

# All's Well That Ends Well

## 2.3

*Enter Bertram, Lafeu [with a ballad], and Paroles*

**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. 5

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

**BERTRAM** And so 'tis.

**LAFEU** To be relinquished of the artists±± 10

**PAROLES** So I say±±both of Galen and Paracelsus.

**LAFEU** Of all the learned and authentic Fellows±±

**PAROLES** Right, so I say.

**LAFEU** That gave him out incurable±±

**PAROLES** Why, there 'tis, so say I too. 15

**LAFEU** Not to be helped.

**PAROLES** Right, as 'twere a man assured of a±±

**LAFEU** Uncertain life and sure death.

**PAROLES** Just, you say well, so would I have said.

**LAFEU** I may truly say it is a novelty to the world. 20

**PAROLES** It is indeed. If you will have it in showing, you shall read it in *[pointing to the ballad]* what-do-ye-call there.

**LAFEU** *[reads]* 'A showing of a heavenly effect in an earthly actor.' 25

**PAROLES** That's it, I would have said the very same.

**LAFEU** Why, your dolphin is not lustier. Fore me, I speak in respect±±

**PAROLES** Nay, 'tis strange, 'tis very strange, that is the brief and the tedious of it, and he's of a most facinorous spirit that will not acknowledge it to be the±± 30

**LAFEU** Very hand of heaven.

**PAROLES** Ay, so I say.

**LAFEU** In a most weak±±

**PAROLES** And debile minister great power, great trans- 35

cendence, which should indeed give us a further use  
to be made than alone the recov'ry of the king, as to  
be±±

**LAFEU** Generally thankful.

*Enter the King, Helen, and attendants*

**PAROLES** I would have said it, you say well. Here comes 40  
the King.

**LAFEU** *Lustig*, as the Dutchman says. I'll like a maid the  
better whilst I have a tooth in my head.

*[The King and Helen dance]*

Why, he's able to lead her a coranto.

**PAROLES** *Mort du vinaigre*, is not this Helen? 45

**LAFEU** Fore God, I think so.

**KING**

Go call before me all the lords in court.

*Exit one or more*

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

*[The King and Helen sit]*

And with this healthful hand whose banished sense

Thou hast repealed, a second time receive 50

The confirmation of my promised gift,

Which but attends thy naming.

*Enter 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 55

I have to use. Thy frank election make.

Thou hast power to choose, and they none to forsake.

**HELEN**

To each of you one fair and virtuous mistress

Fall when love please. Marry, to each but one.

**LAFEU** *(aside)*

I'd give bay Curtal and his furniture 60

My mouth no more were broken than these boys',

And writ as little beard.

**KING** *(to Helen)* Peruse them well.

Not one of these but had a noble father.

**HELEN** Gentlemen,

Heaven hath through me restored the King to health. 65

**[ALL BUT HELEN]**

We understand it, and thank heaven for you.

**HELEN**

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: 70  
`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.

**HELEN** (*rising*)

Now, Dian, from thy altar do I fly, 75  
And to imperial Love, that god most high,  
Do my sighs stream.

*[She addresses her to a Lord]*

Sir, will you hear my suit?

**FIRST LORD**

And grant it.

**HELEN** Thanks, sir. All the rest is mute.

**LAFEU** (*aside*) I had rather be in this choice than throw  
ambs-ace for my life. 80

**HELEN** (*to another Lord*)

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

**SECOND LORD**

No better, if you please.

**HELEN**

My wish receive, 85

Which great Love grant. And so I take my leave.

**LAFEU** (*aside*) Do all they deny her? An they were sons of  
mine I'd have them whipped, or I would send them to  
th' Turk to make eunuchs of.

**HELEN** (*to another Lord*)

Be not afraid that I your hand should take; 90  
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** (*aside*) These boys are boys of ice, they'll none have

her. Sure they are bastards to the English, the French  
ne'er got 'em. 95

**HELEN** (*to another Lord*)

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** (*aside*) There's one grape yet. I am sure thy father 100  
drunk wine, but if thou beest not an ass I am a youth  
of fourteen. I have known thee already.

**HELEN** (*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. 105

**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, 110  
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. 115  
A poor physician's daughter, my wife? Disdain  
Rather corrupt me ever.

**KING**

'Tis only title thou disdain'st in her, the which  
I can build up. Strange is it that our bloods,  
Of colour, weight, and heat, poured all together, 120  
Would quite confound distinction, yet stands off  
In differences so mighty. If she be  
All that is virtuous, save what thou dislik'st±±  
'A poor physician's daughter'±±thou dislik'st  
Of virtue for the name. But do not so. 125

From lowest place when virtuous things proceed,  
 The place is dignified by th' 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: 130  
 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 135  
 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,  
 Debauched on every tomb, on every grave  
 A lying trophy, and as oft is dumb 140  
 Where dust and dammed oblivion is the tomb  
 Of honoured 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. 145

**BERTRAM**

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

**KING**

Thou wrong'st thyself. If thou shouldst strive to  
 choose±±

**HELEN**

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

**KING**

My honour's at the stake, which to defeat 150  
 I must produce my power. Here, take her hand,  
 Proud, scornful boy, unworthy this good gift,  
 That dost in vile misprision shackle up  
 My love and her desert; that canst not dream  
 We, poisoning us in her defective scale, 155  
 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. Check thy contempt;  
 Obey our will, which travails in thy good;  
 Believe not thy disdain, but presently 160

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 165  
Loosing upon thee in the name of justice  
Without all terms of pity. Speak. Thine answer.

**BERTRAM** (*kneeling*)

Pardon, my gracious lord, for I submit  
My fancy to your eyes. When I consider  
What great creation and what dole of honour 170  
Flies where you bid it, I find that she, which late  
Was in my nobler thoughts most base, is now  
The praise 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 175  
A counterpoise, if not to thy estate  
A balance more replete.

**BERTRAM** (*rising*) 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, 180  
And be performed tonight. The solemn feast  
Shall more attend upon the coming space,  
Expecting absent friends. As thou lov'st her  
Thy love's to me religious; else, does err.

*[Flourish.] Exeunt all but Paroles and Lafeu,  
who stay behind, commenting on this wedding*

**LAFEU** Do you hear, monsieur? A word with you. 185

**PAROLES** Your pleasure, sir.

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

**PAROLES** Recantation? My lord? My master?

**LAFEU** Ay. Is it not a language I speak? 190

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

**LAFEU** Are you companion to the Count Roussillon?

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

**LAFEU** To what is count's man; count's master is of 195  
another style.

**PAROLES** 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. 200

**PAROLES** 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 scarves and the bannerets  
about thee did manifoldly dissuade me from believing 205  
thee a vessel of too great a burden. I have now found  
thee; when I lose thee again I care not. Yet art thou  
good for nothing but taking up, and that thou'rt scarce  
worth.

**PAROLES** Hadst thou not the privilege of antiquity upon 210  
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 215  
thee. Give me thy hand.

**PAROLES** My lord, you give me most egregious indignity.

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

**PAROLES** I have not, my lord, deserved it.

**LAFEU** Yes, good faith, every dram of it, and I will not 220  
bate thee a scruple.

**PAROLES** Well, I shall be wiser.

**LAFEU** E'en as soon as thou canst, for thou hast to pull  
at a smack o'th' contrary. If ever thou beest bound in  
thy scarf and beaten thou shall find what it is to be 225  
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'.

**PAROLES** My lord, you do me most insupportable vexation.

**LAFEU** I would it were hell-pains for thy sake, and my 230  
poor doing eternal; for doing I am past, as I will by  
thee, in what motion age will give me leave.

*Exit*

**PAROLES** Well, thou hast a son shall take this disgrace off

me. Scurvy, old, filthy, scurvy lord. Well, I must be patient. There is no fettering of authority. I'll beat him, 235 by my life, if I can meet him with any convenience, an he were double and double a lord. I'll have no more pity of his age than I would have of  $\pm\pm$  I'll beat him, an if I could but meet him again.

*Enter Lafeu*

**LAFEU** Sirrah, your lord and master's married. There's 240 news for you: you have a new mistress.

**PAROLES** 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?

245

**PAROLES** 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 thy sleeves? Do other servants so? Thou wert best set thy lower part where thy nose stands. By mine honour, 250 if I were but two hours younger I'd beat thee. Methink'st thou art a general offence and every man should beat thee. I think thou wast created for men to breathe themselves upon thee.

**PAROLES** This is hard and undeserved measure, my lord. 255

**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 260 another word, else I'd call you knave. I leave you.

*Exit*

**PAROLES** Good, very good, it is so then. Good, very good, let it be concealed awhile.

*[Enter Bertram]*

**BERTRAM**

Undone and forfeited to cares for ever.

**PAROLES** What's the matter, sweetheart? 265

**BERTRAM**

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

**PAROLES** What, what, sweetheart?



**BERTRAM**

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

270

**PAROLES**

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

**BERTRAM**

There's letters from my mother. What th'import is  
I know not yet.

**PAROLES**

Ay, that would be known. To th' wars, my boy, to th'  
wars!

275

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

280

**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. Wars is no strife  
To the dark house and the detested wife.

285

**PAROLES**

Will this *capriccio* hold in thee? Art sure?

290

**BERTRAM**

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

**PAROLES**

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

295

*Exeunt*