

# All's Well That Ends Well

## 5.3

*Flourish of trumpets. Enter the King, the old Countess, Lafeu, and attendants*

**KING**

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

**COUNTESS**

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

5

**KING**

My honoured lady,  
I have forgiven and forgotten all,  
Though my revenges were high bent upon him  
And watched the time to shoot.

10

**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 scorned to serve  
Humbly called mistress.

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**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  
Th'incensing relics of it. Let him approach  
A stranger, no offender; and inform him  
So 'tis our will he should.

25

**ATTENDANT**

I shall, my liege.

*Exit*

**KING** (to Lafeu)

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 30

That sets him high in fame.

*Enter Bertram [with a patch of velvet on his left  
cheek, and kneels]*

**LAFEU** He looks well on't.

**KING** (to Bertram) 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 35

Distracted clouds give way; so stand thou forth.

The time is fair again.

**BERTRAM** My high-repented blames,

Dear sovereign, pardon to me.

**KING** All is whole.

Not one word more of the consumeÁd time.

Let's take the instant by the forward top, 40

For we are old, and on our quick'st decrees

Th'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 45

I stuck my choice upon her, ere my heart

Durst make too bold a herald of my tongue;

Where, the impression of mine eye enfixing,

Contempt his scornful perspective did lend me,

Which warped the line of every other favour, 50

Stained a fair colour or expressed 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 55

The dust that did offend it.

**KING** Well excused.

That thou didst love her strikes some scores away

From the great count. But love that comes too late,

Like a remorseful pardon slowly carried,  
To the grace-sender turns a sour offence, 60  
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. 65  
Our own love waking cries to see what's done,  
While shameful hate 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 70  
To see our widower's second marriage day.

**[COUNTESS]**

### *Bertram gives Lafeu a ring*

**BERTRAM** Hers it was not.

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

**COUNTESS** Son, on my life 90  
I have seen her wear it, and she reckoned 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,  
Wrapped in a paper which contained the name 95  
Of her that threw it. Noble she was, and thought  
I stood ingaged. But when I had subscribed  
To mine own fortune, and informed her fully  
I could not answer in that course of honour  
As she had made the overture, she ceased 100  
In heavy satisfaction, and would never  
Receive the ring again.

**KING** Plutus himself,  
That knows the tinct and multiplying med'cine,  
Hath not in nature's mystery more science  
Than I have in this ring. 'Twas mine, 'twas Helen's, 105  
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 called the saints to surety  
That she would never put it from her finger 110  
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 speak'st it falsely, as I love mine honour,  
And mak'st conjectural fears to come into me 115  
Which I would fain shut out. If it should prove  
That thou art so inhuman±±'twill not prove so.  
And yet I know not. Thou didst hate her deadly,  
And she is dead, which nothing but to close  
Her eyes myself could win me to believe, 120  
More than to see this ring.±±Take him away.  
My fore-past proofs, howe'er the matter fall,  
Shall tax my fears of little vanity,  
Having vainly feared too little. Away with him.

We'll sift this matter further.

**BERTRAM**

If you shall prove 125

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

*Exit guarded*

*Enter the Gentleman Austringer with a paper*

**KING** I am wrapped in dismal thinkings.

**GENTLEMAN**

Gracious sovereign, 130

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,  
Vanquished 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. 140

135

**[KING]** *(reads a letter)* 'Upon his many protestations to  
marry me when his wife was dead, I blush to say it,  
he won me. Now is the Count Roussillon 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.'

145

**LAFEU** I will buy me a son-in-law in a fair, and toll for 150  
this. I'll none of him.

**KING**

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

*Exit one or more*

I am afeard the life of Helen, lady, 155  
Was foully snatched.

*[Enter Bertram guarded]*

**COUNTESS** Now justice on the doers!

**KING** *(to Bertram)*

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

*Enter the Widow and Diana*

What woman's that?

**DIANA**

I am, my lord, a wretched Florentine, 160  
DeriveÁd from the ancient Capilet.  
My suit, as I do understand, you know,  
And therefore know how far I may be pitied.

**WIDOW** *(to the King)*

I am her mother, sir, whose age and honour  
Both suffer under this complaint we bring, 165  
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? 170

**BERTRAM** *(to the King)*

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 175  
That she which marries you must marry me,  
Either both or none.

**LAFEU** *(to Bertram)* Your reputation comes too short for  
my daughter, you are no husband for her.

**BERTRAM** *(to the King)*

My lord, this is a fond and desp'rate creature 180  
Whom sometime I have laughed 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 my thoughts, you have them ill to friend

Till your deeds gain them. Fairer prove your honour 185  
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 sayst thou to her?

**BERTRAM** She's impudent, my lord, 190  
And was a common gamester to the camp.

**DIANA** (*to the King*)  
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 195  
Did lack a parallel; yet for all that  
He gave it to a commoner o'th' camp,  
If I be one.

**COUNTESS** He blushes and 'tis hit.  
Of six preceding ancestors, that gem;  
Conferred by testament to th' sequent issue 200  
Hath it been owed and worn. This is his wife.  
That ring's a thousand proofs.

**KING** (*to Diana*) 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 Paroles. 205

**LAFEU**  
I saw the man today, if man he be.

**KING**  
Find him and bring him hither.

*Exit one*

**BERTRAM** What of him?  
He's quoted for a most perfidious slave  
With all the spots o'th' world taxed and debauched,  
Whose nature sickens but to speak a truth. 210  
Am I or that or this for what he'll utter,  
That will speak anything?

**KING** She hath that ring of yours.

**BERTRAM**  
I think she has. Certain it is I liked her

And boarded her i'th' wanton way of youth.  
She knew her distance and did angle for me, 215  
Madding my eagerness with her restraint,  
As all impediments in fancy's course  
Are motives of more fancy; and in fine  
Her inf'nite cunning with her modern grace  
Subdued me to her rate. She got the ring, 220  
And I had that which my inferior might  
At market price have bought.

**DIANA** I must be patient.  
You that have turned off a first so noble wife  
May justly diet me. I pray you yet±±  
Since you lack virtue I will lose a husband±± 225  
Send for your ring, I will return it home,  
And give me mine again.

**BERTRAM** I have it not.

**KING** (*to Diana*) What ring was yours, I pray you?

**DIANA**  
Sir, much like the same upon your finger. 230

**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 Paroles*

**BERTRAM** (*to the King*)  
My lord, I do confess the ring was hers. 235

**KING**  
You boggle shrewdly; every feather starts you.±±  
Is this the man you speak of?

**DIANA** Ay, my lord.

**KING** (*to Paroles*)  
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±± 240  
By him and by this woman here what know you?

**PAROLES** So please your majesty, my master hath been



an honourable gentleman. Tricks he hath had in him  
which gentlemen have.

**KING**

Come, come, to th' purpose. Did he love this woman? 245

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

**KING** How, I pray you?

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

**KING** How is that? 250

**PAROLES** He loved her, sir, and loved her not.

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

**PAROLES** I am a poor man, and at your majesty's  
command. 255

**LAFEU** (*to the King*) He's a good drum, my lord, but a  
naughty orator.

**DIANA** (*to Paroles*) Do you know he promised me marriage?

**PAROLES** Faith, I know more than I'll speak.

**KING** But wilt thou not speak all thou know'st? 260

**PAROLES** Yes, so please your majesty. I did go between  
them, as I said; but more than that, he loved her, for  
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 265  
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, 270  
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. 275

**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 *(to the King)* This woman's an easy glove, my lord,  
she goes off and on at pleasure. 280

KING *(to Diana)*

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

DIANA

It might be yours or hers for aught I know.

KING *(to attendants)*

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 285  
Thou diest within this hour.

DIANA

I'll never tell you.

KING *(to attendants)*

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? 290

DIANA

Because he's guilty, and he is not guilty.  
He knows I am no maid, and he'll swear to't;  
I'll swear I am a maid, and he knows not.  
Great King, I am no strumpet; by my life,  
I am either maid or else this old man's wife. 295

KING *(to attendants)*

She does abuse our ears. To prison with her.

DIANA

Good mother, fetch my bail.

*Exit Widow*

Stay, royal sir.

The jeweller that owes the ring is sent for,  
And he shall surety me. But for this lord,

Who hath abused me as he knows himself, 300  
Though yet he never harmed 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. 305  
And now behold the meaning.

*Enter Helen and the Widow*

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

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

**BERTRAM** Both, both. O, pardon! 310

**HELEN**  
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,' et cetera. This is done. 315  
Will you be mine now you are doubly won?

**BERTRAM** *(to the King)*  
If she, my liege, can make me know this clearly  
I'll love her dearly, ever ever dearly.

**HELEN**  
If it appear not plain and prove untrue,  
Deadly divorce step between me and you.±± 320  
O my dear mother, do I see you living?

**LAFEU**  
Mine eyes smell onions, I shall weep anon.  
*(To Paroles)* Good Tom Drum, lend me a handkerchief.  
So, I thank thee. Wait on me home, I'll make sport  
with thee. Let thy curtsies alone, they are scurvy ones. 325

**KING** *(to Helen)*  
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 uncroppeÁd flower,  
Choose thou thy husband and I'll pay thy dower.  
For I can guess that by thy honest aid 330

Thou kept'st a wife herself, thyself a maid.  
Of that and all the progress more and less  
ResolveÁdly more leisure shall express.  
All yet seems well; and if it end so meet,  
The bitter past, more welcome is the sweet.

335

*Flourish of trumpets*