIANA  Alas, poor lady!
'Tis a hard bondage to become the wife
Of a detesting lord.
WIDOW  I warrant, good creature, wheresoe'er she is,
Her heart weighs sadly: this young maid might do her
A shrewd turn, if she pleased.
HELENA  How do you mean?
DIANA  May be the amorous count solicits her
In the unlawful purpose.
WIDOW  He does indeed;
And brokes with all that can in such a suit
Corrupt the tender honour of a maid:
But she is arm'd for him and keeps her guard
In honestest defence.
MARIANA  The gods forbid else!
WIDOW  So, now they come:
[Drum and Colours]
[Enter BERTRAM, PAROLLES, and the whole
army]
That is Antonio, the duke's eldest son;
That, Escalus.
HELENA  Which is the Frenchman?
DIANA  He; That with the plume: 'tis a most gallant
fellow. I would he loved his wife; if he were honester he
were much goodlier: is't not a handsome gentleman?
HELENA  I like him well.
DIANA  'Tis pity he is not honest: yond's that
same knave that leads him to these places: were I his
lady, I would Poison that vile rascal.
HELENA  Which is he?
DIANA  That jack-an-apes with scarfs: why is he
melancholy?
HELENA  Perchance he's hurt i' the battle.
PAROLLES  Lose our drum! Well.
MARIANA  He's shrewdly vexed at something: look, he
has spied us.
WIDOW  Marry, hang you!
MARIANA  And your courtesy, for a ring-carrier!
[Exeunt BERTRAM, PAROLLES, and army]
WIDOW  The troop is past. Come, pilgrim, I will
bring you
Where you shall host: of enjoin'd penitents
There's four or five, to great Saint Jaques bound,
Already at my house.
HELENA  I humbly thank you:
Please it this matron and this gentle maid
to eat with us to-night, the charge and thanking
Shall be for me; and, to requite you further,
I will bestow some precepts of this virgin
Worthy the note.
BOTH  We'll take your offer kindly.
[Exeunt]

SCENE VI
Camp before Florence.
[Enter BERTRAM and the two French Lords]
SECOND LORD  Nay, good my lord, put him to't; let him
have his way.
FIRST LORD  If your lordship find him not a hilding, hold
me no more in your respect.
SECOND LORD  On my life, my lord, a bubble.
BERTRAM  Do you think I am so far deceived in him?
SECOND LORD  Believe it, my lord, in mine own direct
knowledge, without any malice, but to speak of him as
my kinsman, he's a most notable coward, an infinite
and endless liar, an hourly promise-breaker, the
owner of no one good quality worthy your
lordship's entertainment.
FIRST LORD  It were fit you knew him; lest, reposing too
far in his virtue, which he hath not, he might at some
great and trusty business in a main danger fail you.
BERTRAM I would I knew in what particular action to try him.

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

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

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

[Enter PAROLLES]

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

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

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

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

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

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

PAROLLES It might have been recovered.

BERTRAM It might; but it is not now.

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

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

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

BERTRAM But you must not now slumber in it.

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

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

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

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

PAROLLES I love not many words.

[Exit]

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

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

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

SECOND LORD None in the world; but return with an invention and clap upon you two or three probable lies: but we have almost embossed him; you shall see his fall to-night; for indeed he is not for your lordship's respect.
All’s Well That Ends Well: ACT III

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

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

BERTRAM Your brother he shall go along with me.

SECOND LORD As’t please your lordship: I’ll leave you. [Exit]

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

FIRST LORD But you say she’s honest.

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

FIRST LORD With all my heart, my lord. [Exeunt]

SCENE VII Florence. The WIDOW’s house.

[Enter HELENA and Widow]

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

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

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

WIDOW I should believe you: For you have shewed me that which well approves You’re great in fortune.

HELENA Take this purse of gold, And let me buy your friendly help thus far, Which I will over-pay and pay again When I have found it. The count he woos your daughter, Lays down his wanton siege before her beauty, Resolved to carry her: let her in fine consent, As we’ll direct her how ‘tis best to bear it. Now his important blood will nought deny That she’ll demand: a ring the county wears, That downward hath succeeded in his house From son to son, some four or five descents Since the first father wore it: this ring he holds In most rich choice; yet in his idle fire, To buy his will, it would not seem too dear, H owe’er repented after.

WIDOW Now I see The bottom of your purpose.

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

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

HELENA Why then to-night Let us assay our plot; which, if it speed, Is wicked meaning in a lawful deed And lawful meaning in a sinful fact: But let’s about it.

[Exeunt]
ACT IV

SCENE I
Without the Florentine camp.

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

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

FIRST SOLDIER Good captain, let me be the interpreter.

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

FIRST SOLDIER No, sir, I warrant you.

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

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

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

[Enter PAROLLES]

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

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

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

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

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

SECOND LORD We cannot afford you so.

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

SECOND LORD 'Twould not do.

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

SECOND LORD Hardly serve.

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

SECOND LORD How deep?

PAROLLES Thirty fathom.

SECOND LORD Three great oaths would scarce make that be believed.

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

SECOND LORD You shall hear one anon.

PAROLLES A drum now of the enemy's,—

[Alarum within]

SECOND LORD Throca movousus, cargo, cargo, cargo.

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

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

[They seize and blindfold him]

FIRST SOLDIER Boskos thromuldo boskos.

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

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

Parolles: O!


Second Lord: Oscorbidulchos volivorco.

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

Parolles: O, let me live!
And all the secrets of our camp I'll show, Their force; their purposes; nay, I'll speak that Which you will wonder at.

First Soldier: But wilt thou faithfully?

Parolles: If I do not, damn me.

First Soldier: Acordo linta.
Come on; thou art granted space.

[Exit, with Parolles guarded. A short alarum within]

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

Second Soldier: Captain, I will.

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

Second Soldier: So I will, sir.

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

[Exeunt]

Scene II
Florence. The Widow's house.

[Enter Bertram and Diana]

Bertram: They told me that your name was Fontibell.

Diana: No, my good lord, Diana.

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

Diana: She then was honest.

Bertram: So should you be.

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

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

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

Bertram: How have I sworn!

Diana: 'Tis not the many oaths that makes the truth, But the plain single vow that is vow'd true. What is not holy, that we swear not by, But take the High'st to witness: then, pray you, tell me, If I should swear by God's great attributes, I loved you dearly, would you believe my oaths, When I did love you ill? This has no holding, To swear by him whom I protest to love, That I will work against him: therefore your oaths Are words and poor conditions, but unseal'd, At least in my opinion.
BERTRAM  Change it, change it;  
Be not so holy-cruel: love is holy;  
And my integrity ne'er knew the crafts  
That you do charge men with. Stand no more off,  
But give thyself unto my sick desires,  
Who then recover: say thou art mine, and ever  
My love as it begins shall so persever.  

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

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

DIANA  Will you not, my lord?  

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

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

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

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

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

DIANA  For which live long to thank both heaven  
and me!  
You may so in the end.  
My mother told me just how he would woo,
measure of his own judgments, wherein so curiously he had set this counterfeit.

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

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

SECOND LORD I hear there is an overture of peace.

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

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

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

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

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

SECOND LORD How is this justified?

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

SECOND LORD Hath the count all this intelligence?

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

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

FIRST LORD How mightily sometimes we make us comforts of our losses!

SECOND LORD And how mightily some other times we drown our gain in tears! The great dignity that his valour hath here acquired for him shall at home be encountered with a shame as ample.

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

[Enter a Messenger]

How now! where's your master?

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

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

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

[Enter BERTRAM]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

BERTRAM Nothing of me, has a'?

SECOND LORD His confession is taken, and it shall be read to his face: if your lordship be't, as I believe you are, you must have the patience to hear it.
[Enter PAROLLES guarded, and First Soldier]

BERTRAM A plague upon him! Muffled! He can say nothing of me; hush, hush!

FIRST LORD Hoodman comes! Portotartarosa.

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

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

FIRST SOLDIER Bosko chimurcho.

FIRST LORD Boblibindo chicurumurco.

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

PAROLLES And truly, as I hope to live.

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

PAROLLES I will say true,—or thereabouts, set down, for I'll speak truth.

FIRST SOLDIER Shall I set down your answer so?

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

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

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

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

FIRST SOLDIER Well, that's set down.

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

FIRST LORD He's very near the truth in this.

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

PAROLLES Poor rogues, I pray you, say.
FIRST SOLDIER What is his reputation with the duke?
PAROLLES The duke knows him for no other but a poor officer of mine; and writ to me this other day to turn him out o’ the band: I think I have his letter in my pocket.
FIRST SOLDIER Marry, we’ll search.
PAROLLES In good sadness, I do not know; either it is there, or it is upon a file with the duke’s other letters in my tent.
FIRST SOLDIER Here ’tis; here’s a paper: shall I read it to you?
PAROLLES I do not know if it be it or no.
BERTRAM Our interpreter does it well.
FIRST LORD Excellent.
FIRST SOLDIER [Reads] “Dian, the count’s a fool, and full of gold,”—
PAROLLES That is not the duke’s letter, sir; that is an advertisement to a proper maid in Florence, one Diana, to take heed of the allurement of one Count Rousillon, a foolish idle boy, but for all that very ruttish: I pray you, sir, put it up again.
FIRST SOLDIER Nay, I’ll read it first, by your favour.
PAROLLES My meaning in’t, I protest, was very honest in the behalf of the maid; for I knew the young count to be a dangerous and lascivious boy, who is a whale to virginity and devours up all the fry it finds.
FIRST SOLDIER Nay, I’ll read it first, by your favour.
PAROLLES My meaning in’t, I protest, was very honest in the behalf of the maid; for I knew the young count to be a dangerous and lascivious boy, who is a whale to virginity and devours up all the fry it finds.
FIRST LORD I begin to love him for this.
BERTRAM For this description of thine honesty? A pox upon him for me, he’s more and more a cat.
FIRST SOLDIER What say you to his expertness in war?
PAROLLES Faith, sir, he has led the drum before the English tragedians; to belie him, I will not, and more of his soldiership I know not; except, in that country he had the honour to be the officer at a place there called Mile-end, to instruct for the doubling of files; I would do the man what honour I can, but of this I am not certain.
FIRST LORD He hath out-villained villany so far, that the rarity redeems him.
BERTRAM A pox on him, he’s a cat still.
FIRST SOLDIER His qualities being at this poor price, I need not to ask you if gold will corrupt him to revolt.
PAROLLES Sir, for a quart d’ecu he will sell the fee-simple of his salvation, the inheritance of it; and cut the entail from all remainders, and a perpetual succession for it perpetually.
FIRST SOLDIER What’s his brother, the other Captain Dumain?
SECOND LORD Why does be ask him of me?
FIRST SOLDIER What's he?
PAROLLES E'en a crow o' the same nest; not altogether so great as the first in goodness, but greater a great deal in evil: he excels his brother for a coward, yet his brother is reputed one of the best that is: in a retreat he outruns any lackey; marry, in coming on he has the cramp.
FIRST SOLDIER If your life be saved, will you undertake to betray the Florentine?
PAROLLES Ay, and the captain of his horse, Count Rousillon.
FIRST SOLDIER I'll whisper with the general, and know his pleasure.
PAROLLES [Aside] I'll no more drumming; a plague of all drums! Only to seem to deserve well, and to beguile the supposition of that lascivious young boy the count, have I run into this danger. Yet who would have suspected an ambush where I was taken?
FIRST SOLDIER There is no remedy, sir, but you must die: the general says, you that have so traitorously discovered the secrets of your army and made such pestiferous reports of men very nobly held, can serve the world for no honest use; therefore you must die. Come, headsman, off with his head.
PAROLLES O Lord, sir, let me live, or let me see my death!
FIRST LORD That shall you, and take your leave of all your friends.
[Unblinding him]
So, look about you: know you any here?
BERTRAM Good morrow, noble captain.
SECOND LORD God bless you, Captain Parolles.
FIRST LORD God save you, noble captain.
SECOND LORD Captain, what greeting will you to my Lord Lafeu? I am for France.
FIRST LORD Good captain, will you give me a copy of the sonnet you writ to Diana in behalf of the Count Rousillon? an I were not a very coward, I'd compel it of you: but fare you well.

[Exeunt BERTRAM and Lords]

SCENE IV Florence. The WIDOW's house.

[Enter HELENA, Widow, and DIANA]

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

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

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

DIANA Let death and honesty
Go with your impositions, I am yours
Upon your will to suffer.

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

[Exeunt]

SCENE V
Rousillon. The COUNT’s palace.

[Enter COUNTESS, LAFEU, and Clown]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

LAFEU Your distinction?

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

LAFEU So you were a knave at his service, indeed.

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

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

CLOWN At your service.

LAFEU No, no, no.

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

LAFEU Who’s that? A Frenchman?

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

LAFEU What prince is that?

CLOWN The black prince, sir; alias, the prince of
darkness; alias, the devil.

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

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

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

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

[Exit]
LAFEU A shrewd knave and an unhappy.

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

LAFEU I like him well; 'tis not amiss. And I was about to tell you, since I heard of the good lady's death and that my lord your son was upon his return home, I moved the king my master to speak in the behalf of my daughter; which, in the minority of them both, his majesty, out of a self-gracious remembrance, did first propose: his highness hath promised me to do it: and, to stop up the displeasure he hath conceived against your son, there is no fitter matter. How does your ladyship like it?

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

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

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

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

COUNTESS You need but plead your honourable privilege.

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

[Re-enter Clown]

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

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

CLOWN But it is your carbonadoed face.

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

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

[Exeunt]

ACT V

SCENE I
Marseilles. A street.

[Enter HELENA, Widow, and DIANA, with two Attendants]

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

[Enter a Gentleman]

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

GENTLEMAN And you.

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

GENTLEMAN I have been sometimes there.

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

GENTLEMAN What's your will?

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

GENTLEMAN The king's not here.
HELENA Not here, sir!

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

WIDOW Lord, how we lose our pains!

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

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

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

GENTLEMAN This I’ll do for you.

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

[Exeunt]

SCENE II
Rousillon. Before the COUNT’s palace.

[Enter Clown, and PAROLLES, following]

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

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

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

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

PAROLLES Pray you, sir, deliver me this paper.

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

[Enter LAFEU]

LAFEU Here is a purr of fortune’s, sir, or of fortune’s cat,—but not a musk-cat,—that has fallen into the unclean fishpond of her displeasure, and, as he says, is muddied withal: pray you, sir, use the carp as you may; for he looks like a poor, decayed, ingenious, foolish, rascally knave. I do pity his distress in my smiles of comfort and leave him to your lordship.

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

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

PAROLLES I beseech your honour to hear me one single word.

LAFEU You beg a single penny more: come, you shall ha’; save your word.

PAROLLES My name, my good lord, is Parolles.

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

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

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

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

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

[Trumpets sound]

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

PAROLLES I praise God for you.

[Exeunt]
SCENE III  
Rousillon. The COUNT’s palace.

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

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

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

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

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

KING Praising what is lost  
Makes the remembrance dear. Well, call him hither;  
We are reconciled, and the first view shall kill  
All repetition: let him not ask our pardon;  
The nature of his great offence is dead,  
And deeper than oblivion we do bury  
The incensing relics of it: let him approach,  
A stranger, no offender; and inform him  
So ‘tis our will he should.

GENTLEMAN I shall, my liege.

[Exit]

KING What says he to your daughter? Have you spoke?  
LAFEU All that he is hath reference to your highness.

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

[Enter BERTRAM]

LAFeU He looks well on’t.

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

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

KING All is whole;  
Not one word more of the consumed time.  
Let’s take the instant by the forward top;  
For we are old, and on our quick’st decrees  
The inaudible and noiseless foot of Time  
Steals ere we can effect them. You remember  
The daughter of this lord?

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

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

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

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

[BERTRAM gives a ring]

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

BERTRAM Hers it was not.

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

BERTRAM My gracious sovereign,
Howe’er it pleases you to take it so,
Ther’ing was never hers.

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

LAFEU I am sure I saw her wear it.

BERTRAM You are deceived, my lord; she never saw it:
In Florence was it from a casement thrown me,
Wrapp’d in a paper, which contain’d the name
Of her that threw it: noble she was, and thought
I stood engaged: but when I had subscribed
To mine own fortune and inform’d her fully
I could not answer in that course of honour
As she had made the overture, she ceased
In heavy satisfaction and would never
Receive the ring again.

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

BERTRAM She never saw it.

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

[Guards seize BERTRAM]

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

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

[Exit, guarded]

KING I am wrapp’d in dismal thinkings.

[Enter a Gentleman]

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

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

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

KING The heavens have thought well on thee Lafeu,
To bring forth this discovery. Seek these suitors:
Go speedily and bring again the count.
I am afraight the life of Helen, lady,
Was foully snatch’d.
COUNTESS Now, justice on the doers!

[Re-enter BERTRAM, guarded]

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

[Enter Widow and DIANA]

What woman's that?

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

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

KING Come hither, count; do you know these women?

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

DIANA Why do you look so strange upon your wife?

BERTRAM She's none of mine, my lord.

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

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

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

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

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

KING What say'st thou to her?

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

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

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

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

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

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

KING Find him, and bring him hither.

[Exit an Attendant]
DIANA Sir, much like
The same upon your finger.
KING Know you this ring? This ring was his of late.
DIANA And this was it I gave him, being abed.
KING The story then goes false, you threw it him
Out of a casement.
DIANA I have spoke the truth.

[Enter PAROLLES]

BERTRAM My lord, I do confess the ring was hers.
KING You boggle shrewdly, every feather stars you.
Is this the man you speak of?
DIANA Ay, my lord.
KING Tell me, sirrah, but tell me true, I charge you,
Not fearing the displeasure of your master,
Which on your just proceeding I'll keep off,
By him and by this woman here what know you?
PAROLLES So please your majesty, my master hath been
an honourable gentleman: tricks he hath had in him,
which gentlemen have.
KING Come, come, to the purpose: did he love
this woman?
PAROLLES Faith, sir, he did love her; but how?
KING How, I pray you?
PAROLLES He did love her, sir, as a gentleman loves
a woman.
KING How is that?
PAROLLES He loved her, sir, and loved her not.
KING As thou art a knave, and no knave. What an
equivocal companion is this!
PAROLLES I am a poor man, and at your
majesty's command.
LAFEU He's a good drum, my lord, but a
naughty orator.
DIANA Do you know he promised me marriage?
PAROLLES Faith, I know more than I'll speak.
KING But wilt thou not speak all thou knowest?
PAROLLES Yes, so please your majesty. I did go between
them, as I said; but more than that, he loved her:
indeed he was mad for her, and talked of Satan and of
Limbo and of Furies and I know not what: yet I was in
that credit with them at that time that I knew of their
going to bed, and of other motions, as promising her
marriage, and things which would derive me ill will to
speak of; therefore I will not speak what I know.
KING Thou hast spoken all already, unless thou canst
say they are married: but thou art too fine in thy
evidence; therefore stand aside. This ring, you say,
was yours?
DIANA Ay, my good lord.
KING Where did you buy it? or who gave it you?
DIANA It was not given me, nor I did not buy it.
KING Who lent it you?
DIANA It was not lent me neither.
KING Where did you find it, then?
DIANA I found it not.
KING If it were yours by none of all these ways,
How could you give it him?
DIANA I never gave it him.
LAFEU This woman's an easy glove, my lord; she goes
off and on at pleasure.
KING This ring was mine: I gave it his first wife.
DIANA It might be yours or hers, for aught I know.
KING Take her away; I do not like her now;
To prison with her: and away with him.
Unless thou tell'st me where thou hadst this ring,
Thou diest within this hour.
DIANA I'll never tell you.
KING Take her away.
DIANA I'll put in bail, my liege.
KING I think thee now some common customer.
DIANA By Jove, if ever I knew man, 'twas you.
KING Wherefore hast thou accused him all this while?
DIANA Because he's guilty, and he is not guilty:
He knows I am no maid, and he shall swear to't;
I'll swear I am a maid, and he knows not.
Great king, I am no strumpet, by my life:
I am either maid, or else this old man's wife.
KING She does abuse our ears: to prison with her.

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

[Exit Widow]

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

[Re-enter Widow, with HELENA]

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

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

BERTRAM Both, both. O, pardon!

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

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

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

LAFEU Mine eyes smell onions; I shall weep anon:

[To PAROLLES]

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

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

[To DIANA]

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

[Flourish]

EPILOGUE

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

[Exeunt]