

# All Is True

## 2.3

*Enter Anne Boleyn and an Old Lady*

**ANNE**

Not for that neither. Here's the pang that pinches±±  
His highness having lived so long with her, and she  
So good a lady that no tongue could ever  
Pronounce dishonour of her±±by my life,  
She never knew harm-doing±±O now, after 5  
So many courses of the sun enthroneÁd,  
Still growing in a majesty and pomp the which  
To leave a thousandfold more bitter than  
'Tis sweet at first t'acquire±±after this process,  
To give her the avaunt, it is a pity 10  
Would move a monster.

**OLD LADY** Hearts of most hard temper  
Melt and lament for her.

**ANNE** O, God's will! Much better  
She ne'er had known pomp; though't be temporal,  
Yet if that quarrel, fortune, do divorce  
It from the bearer, 'tis a sufferance panging 15  
As soul and bodies severing.

**OLD LADY** Alas, poor lady!  
She's a stranger now again.

**ANNE** So much the more  
Must pity drop upon her. Verily,  
I swear, 'tis better to be lowly born  
And range with humble livers in content 20  
Than to be perked up in a glist'ring grief  
And wear a golden sorrow.

**OLD LADY** Our content  
Is our best having.

**ANNE** By my troth and maidenhead,  
I would not be a queen.

**OLD LADY** Beshrew me, I would±±  
And venture maidenhead for't; and so would you, 25  
For all this spice of your hypocrisy.  
You, that have so fair parts of woman on you,

Have, too, a woman's heart which ever yet  
Affected eminence, wealth, sovereignty;  
Which, to say sooth, are blessings; and which gifts, 30  
Saving your mincing, the capacity  
Of your soft cheveril conscience would receive  
If you might please to stretch it.

**ANNE** Nay, good troth.

**OLD LADY**  
Yes, troth and troth. You would not be a queen?

**ANNE**  
No, not for all the riches under heaven. 35

**OLD LADY**  
'Tis strange. A threepence bowed would hire me,  
Old as I am, to queen it. But I pray you,  
What think you of a duchess? Have you limbs  
To bear that load of title?

**ANNE** No, in truth.

**OLD LADY**  
Then you are weakly made. Pluck off a little; 40  
I would not be a young count in your way  
For more than blushing comes to. If your back  
Cannot vouchsafe this burden, 'tis too weak  
Ever to get a boy.

**ANNE** How you do talk!  
I swear again, I would not be a queen 45  
For all the world.

**OLD LADY** In faith, for little England  
You'd venture an emballing; I myself  
Would for Caernarfonshire, although there 'longed  
No more to th' crown but that. Lo, who comes here?

*Enter the Lord Chamberlain*

**LORD CHAMBERLAIN**  
Good morrow, ladies. What were't worth to know 50  
The secret of your conference?

**ANNE** My good lord,  
Not your demand; it values not your asking.  
Our mistress' sorrows we were pitying.

**LORD CHAMBERLAIN**  
It was a gentle business, and becoming 55  
The action of good women. There is hope  
All will be well.

**ANNE** Now I pray God, amen.

**LORD CHAMBERLAIN**

You bear a gentle mind, and heav'nly blessings  
Follow such creatures. That you may, fair lady,  
Perceive I speak sincerely, and high note's  
Ta'en of your many virtues, the King's majesty 60  
Commends his good opinion of you, and  
Does purpose honour to you no less flowing  
Than Marchioness of Pembroke; to which title  
A thousand pound a year annual support  
Out of his grace he adds.

**ANNE** I do not know 65

What kind of my obedience I should tender.  
More than my all is nothing; nor my prayers  
Are not words duly hallowed, nor my wishes  
More worth than empty vanities; yet prayers and wishes  
Are all I can return. Beseech your lordship, 70  
Vouchsafe to speak my thanks and my obedience,  
As from a blushing handmaid to his highness,  
Whose health and royalty I pray for.

**LORD CHAMBERLAIN**

Lady,

I shall not fail t'approve the fair conceit  
The King hath of you. (*Aside*) I have perused her well. 75  
Beauty and honour in her are so mingled  
That they have caught the King, and who knows yet  
But from this lady may proceed a gem  
To lighten all this isle. (*To Anne*) I'll to the King  
And say I spoke with you. 80

**ANNE** My honoured lord.

*Exit the Lord Chamberlain*

**OLD LADY** Why, this it is±±see, see!

I have been begging sixteen years in court,  
Am yet a courtier beggarly, nor could  
Come pat betwixt too early and too late 85  
For any suit of pounds; and you±±O, fate!±±  
A very fresh fish here±±fie, fie upon  
This compelled fortune!±±have your mouth filled up  
Before you open it.

**ANNE** This is strange to me.

**OLD LADY**

How tastes it? Is it bitter? Forty pence, no. 90  
There was a lady once±±'tis an old story±±  
That would not be a queen, that would she not,  
For all the mud in Egypt. Have you heard it?

**ANNE**

Come, you are pleasant.

**OLD LADY**

With your theme I could  
O'er mount the lark. The Marchioness of Pembroke? 95  
A thousand pounds a year, for pure respect?  
No other obligation? By my life,  
That promises more thousands. Honour's train  
Is longer than his foreskirt. By this time  
I know your back will bear a duchess. Say, 100  
Are you not stronger than you were?

**ANNE**

Good lady,

Make yourself mirth with your particular fancy,  
And leave me out on't. Would I had no being,  
If this salute my blood a jot. It faints me  
To think what follows. 105  
The Queen is comfortless, and we forgetful  
In our long absence. Pray do not deliver  
What here you've heard to her.

**OLD LADY**

What do you think me±±

*Exeunt*