

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL – THE PLOT

Helena is the orphaned daughter of a doctor, who has grown up in the care of the Countess of Roussillon, alongside her son Bertram. Throughout their childhood they have been firm friends, and as they have grown up Helena has secretly fallen in love with Bertram.

Unaware of Helena's affection, and on the death of his father, Bertram leaves home to attend the ailing ruler of France in Paris. Parted from her childhood sweetheart, Helena confides in the Countess who agrees that she should follow her heart and join Bertram at the court in Paris, with the outward purpose of attempting to cure the Queen's illness using the medical knowledge she gained from before her father's death.

Using the knowledge her father gave her, Helena cures the 'incurable' Queen, and as a reward the Queen gives Helena her ring and offers her a husband of her own choosing. Naturally she chooses Bertram. Intent on following his own path, Bertram initially rejects Helena but then reluctantly accepts the offer of marriage to avoid the Queen's displeasure.

Accompanied by the swaggering Parolles, Bertram leaves for Florence to join the army fighting in the Tuscan wars. Once away, he writes Helena a letter promising that he will only marry her if she can get his family ring off his finger and prove that she is pregnant with his child: both of which are seemingly impossible.

Undeterred, Helena secretly journeys to Florence, where she discovers he is trying to seduce Diana, the daughter of the widowed hostess of her inn. Together, Diana and Helena create a plan to bring Helena and Bertram together: Diana will agree to sleep with Bertram on condition that he gives her his ring as a token of his love, and Diana will give him her ring. The meeting will take place in a dark room where Helena will take Diana's place, giving Bertram her ring – the one the Queen originally gave her.

Meanwhile, Bertram is warned by the Lord Dumaine of Parolles' cowardice and a plan is put in place to test his loyalty: Parolles is 'captured' by Dumaine pretending to be the enemy, and when threatened with torture, reveals all the secret plans of the army. This is witnessed by Bertram who abandons Parolles who is left friendless.

Following the battle that ensues, Bertram returns home, where the Queen is visiting. News has reached Roussillon that Helena is supposed dead, and it is proposed that Bertram should marry the daughter of Lafew, one of the Queen's courtiers. On Bertram giving Lafew the ring off his finger, the Queen recognizes it as the one he gave Helena, and Bertram is arrested.

Diana arrives, telling of Bertram's attempted wooing of her and the plan that she and Helena created. On seeing Helena is pregnant and wearing his family ring, Bertram cannot deny his original promise to Helena, and professes his love for her, and **all's well that ends well.**