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# BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

## Shakespeare speaks

### A fool's paradise

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**Narrator**

It was a sunny August morning. William Shakespeare is at the market.

**Stallholder**

Get your cherries, lovely ripe cherries! Come over here and get your cherries...

**Will**

Ahhh... sweet, ripe cherries! Two pounds, please, Mary.

**Stallholder**

Here you are Mr Will.

**Will**

And how's the family Mary? All well?

**Stallholder**

Growing up fast, you know how it is... my Janet's a worry though. That Robert Harley says he wants to marry her, but I don't trust him: I think he just wants to have his way with her and what will we do Mr Will if she ends up just 14 years old with a baby and no husband?!

**Will**

Now Mary, I'm sure young Robert will do right by Janet. Look at me, didn't I marry my Anne when she was in trouble? And here we are now, still together with three children...

**Stallholder**

You're not too happy though, are you Mr Will?

**Will**

Marriage isn't easy Mary, you know that.

**Stallholder**

Oh, Mr Will. Last week he was in love with that Rosie from the village and this week it's my Janet's turn. He's promised her clothes, money, ribbons for her hair, and she's so in love with him she believes all of it! I tell you, she's living in a fool's paradise!

### Will

A fool's paradise... hmmm... That might sound good in my play! Romeo and Juliet, the star-cross'd lovers. Romeo says he'll marry Juliet but Juliet's nurse doesn't trust him. She warns him not to make false promises just to get Juliet into bed. Listen Mary, it'll go like this: ...let me tell ye, if ye should lead her...

### Nurse

let me tell ye, if ye should lead her into  
**a fool's paradise**, as they say, it were a very gross  
kind of behaviour,

### Stallholder

That's really good Mr Will.

### Will

Thank you, Mary. You can use it if you like...

### Narrator

We'll leave them there for now. In Shakespeare's day, it was legal for girls to marry at the age of 14, although people usually got married when they were older. It was not uncommon for women to already be pregnant when they got married – as was the case with William Shakespeare's own marriage. These days, the phrase **a fool's paradise** describes any situation that somebody thinks is good, without realising that it won't last – or that it's actually bad. Take this 2015 BBC News headline, written when the value of the single European currency fell to record lows – making it cheap to buy for investors, but not particularly safe:

### Clip 1

The euro: Good bet or a fool's paradise?

### Clip 2

Jack's work is terrible. He's living in a fool's paradise if he thinks he's getting a pay rise.

### Stallholder

Just wait till I catch up with that Mr Robert. If you see him Mr Will, you be sure to tell me.

### Will

Hmmm... to tell, or not to tell: that is the question.