

All's Well That Ends Well

1.3

*Enter the Countess, Reynaldo her steward, and
[behind] Lavatch her clown*

COUNTESS I will now hear. What say you of this gentle-
woman?

REYNALDO 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 5
make foul the clearness of our deservings, when of
ourselves we publish them.

COUNTESS What does this knave here? *(To Lavatch)* Get
you gone, sirrah. The complaints I have heard of you
I do not all believe. 'Tis my slowness that I do not, for 10
I know you lack not folly to commit them and have
ability enough to make such knaveries yours.

LAVATCH 'Tis not unknown to you, madam, I am a poor
fellow.

COUNTESS Well, sir? 15

LAVATCH 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? 20

LAVATCH I do beg your good will in this case.

COUNTESS In what case?

LAVATCH 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 bairns 25
are blessings.

COUNTESS Tell me thy reason why thou wilt marry.

LAVATCH My poor body, madam, requires it. I am driven
on by the flesh, and he must needs go that the devil
drives. 30

COUNTESS Is this all your worship's reason?

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

COUNTESS May the world know them?

LAVATCH I have been, madam, a wicked creature, as 35
you±±and all flesh and blood±±are, and indeed I do
marry that I may repent.

COUNTESS Thy marriage sooner than thy wickedness.

LAVATCH I am out o' friends, madam, and I hope to have
friends for my wife's sake. 40

COUNTESS Such friends are thine enemies, knave.

LAVATCH You're shallow, madam±±in great friends, for
the knaves come to do that for me which I am aweary
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 45
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 50
are, there were no fear in marriage. For young
Chairbonne the puritan and old Poisson the papist,
howsome'er their hearts are severed in religion, their
heads are both one: they may jowl horns together like
any deer i'th' herd. 55

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

LAVATCH A prophet? Ay, madam, and I speak the truth
the next way.
[He sings]

For I the ballad will repeat, 60
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.

REYNALDO May it please you, madam, that he bid Helen 65
come to you? Of her I am to speak.

COUNTESS *(to Lavatch)* Sirrah, tell my gentlewoman I would
speak with her. Helen, I mean.

LAVATCH *[sings]*
`Was this fair face the cause', quoth she,
`Why the Grecians sackeÁd Troy? 70
Fond done, done fond. Was this King Priam's joy?'
With that she sigheÁd as she stood,

With that she sigheÁd as she stood,
And gave this sentence then:
`Among nine bad if one be good, 75
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.

LAVATCH One good *woman* in ten, madam, which is a 80
purifying o'th' 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 ere every
blazing star, or at an earthquake, 'twould mend the 85
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.

LAVATCH That man should be at woman's command, and 90
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.

Exit

COUNTESS Well now. 95

REYNALDO 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 100
owing her than is paid, and more shall be paid her
than she'll demand.

REYNALDO 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 105
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 110
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 115
you withal, 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 tott'ring in the balance that I could 120
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 Helen

COUNTESS (*aside*)
Even so it was with me when I was young.
If ever we are nature's, these are ours: this thorn 125
Doth to our rose of youth rightly belong.
Our blood to us, this to our blood is born;
It is the show and seal of nature's truth,
Where love's strong passion is impressed in youth.
By our remembrances of days foregone, 130
Such were our faults±±or then we thought them
none.

Her eye is sick on't. I observe her now.

HELEN

What is your pleasure, madam?

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

HELEN

Mine honourable mistress.

COUNTESS Nay, a mother. 135
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 140
Adoption strives with nature, and choice breeds
A native slip to us from foreign seeds.
You ne'er oppressed me with a mother's groan,

Yet I express to you a mother's care.
God's mercy, maiden! Does it curd thy blood 145
To say I am thy mother? What's the matter,
That this distempered messenger of wet,
The many-coloured Iris, rounds thine eye?
Why, that you are my daughter?

HELEN That I am not.

COUNTESS

I say I am your mother.

HELEN Pardon, madam. 150

The Count Roussillon cannot be my brother.
I am from humble, he from honoured name;
No note upon my parents, his all noble.
My master, my dear lord he is, and I
His servant live and will his vassal die. 155
He must not be my brother.

COUNTESS Nor I your mother?

HELEN

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, 160
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? 165
My fear hath caught your fondness. Now I see
The myst'ry of your loneliness, and find
Your salt tears' head. Now to all sense 'tis gross:
You love my son. Invention is ashamed
Against the proclamation of thy passion 170
To say thou dost not. Therefore tell me true,
But tell me then 'tis so±±for look, thy cheeks
Confess it t'one to th'other, and thine eyes
See it so grossly shown in thy behaviours
That in their kind they speak it. Only sin 175
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, 180
To tell me truly.

HELEN Good madam, pardon me.

COUNTESS

Do you love my son?

HELEN Your pardon, noble mistress.

COUNTESS

Love you my son?

HELEN 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 185
The state of your affection, for your passions
Have to the full appeached.

HELEN Then I confess,

Here on my knee, before high heaven and you,
That before you and next unto high heaven
I love your son. 190

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, 195

Yet never know how that desert should be.

I know I love in vain, strive against hope;

Yet in this captious and intenable sieve

I still pour in the waters of my love

And lack not to lose still. Thus, Indian-like, 200

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, 205

Whose age And 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 210

But lend and give where she is sure to lose,
That seeks to find not 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?

215

HELEN Madam, I had.

COUNTESS Wherefore? Tell true.

HELEN

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 willed me
In heedfull'st reservation to bestow them,
As notes whose faculties inclusive were
More than they were in note. Amongst the rest
There is a remedy, approved, set down,
To cure the desperate languishings whereof
The King is rendered lost.

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COUNTESS This was your motive
For Paris, was it? Speak.

HELEN

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.

230

COUNTESS But think you, Helen,
If you should tender your supposeÁd 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,
Embowelled of their doctrine, have left off
The danger to itself?

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HELEN There's something in't
More than my father's skill, which was the great'st
Of his profession, that his good receipt
Shall for my legacy be sanctified
By th' luckiest stars in heaven, and would your

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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, an hour.

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COUNTESS Dost thou believe't?

HELEN Ay, madam, knowingly.

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 tomorrow, and be sure of this:
What I can help thee to, thou shalt not miss.

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Exeunt