ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL
adapted by J.D. Newman
from the play by William Shakespeare

Newport, Maine
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ALL’S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

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Cast of Characters -- (7-11 female, 8-12 male, 15-23 total)

HELENA (F) -- Orphaned daughter of a renowned physician and foster daughter of the Countess of Rousillon
COUNTESS OF ROUSILLON (F) -- Birth mother of Bertram, foster mother of Helena
BERTRAM (M) -- The young Count of Rousillon, son of the Countess, ward of the King of France, and unwilling husband of Helena
KING OF FRANCE (M) -- The aged monarch who is healed by Helena and who commands Bertram marry her
PAROLLES (M) -- Bertram's witty but cowardly follower
LORD SENIOR (M) -- The elder of the two Dumaine brothers
LORD DUMAINE (M) -- The younger of the two Dumaine brothers
RINALDA (F) -- Steward of the Countess of Rousillon
LAVATACH (F) -- A clownish servant in the Countess' household
LAFEW (M) -- A steward of the King of France
COURTIER (F) -- A courtier in France, a messenger
WIDOW CAPULET (F) -- A widow in Florence, mother of Diana
DIANA (F) -- The widow's daughter who gains the affections of Bertram
VIOLENTA (F) -- A neighbor of the Widow Capulet
MARIANA (F) -- Violenta's daughter, Diana's friend
DUCHESS OF FLORENCE (F) -- Commander of the French lords
MADELEINE (F) -- Daughter of LaFew, offered as a bride to BERTRAM when HELENA is believed dead
LORD GOUGH (M) -- Ward of the King of France
LORD GILBURN (M) -- Ward of the King of France
LORD ECCLESTONE (M) -- Ward of the King of France
LORD EDWARD (M) -- Ward of the King of France

CASTING NOTE: For a smaller cast:
• Lord Gough and Lord Gilburn may be played by the same male actor
• Lord Ecclestone and Lord Edward by the same male actor.
• In the ruse to test Parolles, one of the lords assumes the role of the interpreter and another lord or the same lord assumes the role of the general, allowing for up to two more male speaking roles.
• The female actors playing Rinalda and LaVatch could also play Violenta and Mariana.
• Courtier, Duchess, and Madeleine could be played by the same female actor.

Settings: (all of which can be suggested by simple variations of a unit set)
    Rousillon (in the Countess' palace)
    Paris (in the palace of the King of France)
    Florence (outside the city walls, at the Duchess' palace, at the Widow's inn, and in the Florentine camp)

Time: In or Before 1604

This adaptation premiered in 2010 at Highland High School in Salt Lake City on an Elizabethan stage in the Ursel Allred Theatre.
Scene I -- Rousillon: In the Countess' palace (Enter BERTRAM, the COUNTESS of Rousillon, HELENA, and LAFEW, all accessorized in black.)

COUNTESS: In delivering my only son, I bury again my husband.
BERTRAM: And I in going, madam, lament my father's death anew,
    But I must attend his majesty's command.
    To him I am now ward, evermore in subjection.
LAFEW: You shall find the king like a husband, madam;
    You, sir, like a father.
    He that so generally is good
    Must of necessity hold his virtue to you.
COUNTESS: What hope is there of his majesty's recovery?
LAFEW: He hath abandoned his physicians, madam;
    Under whose practices he hath persecuted time with hope.
COUNTESS: (indicating HELENA)
    This young gentlewoman had a father,
    A physician whose skill was almost as great as his honesty;
    Would, for the king's sake, he were living!
LAFEW: How called you the man you speak of, madam?
COUNTESS: Gerard de Narbonne
LAFEW: He was excellent indeed, madam;
    The king lately spoke of him, admiringly and mourningly.
BERTRAM: What is it the king suffers from?
LAFEW: Was this gentlewoman the daughter of Gerard de Narbonne?
COUNTESS: His sole child, my lord, and bequeathèd to my overlooking.
    I have those hopes that her education promises.
    His dispositions she inherits, which makes fair gifts fairer.
LAFEW: Your commendations, madam, draw her tears.
COUNTESS: 'Tis the best brine in which a maiden can season her praise.
    The remembrance of her father never approaches her heart
    But sorrows take all color from her cheek.
    No more of this, Helena; least it be thought thou affects a sorrow.
HELENA: I do affect a sorrow indeed, but I have it too.
LAFEW: Moderate lamentation is the right of the dead;
    Excessive grief the enemy of the living.
BERTRAM: Madam, I desire your holy wishes.
COUNTESS: Be thou blest, Bertram, and succeed thy father in manners, as in shape.
Love all, trust few, do wrong to none.  
Be checked for silence, but never taxed for speech.  
Farewell, my son.  

(to LAFEW)  
He's an unseason'd courtier, LaFew. Advise him.  

LAFeW: He shall not lack my counsel.  

COUNTESS: Heaven bless him! Farewell, Bertram.  
A fistula, my lord.  
(Exit COUNTESS.)  

BERTRAM: (to HELENA)  
The best wishes that can be forged in thy thoughts be  
servants to thee!  
Be comforting to my mother, thy mistress, and make much of her.  
(BERTRAM touches HELENA's cheek. She weeps and turns away.)  

LAFeW: Farewell, pretty lady: thou must hold the credit of thy father.  
(Exit BERTRAM and LAFEW.)  

HELENA: (Alone, she produces a drawing she has made of BERTRAM. RINALDA overhears.)  
I think not on my father;  
What was he like? I have forgotten him.  
My imagination holds no face but Bertram's.  
I am undone: there is no living, none, if Bertram be away.  
'Twere better I loved a star and thought to wed it.  
He is so above me in his bright radiance that his collateral light must comfort me.  
I am not of his sphere.  
The ambition in my love torments itself;  
The doe that would be mated to the lion must die for love.  
'Twas pleasant but painful to see him every hour;  
To sit and draw¹ his archèd brows, his hawk-like eye, his curls...  
But now he's gone, and my idolatrous fancy  
Must sanctify his relics.  
(RINALDA disappears as PAROLLES enters.)  

Who comes here?  
(aside)  
One that goes with him: I love him for his sake;  
And yet I know him a notorious liar, think him a great fool and a coward...  

PAROLLES: Save thee, pretty lady.  
HELENA: And thee, brave soldier.  
Let me ask you a question.  

¹ While Shakespeare's meaning was to pull, in this script the meaning is to sketch.
Man is an enemy to maidenhood.
How may I protect it from him?
Unfold to me some warlike resistance.

PAROLLES: There is none.
It is not politic to preserve maidenhood.
There is little that can be said of it.
To speak for maidenhood is to accuse our mothers,
Which is surely disobedient.

HELENA: But how might one lose her maidenhood to her own liking?
PAROLLES: As a commodity, the longer it is kept, the less it's worth.
Give it up while it is vendible.

(Enter COURTIER.)

COURTIER: Monsieur Parolles, Lord Bertram calls for you.

(Exit COURTIER.)

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

HELENA: Farewell, Monsieur Parolles, thou must have been born under Mars.

PAROLLES: When Mars was predominant?

HELENA: When he was retrograde.

PAROLLES: Why think thou so?

HELENA: Thou goeth backward when thou fights.

PAROLLES: That's for advantage.

HELENA: So is running away, when fear proposes safety.

PAROLLES: I am so full of businesses, I cannot answer thee acutely.
When thou hast leisure, say thy prayers;
When thou hast none, remember thy friends

(He steals HELENA's sketch.)

Get thee a good husband, and use him as he uses thee.

(PAROLLES returns HELENA's sketch and exits.)

HELENA: (alone)

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 that mounts my love so high,
That makes me see but cannot feed mine eye?
The mightiest things by fortune nature brings
To join like likes to kiss like native things.
Impossible be strange attempts by those
Who soothe their pains with sense and do suppose
What is must ever be: who ever strove
To 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 HELENA.)

Act I Scene 2
Paris: In the Palace of the King of France -- A flourish is heard. Enter the KING OF FRANCE with LORD SENIOR, LORD DUMAINE, LORD ECCLESTONE, and LORD EDWARD.

KING: Florence and Sienna are at war and have fought with equal fortune.
LORD SENIOR: So 'tis reported, sir
KING: 'Tis most credible;  
We have received a message from our cousin Austria  
That Florence will petition us for speedy aid,  
And Austria would have us make denial.
LORD DUMAINE: Must his majesty heed faithful Austria?
KING: Yes, Florence is denied before she asks,  
And yet our gentlemen who wish to take a stand,  
They have my leave to fight on either side.
LORD ECCLESTONE: It well may be a training ground  
For courtiers who crave adventure and exploit.  

(Enter BERTRAM, LAFEW, and PAROLLES.)
KING: Who comes here?
LORD EDWARD: It is Count Rousillon: young Bertram.
KING: Youth, thou bear'st thy father's face;  
Frank nature hath well composed thee.  
Thy father's moral parts may'st thou inherit too!  
Welcome to Paris.
BERTRAM: My thanks and duty are your majesty's.
KING: I would I had that physical soundness now,  
As when thy father and myself in friendship  
First tried our soldiership!  
It much restores me to talk of thy good father.  
In his youth he had the modesty that I observe today in my young lords.  
Those who were below him he honored  
And bow'd his eminent head to their low ranks,  
Making them proud by his humility.  
Such a man might be example in these younger times.
BERTRAM: His good remembrance, sir, lies richer in your thoughts than on his tomb.

KING: Would I were with him!

"Let me not live," quoth he, "after my flame lacks oil!
Let me not be the snuff of younger spirits!"

This he wish'd; after him I wish it too.
When I cannot bring wax nor honey home,
I would be driven from the hive to give young laborers room.

LORD SENIOR: You are loved, sir.

LORD DUMAINE: They that acknowledge you most will miss you most.

KING: I fill a place, I know it.

How long is it, Count Bertram, since thy father's physician died?
He was much famed.

BERTRAM: Some six months since, my lord.

KING: If he were living, I would try him yet.

Lend me an arm. Welcome, count;
My son's no dearer to me than thou art.

BERTRAM: My thanks, your Majesty.

(Exit all.)

Act I Scene 3
Rousillon: In the Countess' palace -- Enter COUNTESS and LAVATCH.

The complaints I have heard of thee I do not all believe,
But thou lacks not folly to commit the deeds.

LAVATCH: I am a poor fool, but, if I may have your ladyship's good
will to go into the world, I will do as I may.

COUNTESS: Wilt thou be a beggar?

LAVATCH: Nay, I shall marry.

COUNTESS: Tell me thy reason.

LAVATCH: My poor body, requires it.
I am driven on by the flesh, and she must move that the devil drives.

COUNTESS: Is this thine only reason?

LAVATCH: I have been a wicked creature, madam, and, indeed, I do
marry that I may repent.

COUNTESS: Get thee gone;
I'll not send thee away but will talk with thee more anon.

(Enter RINALDA.)
RINALDA: May it please you, madam, that she bid Helen come to you; I would speak to you.

COUNTESS: Lavatch, tell my gentlewoman Helen I would speak with her.

LAVATCH: Ah, beautiful Helen!

(reciting)
"'Was her fair face the cause,' he asked, 'That the Greeks laid siege to Troy? The face that launched a thousand ships? Was she King Priam's joy?' With that I sighed as there I stood, And gave this sentence then: 'Among nine bad if one be good, There's yet one good in ten.'"

COUNTESS: One good in ten? Thou corrupts the verse, sirrah. It's "one bad woman among nine good."

LAVATCH: If I were parson, I'd accept a tithing of one good woman in ten. Would that one good woman were born with every blazing star, And one good man in a century!

COUNTESS: Be gone, thou naughty wench.

LAVATCH: I am going, forsooth, to summon Helen hither. (Exit LAVATCH)

COUNTESS: Well, now, Rinalda.

RINALDA: I know, madam, you love your gentlewoman Helena entirely.

COUNTESS: Faith, I do: her father bequeathed her to me, And she may lawfully claim as much love as she desires of me. There is more owed her than is paid; and more shall be paid her than she'll demand.

RINALDA: Madam, I was lately more near to her than I think she wished me to be. Alone she did communicate words to her own ears. Her matter was she loves your son. Fortune, she said, Was no goddess that had put such difference between their two estates; Love no god, she cried, That would extend his might only where social ranks were level. This she delivered in the most bitter touch of sorrow that e'er I heard maiden exclaim in. I held my tongue to speedily acquaint you withal, since it concerns you to know it.

COUNTESS: Thou has discharged this honestly; keep it to thyself: Many likelihoods informed me of this before. Pray thee, leave me: hold this in thy bosom; and I thank thee for thine honest care:
I will speak with thee further anon.

_(Exit RINALDA.)_

So it was with me when I was young.
It is a woman's nature that this thorn
Doth ever to our rose of youth belong.
Ambitious hunger in our blood is born.
It is the show and seal of nature's truth,
Where love's strong passion is impress'd in youth.
In our remembrances of days foregone,
Such were our faults, though then we thought them none.

_(Enter HELENA.)_

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

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

**HELENA:** My honorable mistress!

**COUNTESS:** Nay, a mother: Why not a mother?
When I said "a mother," methought thou saw a serpent.
I say, I am thy mother and count thee with those of mine own womb.
'Tis often seen adoption breeds a native sprout from foreign seeds:
Thou ne'er oppress'd me with a mother's groan, yet I've expressed to thee a mother's care:
God's mercy, maiden!
Does it curd thy blood to say I am thy mother and thou my daughter?

**HELENA:** That I am not.

**COUNTESS:** I say I am thy mother.

**HELENA:** Pardon, madam, Count Bertram cannot be my brother;
I am of humble birth and he of honored name.
No note upon my parents, but he is all noble.
My master, my dear lord he is, and I
His servant live, and will his vassal die.
He must not be my brother.

**COUNTESS:** Nor I thy mother?

**HELENA:** You are my mother, madam, if you will.

**COUNTESS:** But thou would be my daughter-in-law?

_(HELENA reacts.)_

What, pale again? My words have catch'd thy fondness.
Now I see the mystery of thy loneliness.
To all sense 'tis bold thou loves my son;
But tell me, is it so? Thy cheeks confess it.
Speak, is't so. If it be not, forswear it.
However, I charge thee: as heaven shall work in me for thy benefit, tell me truly.

**HELENA:** Good madam, pardon me!
COUNTESS: Doth thou love my son?
HELENA: Your pardon, noble mistress!
COUNTESS: Love thou my son?
HELENA: Do not you love him, madam?
COUNTESS: Go not round about.
   Come, come, disclose the state of thine affection.
HELENA: Then, I confess, here on my knee, before you and highest heaven: I love your son!
   Be not offended; for it hurts not him that he is loved of me.
I follow him not with a presumptuous suit, nor would I have him till I do deserve him.
I know I love in vain, strive against hope,
   Yet into this sieve I pour the waters of my love.
   My dearest madam, do not hate me for loving where you do.
Pity me instead, who cannot choose
   But lend her love when she is sure to lose;
COUNTESS: Had you not lately an intent, speak truly, to go to Paris?
HELENA: Madam, I had.
COUNTESS: Why so? Tell me true.
HELENA: You know my father left me some prescriptions of rare and proved effects,
   Such as his reading and experience had collected,
   And that he will'd me, with heedful reservation to bestow them.
   There is a remedy, approved and set down, to cure the desperate languishing
   Whereof the king is rendered lost.
COUNTESS: This was your motive to go to Paris? Speak.
HELENA: My lord your son has made me think of this,
   Or else Paris and the medicine and the king would have been absent from my thoughts.
COUNTESS: But think thou, Helen, if thou should tender thy supposed aid, would he receive it?
   His physicians are of a mind that they cannot help him,
   So how shall they credit a poor, unlearnèd virgin?
HELENA: Even with my father's reputation, which was the greatest of his profession,
   My enterprise must be sanctified by the luckiest stars in heaven.
   Would your honor give me leave to try success?
I'll venture my life on his grace's cure.
COUNTESS: Why, Helen, thou shalt have my leave and love.
   I'll stay at home and pray God's blessing on thine attempt.
Be gone to-morrow; and be sure of this:
What help thou needs of me, thou shall not miss.
   (Exit HELENA and COUNTESS.)
Act II

Scene 1 -- Paris: In the palace of the King of France -- Enter the KING of France, attended by BERTRAM and PAROLLES, as well as LORD SENIOR and LORD DUMAINE who are leaving for the Florentine war.

KING: Farewell, young lords.
LORD SENIOR: 'Tis our hope, sir, to return from war and find your grace in health.
KING: No, no, it cannot be.
   Whether I live or die, be you the sons of worthy Frenchmen.
   Let the Italians see that you come not to woo honor, but to wed it.
LORD DUMAINE: May health, at your bidding, serve your Majesty!
KING: Those girls of Italy, take heed of them.
   Beware becoming captives of their love before you serve.
LORD SENIOR: Our hearts receive your warnings.
KING: Come hither to me when the fighting's done.
   (Exit KING of France.)
LORD SENIOR: Parolles, we regret that you will stay behind!
LORD DUMAINE: O, it is a brave war!
PAROLLES: Most admirable, but I have seen those wars.
BERTRAM: I am commanded to remain. I'm told I am too young and 'tis too early.
PAROLLES: If thou hast a mind to it, steal away to war!
BERTRAM: I shall stay here, creaking my shoes on this masonry…
   By heaven, I should steal away.
LORD SENIOR: There would be honor in the theft.
PAROLLES: Commit it, Bertram.
LORD DUMAINE: I'll be your accessory.
BERTRAM: I'm so attached to you, my lords, our parting tears my body.
LORD SENIOR: Then farewell, Bertram.
LORD DUMAINE: Farewell, Monsieur Parolles!
PAROLLES: Noble heroes, my sword and yours are kin.
   If you shall find in their regiment a Captain Spurio,
      With a scar of war, here on his left cheek,
      It was this very sword that entrenched it.
   Tell him that I live; and observe his reports of me.
LORD SENIOR: We shall, noble captain.
PAROLLES: May Mars favor you as his new recruits.
   (Exit LORD SENIOR and LORD DUMAINE.)
PAROLLES: Bertram, thou hast restrained thyself and offered them a cold adieu.
   Be more expressive to them. Let's after them, and offer a more expansive farewell.
BERTRAM: Let us do so.
PAROLLES: Worthy fellows, and likely to prove fine sword-men.

(Exit BERTRAM and PAROLLES. Enter LAFEW, supporting the KING.)

LAFEW: My lord, pardon me for my tidings.

KING: I'll pray thee speak them.

LAFEW: Good faith, would you be cured of your infirmity?

KING: No.

LAFEW: My royal fox, will you declare the grapes you cannot reach are sour?

KING: Indeed.

LAFEW: But you can reach those tasty grapes if you extend your hand.

I have seen a medicine that's able to breathe life into a stone.
Its touch is powerful enough to raise a dying king
And make him write a line of love to her who offered it.

KING: Who is this "her"?

LAFEW: Why, Doctor She! My lord, there's one arrived whose wisdom hath amazed me.

Pray, know her business. If she prove false, laugh well at me.

KING: Good LaFew, bring in this admirable woman, that I may wonder at her too.

LAFEW: Nay, I'll do it, and not be all day neither.

(Exit LAFEW.)

KING: (to himself)
Lafew is nothing without his special prologues.

(Re-enter LAFEW with HELENA.)

LAFEW: Come along. This is his majesty; speak thy mind to him:

A traitor thou doth look like with thine eyes downcast,
But such traitors his majesty seldom fears.
Fare thee well.

(Exit LAFEW.)

HELENA: Gerard de Narbonne was my father.

KING: I knew him.

HELENA: Then will I spare my praises of him; knowing him is enough.

On his bed of death, many remedies he gave me,
Chiefly one that he bade me store up, and I have done so,
Hearing your high majesty is touch'd with that malignancy
For which my father's gift stands powerful,
I come to tender it to you with all bound humbleness.

KING: I thank thee, yet I am not credulous.

Since all our learned doctors did conclude
Their art could never ransom me from nature,
I shan't esteem a senseless hope when I'm past help.

HELENA: My duty then shall pay me for my pains.

I will no more enforce mine office on you.
KING: Thou thought to help me; and such thanks I give
   As one near death to those that wish him live.
HELENA: What I can do could do no hurt to try,
   Since you believe you are past remedy.
   He that of greatest works is finisher
   Oft does them by the weakest minister:
   For Moses, slow of speech, the Red Sea dried
   When miracles to Pharaoh were denied.
KING: I must not hear thee; fare thee well, kind maid;
   In medicine retained shalt thou be paid.
HELENA: ’Tis most presumptuous of mortals when
   The help of heav’n we count an act of men.
   Dear sir, to my endeavors give consent;
   Of heav’n, not me, make your experiment.
   I am not an impostor that proclaim
   Myself the equal of my noble aim;
   But know I think and think I know most sure:
   My art is not past power nor you past cure.
KING: If I would trust me to thy confidence,
   What should thou pay if it prove impudence?
HELENA: Gerard de Narbonne and myself bear shame
   As ballads slander our once-honored name,
   Or punish me: my arms and legs extended
   With vilest torture let my life be ended.
KING: Methinks in thee I hear a spirit speak
   His mighty sound within an organ weak.
   Youth, beauty, wisdom, courage; all
   These virtues, maid, are at thy beckon call.
   To hazard this thy skill is infinite
   Or else thy cause is monstrous desperate.
   Doctor She, thy physic I will try,
   That ministers thine own death if I die.
HELENA: If I should fail to work this remedy
   And heal my king, unpitied let me die,
   And well deserved: not helping, death's my fee;
   But, if I help, what would you promise me?
KING: Ask me what thou wilt. Make thy demand.
HELENA: Then would you give me with your kingly hand
   What husband in your power I will command?
   Exempted from me is the arrogance
To choose one from the royal blood of France,
But such a one, your vassal, whom I know
Is free for me to ask, you will bestow?

KING: Here is my hand; the premise is observed,
Thy will by my performance shall be served:
Give me some help to rise. If thou proceed
And work thy miracle, I'll do the deed.

(Exit KING supported by HELENA.)

Act II Scene 2 -- Rousillon: In the palace of the Countess -- Enter COUNTLESS and LAVATCH.

COUNTRESS: Come on, I shall test the extent of thy breeding.
LAVATCH: I will show myself highly fed and lowly taught:
I know my talent is for the court.
COUNTRESS: For the court!
LAVATCH: Truly, madam, for I have an answer that will serve all men.
COUNTRESS: Marry, that's a bountiful answer that fits all questions.
LAVATCH: It is like a barber's chair that fits all buttocks.
COUNTRESS: Hast thou an answer of such fitness for all questions?
LAVATCH: Aye, it will fit any question.
COUNTRESS: It must be an answer of most monstrous size that must fit all demands.
LAVATCH: Here it is. Ask me if I am a courtier: it shall do you no harm to learn.
COUNTRESS: I will be a fool and ask the question, hoping to be the wiser by thine answer.
"I pray you, are you a courtier?"
LAVATCH: (emphatically) "Indeed, madam!" That puts you off. Again.
COUNTRESS: Sir, I am a friend of yours, that loves you.
LAVATCH: (ingratiatingly) "Indeed, madam!" Quickly, once more.
COUNTRESS: I think you should eat none of this meat.
LAVATCH: (offended) "Indeed, madam!" Easy, spare me not.
COUNTRESS: Thou should be whipped, I think.
LAVATCH: (automatically) "Indeed, madam!"
COUNTRESS: Does thou cry, "indeed, madam" for a whipping?
LAVATCH: I see mine answer serves long, but does not serve ever.
COUNTRESS: I play the noble housewife with the time
To entertain so merrily a fool.
LAVATCH: (amiably) "Indeed, madam!" Why, it serves me well again.
COUNTRESS: An end to thy business. Go to Paris, give Helen this,
And urge her for a present answer back.
Commend me to the king and to my son.
This is not much.
**LAVATCH:** Not much commendation?
**COUNTESS:** Not much employment for thee: thou understandest me?
**LAVATCH:** Most fruitfully: I am there before my legs.

*(Exit COUNTESS and LAVATCH.)*

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**Act II Scene 3 -- Paris: In the palace of the King of France --** Enter LAFEW, PAROLLES, and BERTRAM.

**LAFEW:** They say miracles are past, and we have philosophical persons
Who make supernatural and causeless things seem --

**PAROLLES:** …modern and familiar.

**LAFEW:** Yes, so I say.
We thought the king incurable, not able be helped, as 'twere, a man assured of --

**BERTRAM:** An uncertain life and certain death.
**LAFEW:** Just as you say, I would I have said.
It is a novelty to the world, a display of a --

**PAROLLES:** A heavenly effect in an earthly actor.
**LAFEW:** Yes, so I would have said.
He's the most wicked spirit that will not acknowledge it to be --

*He waits for PAROLLES or BERTRAM to finish the sentence.*

The very hand of heaven.

**PAROLLES:** So I would have said myself.

*(*A trumpet is heard.*)*

**BERTRAM:** Here comes the king.

*(Enter the KING, attended by HELENA, LORD ECCLESTONE, and LORD EDWARD.)*

**BERTRAM:** Is that not Helena?
**PAROLLES:** Before God, I think so.

**KING:** My fair preserver, with this healthful hand
I give to thee my ring of greatest worth.
It will preserve thee in thy needful hour,
But now receive my promised gift, which thou must name.
Here before us are my lords of court,
These noble bachelors whom I may bestow.
Fair Helena, thy wise selection make;
Thou hast the power to choose, and they none to forsake.

**HELENA:** Gentlemen, heaven hath through me restored the king to health.
PAROLLES: We understand it, and thank heaven for it.

HELENA: Your majesty, I have already chosen
But the blushes in my cheeks whisper to me,
"We blush that thou should choose but be refused."

KING: Who shuns thy love shuns all my love for him.

HELENA: (aside) Diana, from your altar do I fly,
To worship Venus, goddess of the sky.
(to LORD ECCLESTONE)
Sir, will you hear my suit?

LORD ECCLESTONE: (reluctantly) And grant it thee.

HELENA: Then the rest is mute.
Your fortune would be twenty times above
Mine own if I should grant my humble love.

LORD ECCLESTONE: Much better, if thou please, if I'd receive.

HELENA: My love is greater, so I take my leave.
(to LORD EDWARD)
Be not afraid that I your hand should take.

LORD EDWARD: Then never do me wrong for thine own sake.

LAEF: These lords are boys of ice! None would have her?
They act like Englishmen and shame the French!

HELENA: You are too young, too happy, and too good
To make a son out of my woman's blood.

LORD EDWARD: Fair one, thou speakest rightly.

LAEF: Were I a youthful lord,
Fair maid, I'd wed thee willingly, forsooth!

HELENA: And I would take you, sir, if you I loved.
(She passes an expectant PAROLLES and approaches a shocked 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 the help of mine own eyes to choose my bride.

KING: Bertram, know'st thou not what she has done for me?

BERTRAM: Yes, my good lord, but I can never hope to know why I should marry her.

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

BERTRAM: But follows it to bring me down on mine?
(The others react.)
I know her well: she had her breeding in my mother's house,
But a poor physician's daughter as my wife?
KING: *(in emotional crescendo)* 'Tis only title thou disdain'st in her, the which I can build up. Strange it is that our bloods of color, weight, and heat Confound distinction, yet blood makes differences so mighty.

*(rational)*

She has no title?!! She is wise and fair; In these to nature she's immediate heir, And these breed honor. What can now be said? If thou canst like this creature as a maid, I can create nobility, for she Is her own dowery. Take this bride of me.

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

KING: Thou wrong'st thyself, if thou choose otherwise.

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

KING: *(emotional and determined)* My honor's now at stake. Here, take her hand, Proud scornful boy, unworthy this good gift, It is in me to plant mine honor where I please to have it grow. Check thy contempt. Obey my will, which labors for thy good. Do what thy duty owes and my power claims; Or I will throw thee from my care for ever. Speak; what is thine answer?

BERTRAM: Pardon, my gracious lord, for I submit My fancy to your eyes. When I consider What great creation and what gift of honor Flies to where you bid it, I find that she, Which of late I thought most base, is now Ennobled by our praised king.

KING: Take her by the hand, And tell her she is thine.

BERTRAM: I take her hand.

KING: Good fortune and the favor of the king Smile upon this contract; whose ceremony Shall be perform'd tonight.

*(Exit all but LAFEW and PAROLLES.)*

LAFEW: A word with thee.

PAROLLES: Thy pleasure, sir?

LAFEW: Art thou not companion to this Bertram, Count of Rousillon?

PAROLLES: By any count, to this count, I'm his man, And proud of his companionship.

LAFEW: Thou counts for nothing, and thy master counts for less,
For setting at naught the love of that good woman.
Tell thy lord he did well to make his recantation.
PAROLLES: (bitterly rather than proudly) 'Tis against nature for him to taint his better blood.
LAFEW: Fare thee well. Thy window I need not open, for I can look thee through and through.
PAROLLES: You give me most egregious injury.
LAFEW: Ay, with all my heart; and thou art worthy of it.
PAROLLES: You do me most insupportable vexation.
LAFEW: I would it were hell-pains for thy sake, if it would do thee good.
(Exit LAFEW.)
PAROLLES: You filthy, scurvy soul!
   Well, I must be patient; there is no flouting authority.
(Re-enter LAFEW.)
LAFEW: Sirrah, thy lord and master's married; here's news for thee: thou hast a new mistress.
PAROLLES: Nay, Bertram is my good lord, but he I serve is above my master.
LAFEW: Who? God?
PAROLLES: Aye.
LAFEW: The devil is thy master and every man should beat thee.
   I think thou wast created for men to give thee blows.
PAROLLES: This is hard and undeserved measure, my lord.
LAFEW: Thou art a vagabond and no true courtier.
   Thou art more saucy with lords and honorable persons
   Than thy birth and virtue merit.
   Thou art not worth another word, or else I'd call thee knave. I leave thee.
(Exit LAFEW.)
PAROLLES: (alone) True, all very true, but let my nature be concealed awhile.
(Re-enter BERTRAM.)
BERTRAM: Undone, and forfeited to cares forever!
PAROLLES: What's the matter, good heart?
BERTRAM: Although before the solemn priest I have sworn, I will not bed her.
PAROLLES: What is that, my good lord?
BERTRAM: O my faithful Parolles, they have married me!
   I'll to the Italian wars, and never bed her.
PAROLLES: Yes, France is a dog-hole, and it no more merits the tread of our feet. To the wars!
   To other nations, France is a stable. Therefore, to Italy, to the wars!
BERTRAM: It shall be so: I'll send Helen to my house,
   Acquaint my mother with my hate for her,
   And the reason I am fled. I'll write to the king
   That which I dare not speak. War is no strife
   Compared to life with a detested wife.
   I'll send her straight away, and so tomorrow
I go to war and she to single sorrow.

PAROLLES: I see that thy resolve is firm and hard;
A man mal-married is a man that's marr'd.
Therefore away, and leave her bravely. Go!
The king has done thee wrong, but hush, 'tis so.

(Exit BERTRAM and PAROLLES.)

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Act II Scene 4 -- Paris: In the palace of the King of France -- Enter HELENA and LAVATCH.

HELENA: My mother greets me kindly; is she well?
LAVATCH: She's very well and lacks nothing in the world; but yet she is not well.
HELENA: If she be very well, what ails her?
LAVATCH: Truly, she's very well indeed, but for two things.
   One, that she's not in heaven, may God send her there quickly!
   The other that she's on earth, from whence God send her quickly!

(Enter PAROLLES.)
PAROLLES: Bless thee, my fortunate lady!
HELENA: I hope, sir, I have thy good will to have mine own good fortunes.
PAROLLES: Thou hath my prayers to lead them on. Wench, how does thy old lady?
LAVATCH: If thou had her wrinkles, I would do as thou commands.
PAROLLES: Why, I say nothing.
LAVATCH: Marry, thou art the wiser man for it.
   To say nothing, to do nothing, to know nothing, and to have nothing
   Are a great part of thy character.
PAROLLES: Go to, I find thee a witty fool.
LAVATCH: Do you find me like thyself, sir?
   If so, the search was profitable, as I may find much foolishness in thee,
   For the world's pleasure and laughter.
PAROLLES: (ignoring LAVATCH) Helena, my lord, thy husband goes away tonight.
   A very serious business calls on him.
   The ritual of love, which is thy right, he does acknowledge
   But puts it off because of obligation.
   Anticipation makes the coming hour o'erflow with joy.
HELENA: What else did he bid thee tell me?
PAROLLES: That thou must instantly take thy leave of the king
   And make thy haste seem of thy desire,
   Strengthen'd with a probable apology.
HELENA: What more commands he?
PAROLLES: That, having done this, thou await his further pleasure.
HELENA: In every thing I wait upon his will.
PAROLLES: I shall report it so.
HELENA: I thank thee.

(Exit PAROLLES.)
Come, sirrah.

(Exit HELENA with LAVATCH.)

Act II Scene 5 -- Paris: In the palace of the King of France -- Enter LAFEW and BERTRAM.

LAFEW: ...But I hope your lordship thinks him not a soldier.
BERTRAM: Yes, and a very valiant one.
LAFEW: You have it from his own account?
BERTRAM: And by other warranted testimony.
LAFEW: Then the compass of my judgment points not true.
    I took this lark for a pigeon.
BERTRAM: I do assure you, my lord, he is very great in knowledge and accordingly valiant.
LAFEW: If I have then sinned against his experience and transgressed against his valor,
    I will find in my heart to repent.
    Here he comes: I pray you, make us friends.

(Enter PAROLLES.)
LAFEW: (aside to PAROLLES) Will she away tonight?
PAROLLES: As thou would have her do.
BERTRAM: I have writ my letters, secured my treasure, given order for our horses,
    And tonight, when I should take possession of the bride,
    I will end before I do begin.
LAFEW: God save thee, captain.
BERTRAM: Is there any unkindness between LaFew and thee, Parolles?
PAROLLES: I know not how I have deserved to run into his displeasure.
LAFEW: Thou hast run into it, boots and spurs and all.
BERTRAM: It may be thou hast mistaken him.
LAFEW: And shall do so ever.
    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 matters of heavy consequence.

(to PAROLLES)
Farewell, monsieur.
I have spoken better of thee than thou deserves at my hand,
But we must do good against evil.

(Exit LAFEW. Enter HELENA.)

PAROLLES: An idle soul, I swear it.

BERTRAM: I think so. Here comes my ball and chain.

HELENA: I have, sir, as I was commanded by you,
Spoke with the king and have procured his leave,
Only he desires some private speech with you.

BERTRAM: I shall obey his will.
You must not marvel, Helen, at my course,
I was not prepared for such a business;
Therefore am I so much unsettled.
The matter drives me ask of thee
That presently thou take thy way for home;
And rather muse than ask why I entreat thee,
For my motives are better than they seem,
Greater than they show at the first view.
Give this letter to my mother.
'Twill be at least two days ere I shall see thee,
So I leave thee to thy wisdom.

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

BERTRAM: Come, come, no more of that.

HELENA: I am not worthy of the wealth I've gained,
But, like a timorous thief, would steal
What law confirms is mine.

BERTRAM: What would thou have?

HELENA: Something; and scarce so much: nothing, indeed.
I would that you would grace me with a kiss.

BERTRAM: I pray thee, stay not, but in haste to thy horse.

HELENA: I shall not break your bidding, my good lord

BERTRAM: Farewell. Go thou toward home…

(HELENA bows and exits.)

…where I will never come
Whilst I can shake my sword or hear the drum.
Away, and for our flight.

PAROLLES: Bravely, courage my good master!
(Exit BERTRAM and PAROLLES.)

35 more pages in the script