

HELENA But now he's gone, and my idolatrous fancy
Must sanctify his relics. Who comes here?

Enter Parolles.

One that goes with him. I love him for his sake,
And yet I know him a notorious liar, 105
Think him a great way fool, solely a coward.

PAROLLES Save you, fair queen.

HELENA And you, monarch.

PAROLLES No.

HELENA And no.

PAROLLES Are you meditating on virginity? 115

HELENA Ay. You have some stain of soldier in you; let
me ask you a question. Man is enemy to virginity.
How may we barricado it against him?

PAROLLES Keep him out.

HELENA But he assails, and our virginity, though 120
valiant in the defense, yet is weak. Unfold to us
some warlike resistance.

PAROLLES There is none. Man setting down before you
will undermine you and blow you up.

HELENA Bless our poor virginity from underminers and 125
blowers-up! Is there no military policy how virgins
might blow up men?

PAROLLES Virginity being blown down, man will
quicklier be blown up. Marry, in blowing him 130
down again, with the breach yourselves made you
lose your city. It is not politic in the commonwealth
of nature to preserve virginity. Loss of virginity
is rational increase, and there was never
virgin got till virginity was first lost. Away with 't.

HELENA I will stand for 't a little, though therefore I 140
die a virgin.

PAROLLES There's little can be said in 't. 'Tis against the
rule of nature. To speak on the part of virginity is
to accuse your mothers, which is most infallible
disobedience. Away with 't! 155

HELENA How might one do, sir, to lose it to her own
liking?

PAROLLES Let me see. Marry, ill, to like him that ne'er
it likes. 'Tis a commodity will lose the gloss with
lying; the longer kept, the less worth. And your virginity,
your old virginity, is like one of our French withered pears:
it looks ill, it eats dryly; marry, 'tis a withered pear.
It was formerly better, marry, yet 'tis a withered
pear. Will you anything with it? 170

HELENA Not my virginity, yet—
There shall your master have a thousand loves,
A mother, and a mistress, and a friend,
A phoenix, captain, and an enemy,
A guide, a goddess, and a sovereign, 175
A counselor, a traitress, and a dear;

Of pretty, fond adoptious christendoms 180
That blinking Cupid gossips. Now shall he—
I know not what he shall. God send him well.

The court's a learning place, and he is one—

PAROLLES What one, i' faith?

HELENA That I wish well. 'Tis pity— 185

PAROLLES What's pity?

HELENA

That wishing well had not a body in 't