

An early quarto edition of Shakespeare's *Pericles*

William Shakespeare, *Pericles*. London: Printed by Thomas Cotes, 1635. 7 1/4 inches x 5 1/2 inches (184 mm x 140 mm), [68] pages, A–H4 I2.

THE LATE, | And much admired Play, | CALLED | Pericles, Prince of | Tyre. | *With the true Relation of the whole Hi-* | story, aduentures, and fortunes of | the said Prince. | Written by W. SHAKESPEARE: | [Heb Ddieu device] | Printed at *London* by *Thomas Cotes*, 1635.

Shakespeare's quartos, so named because of their format (a single sheet folded twice, creating four leaves or eight pages), are the first printed representations of his plays and, as none of the plays survives in manuscript, of great importance to Shakespeare scholarship. Only twenty-one of Shakespeare's plays were published in quarto before the closure of the theaters and outbreak of civil war in 1642. These quartos were printed from either Shakespeare's "foul papers" (a draft with notations and changes that was given in sections to actors for their respective roles); from "fair copies" created from foul papers that presented the entire action of the play; from promptbooks, essentially fair copies annotated and expanded by the author and acting company to clarify stage directions, sound effects, etc.; or from a previously published quarto edition. The quartos were inexpensive to produce and were published for various reasons, including to secure the acting company's rights to the material and to bring in money during the plague years in London when the theaters were closed.

Narrated by Gower, the play tells the complicated story of Pericles, eventual king of Tyre. The story opens with Antiochus who is offering his daughter's hand to any suitor who can answer a riddle—failure means death. Pericles gives the correct answer, which exposes Antiochus as having an incestuous affair with his daughter. Pericles flees to Tarsus and saves the nation from famine by bringing stores of corn. He is called back to Tyre but is shipwrecked on Pentapolis, where he wins in a jousting tournament and the hand of the king's daughter Thaisa. Pericles is told that Antiochus and his daughter have been killed by a fire from heaven and he departs

Pentapolis to return to Tyre. The ship encounters a great storm and Thaisa dies in childbirth. Her body is put in a chest and washes up in Ephesus, where she is revived. Thinking that his infant daughter Marina won't survive, Pericles leaves her in Tarsus, where she is raised by the king and queen and becomes the object of jealousy. Before she can be killed, Marina is captured by pirates and sold into prostitution on Lesbos, where she cleverly retains her virtue. Pericles returns to Tarsus to find his daughter and is told she is dead. After several more adventures Pericles, now the king of Tyre, is reunited with daughter and wife; the play closes with Gower proclaiming the joys that result from living a virtuous life.

This sixth quarto of *Pericles*, which is now at the Bodleian Library, is bound in dark brown calf with triple blind rules punctuated with floral ornaments in the corners on both front and back covers. Lettered in gold up the spine between gilt double rules is "PERICLES PRINCE OF TYRE. 1635." A handwritten note reads "Edit. | 1635." There are no marks to identify previous owners.

Octavo code: **shapfe**