

Act 1 Scene 1

Antechamber in LEONTES' palace.

Enter CAMILLO and ARCHIDAMUS

ARCHIDAMUS

If you shall chance, Camillo, to visit Bohemia, on the like occasion whereon my services are now on foot, you shall see, as I have said, great difference betwixt our Bohemia and your Sicilia.

CAMILLO

5 I think, this coming summer, the King of Sicilia means to pay Bohemia the visitation which he justly owes him.

ARCHIDAMUS

Wherein our entertainment shall shame us we will be justified in our loves; for indeed—

CAMILLO

Beseech you,—

ARCHIDAMUS

10 Verily, I speak it in the freedom of my knowledge: we cannot with such magnificence—in so rare—I know not what to say. We will give you sleepy drinks, that your senses, unintelligent of our insufficiency,

A waiting room in Leontes's palace.

CAMILLO and ARCHIDAMUS enter.

ARCHIDAMUS

Camillo, if you ever happen to accompany your King to Bohemia, as I am accompanying mine to Sicilia, you'll see there's a great difference between our countries—and our masters.

CAMILLO

I think the King of Sicilia plans to visit the King of Bohemia this coming summer.

ARCHIDAMUS

If our hospitality is inadequate, we'll make up for it with our love for you; in fact—

CAMILLO

Please—

ARCHIDAMUS

Truly, I say it from experience. We can't match the magnificence, the excellence—I don't even know how to describe it. We'll give you drinks to dull your senses, so that you won't be aware of our inadequacies, and even if you will

may, though they cannot praise us, as little accuse
15 us.

CAMILLO

You pay a great deal too dear for what's given freely.

ARCHIDAMUS

Believe me, I speak as my understanding instructs me
and as mine honesty puts it to utterance.

CAMILLO

Sicilia cannot show himself over-kind to Bohemia.
20 They were trained together in their childhoods; and
there rooted betwixt them then such an affection,
which cannot choose but branch now. Since their
more mature dignities and royal necessities made
separation of their society, their encounters,
25 though not personal, have been royally attorneyed
with interchange of gifts, letters, loving
embassies; that they have seemed to be together,
though absent, shook hands, as over a vast, and
embraced, as it were, from the ends of opposed
30 winds. The heavens continue their loves!

ARCHIDAMUS

I think there is not in the world either malice or
matter to alter it. You have an unspeakable

be too sleepy to praise us, you won't be able to accuse us of
negligence, either.

CAMILLO

You are putting too great a value on something that is given for
free.

ARCHIDAMUS

Believe me, I say what my knowledge tells me, and I say it
honestly.

CAMILLO

The King of Sicily could never be anything but kind to the King
of Bohemia. They were brought up together as children, and so
they have a deep-rooted affection for one another that can
only grow. Because of their adult responsibilities and their
duties as kings, they have not been able to meet personally.
Instead their meetings have taken place via royal deputies and
through the exchange of presents, letters, and fond words.
Through these means they've stayed in touch despite the
great distance between them. May the heavens keep their
friendship strong!

ARCHIDAMUS

I don't think there is anything in the world that can shake their
friendship. And you have an indescribable comfort in the

comfort of your young prince Mamillius: it is a gentleman of the greatest promise that ever came
35 into my note.

CAMILLO

I very well agree with you in the hopes of him: it is a gallant child; one that indeed physics the subject, makes old hearts fresh: they that went on crutches ere he was born desire yet their life to
40 see him a man.

ARCHIDAMUS

Would they else be content to die?

CAMILLO

Yes; if there were no other excuse why they should desire to live.

ARCHIDAMUS

If the king had no son, they would desire to live
45 on crutches till he had one.

Exeunt

A room of state in the same.

Enter LEONTES, HERMIONE, MAMILLIUS, POLIXENES,

young prince Mamillius. He has the greatest potential of any young gentleman I've ever seen.

CAMILLO

I agree with you regarding his potential. He is a noble child, and he is like a medicine for his subjects. The old feel young, and those who were crippled even before he was born now hope to live long enough to see him grow into a man.

ARCHIDAMUS

Would they otherwise want to die?

CAMILLO

Yes, if they didn't have any other reason for them to want to live.

ARCHIDAMUS

If the king didn't have a son, they would want to live as cripples until he had one.

They exit.

Act 1 Scene 2

A formal receiving room in Leontes's palace.

LEONTES, HERMIONE, MAMILLIUS, POLIXENES, CAMILLO, and

CAMILLO, and Attendants

POLIXENES

Nine changes of the watery star hath been
The shepherd's note since we have left our throne
Without a burthen: time as long again
Would be filled up, my brother, with our thanks;
5 And yet we should, for perpetuity,
Go hence in debt: and therefore, like a cipher,
Yet standing in rich place, I multiply
With one 'We thank you' many thousands more
That go before it.

LEONTES

10 Stay your thanks a while;
And pay them when you part.

POLIXENES

Sir, that's to-morrow.
I am question'd by my fears, of what may chance
Or breed upon our absence; that may blow
15 No sneaping winds at home, to make us say
'This is put forth too truly:' besides, I have stay'd
To tire your royalty.

LEONTES

We are tougher, brother,
Than you can put us to't.

several attendants enter.

POLIXENES

It has been nine months since I left my throne. I could happily spend another nine months away, but I must leave now, forever in your debt. So, like a zero, which means "nothing" but adds value when placed beside a number , my one "thank you" will multiply the thousand more I've already said.

LEONTES

Don't thank me yet. Wait until you leave.

POLIXENES

Sir, I leave tomorrow. I'm fearful of what might happen by chance, or what plot may develop, because of my absence, and I worry my fears will be confirmed. Besides, I've worn you out with my company.

LEONTES

You couldn't wear me out if you tried.

POLIXENES

20 No longer stay.

LEONTES

One seven-night longer.

POLIXENES

Very sooth, to-morrow.

LEONTES

We'll part the time between's then; and in that
I'll no gainsaying.

POLIXENES

25 Press me not, beseech you, so.

There is no tongue that moves, none, none i' the world,
So soon as yours could win me: so it should now,
Were there necessity in your request, although
'Twere needful I denied it. My affairs

30 Do even drag me homeward: which to hinder

Were in your love a whip to me; my stay
To you a charge and trouble: to save both,
Farewell, our brother.

LEONTES

Tongue-tied, our queen?

35 speak you.

POLIXENES

I can't stay any longer.

LEONTES

Just one more week.

POLIXENES

Really, tomorrow.

LEONTES

We'll split the difference, and I won't hear any objections.

POLIXENES

Please, don't plead with me. There is no one who can
persuade me like you can, and you could persuade me to stay
now if you really needed me to, even if it were necessary that I
deny your request. My business does drag me home, so your
attempts to keep me here, though done out of love, are painful
to me. My staying only costs you and causes you trouble, so
for both our sakes, I must go.

LEONTES

My queen, are you mute? Speak.

HERMIONE

I had thought, sir, to have held my peace until
You have drawn oaths from him not to stay. You, sir,
Charge him too coldly. Tell him, you are sure
All in Bohemia's well; this satisfaction
40 The by-gone day proclaim'd: say this to him,
He's beat from his best ward.

LEONTES

Well said, Hermione.

HERMIONE

To tell, he longs to see his son, were strong:
But let him say so then, and let him go;
45 But let him swear so, and he shall not stay,
We'll thwack him hence with distaffs.
Yet of your royal presence I'll adventure
The borrow of a week. When at Bohemia
You take my lord, I'll give him my commission
50 To let him there a month behind the gest
Prefix'd for's parting: yet, good deed, Leontes,
I love thee not a jar o' the clock behind
What lady-she her lord. You'll stay?

POLIXENES

No, madam.

HERMIONE**HERMIONE**

I intended to keep quiet until you'd made him promise to stay.
You argue too mildly. Tell him you are sure that things in
Bohemia are fine—in fact, just the other day it was proclaimed
so. Tell him this, and his best argument for leaving is gone.

LEONTES

Well said, Hermione.

HERMIONE

If he says that he wants to see his son, that's a strong
argument. But let him say it first, then let him go. If he swears
to that, he won't stay. We'll chase him off by whacking him with
wooden staffs. But I'm guessing he will remain in your
presence another week. *(to Polixenes)* When you receive my
lord in Bohemia, I'll give him permission to stay a month past
his fixed departure day. *(to Leontes)* Yet, Leontes, I don't love
you a jot less than any other woman loves her lord. Polixenes,
you'll stay?

POLIXENES

No, madam.

HERMIONE

55 Nay, but you will?

POLIXENES

I may not, verily.

HERMIONE

Verily!

You put me off with limber vows; but I,
Though you would seek to unsphere the
60 stars with oaths,

Should yet say 'Sir, no going.' Verily,
You shall not go: a lady's 'Verily' 's
As potent as a lord's. Will you go yet?
Force me to keep you as a prisoner,

65 Not like a guest; so you shall pay your fees

When you depart, and save your thanks. How say you?
My prisoner? or my guest? by your dread 'Verily,'
One of them you shall be.

POLIXENES

Your guest, then, madam:

70 To be your prisoner should import offending;
Which is for me less easy to commit
Than you to punish.

HERMIONE

Not your gaoler, then,
But your kind hostess. Come, I'll question you

No, but you will?

POLIXENES

I can't, honestly.

HERMIONE

Honestly! You counter me with weak vows, but even if you would try to take the stars out of the sky with your oaths, I'll still say you are not going. Truly, you won't go—my "truly" is as powerful as yours. Will you still go? You'll force me to keep you like a prisoner, not like a guest, and you'll have to pay a fine at the end, rather than give us thanks. What do you think? My prisoner, or my guest? "Truly," as you say, you'll be one of the two.

POLIXENES

Your guest then, madam. Being your prisoner would suggest I've offended you, which would be more difficult and painful for me than your punishment.

HERMIONE

I won't be your jailer, then, but your kind hostess. Come, I'll ask you about the tricks you and my husband played when you

75 Of my lord's tricks and yours when you were boys:
You were pretty lordings then?

POLIXENES

We were, fair queen,
Two lads that thought there was no more behind
But such a day to-morrow as to-day,

80 And to be boy eternal.

HERMIONE

Was not my lord
The verier wag o' the two?

POLIXENES

We were as twinn'd lambs that did frisk i' the sun,
And bleat the one at the other: what we changed
85 Was innocence for innocence; we knew not
The doctrine of ill-doing, nor dream'd
That any did. Had we pursued that life,
And our weak spirits ne'er been higher rear'd
With stronger blood, we should have answer'd heaven
90 Boldly 'not guilty;' the imposition clear'd
Hereditary ours.

HERMIONE

By this we gather
You have tripp'd since.

were boys. You were handsome princes then?

POLIXENES

We were, fair queen, two young boys who thought that
tomorrow would be just like today, and that we would be boys
forever.

HERMIONE

Was my husband the bigger prankster of you two?

POLIXENES

We were like two lambs that played in the sun and bleated at
one another. We were wholly innocent. We didn't know what it
was to do harm, or even that anyone did. Had we continued
this way, and had our weak spirits never given way to stronger
passions, we could have said upon reaching Heaven that we
were "not guilty," and we would have been cleared even of
[original sin](#).

HERMIONE

I take it that you have not been so innocent since?

POLIXENES

O my most sacred lady!

95 Temptations have since then been born to's; for
In those unfledged days was my wife a girl;
Your precious self had then not cross'd the eyes
Of my young play-fellow.

HERMIONE

Grace to boot!

100 Of this make no conclusion, lest you say
Your queen and I are devils: yet go on;
The offences we have made you do we'll answer,
If you first sinn'd with us and that with us
You did continue fault and that you slipp'd not
105 With any but with us.

LEONTES

Is he won yet?

HERMIONE

He'll stay my lord.

LEONTES

At my request he would not.

Hermione, my dearest, thou never spokest

110 To better purpose.

HERMIONE**POLIXENES**

Most sacred lady! We've had our temptations since then. In those youthful days my wife was just a girl, and my playfellow had not yet seen you.

HERMIONE

Heaven help me! Don't pursue that train of thought, or you'll go on to say that your wife and I are devils. Still, keep going. We'll take responsibility for whatever sins we've made you commit, as long as those sins were committed first with us, only with us, and you've never sinned with any other.

LEONTES

Is he won over yet?

HERMIONE

He'll stay, my lord.

LEONTES

When I requested it he would not. Hermione, my dearest, you've never spoken so well.

HERMIONE

Never?

LEONTES

Never, but once.

HERMIONE

What! have I twice said well? when was't before?
I prithee tell me; cram's with praise, and make's
115 As fat as tame things: one good deed dying tongueless
Slaughters a thousand waiting upon that.
Our praises are our wages: you may ride's
With one soft kiss a thousand furlongs ere
With spur we beat an acre. But to the goal:
120 My last good deed was to entreat his stay:
What was my first? it has an elder sister,
Or I mistake you: O, would her name were Grace!
But once before I spoke to the purpose: when?
Nay, let me have't; I long.

LEONTES

125 Why, that was when
Three crabbed months had sour'd themselves to death,
Ere I could make thee open thy white hand
And clap thyself my love: then didst thou utter
'I am yours for ever.'

HERMIONE

130 'Tis grace indeed.

Never?

LEONTES

Only once before.

HERMIONE

What! I've only spoken well twice? When was the last time?
Please, tell me. Fill me up with praise and make me as fat as a
pet. If one good deed goes unrecognized, the thousand more
that might have been inspired by it will never occur. Praise is
our motivation and reward. One soft kiss will take you two
hundred yards; a sharp kick only gets you an acre. But back to
the point: my last good deed was to plead for Polixenes to stay.
What was my first good deed? Unless I'm misunderstanding
what you said, there was an earlier one. Oh, if only my name
were Grace! So once before I've spoken well. When? Tell me,
please, I long to know.

LEONTES

Why, it was when three bitter months had passed before I
could get you to pledge your love to me with your white
hands. And then you said, "I am yours forever."

HERMIONE

Why, lo you now, I have spoke to the purpose twice:
The one for ever earn'd a royal husband;
The other for some while a friend.

LEONTES

[Aside] Too hot, too hot!

135 To mingle friendship far is mingling bloods.
I have tremor cordis on me: my heart dances;
But not for joy; not joy. This entertainment
May a free face put on, derive a liberty
From heartiness, from bounty, fertile bosom,
140 And well become the agent; 't may, I grant;
But to be paddling palms and pinching fingers,
As now they are, and making practised smiles,
As in a looking-glass, and then to sigh, as 'twere
The mort o' the deer; O, that is entertainment
145 My bosom likes not, nor my brows! Mamillius,
Art thou my boy?

MAMILLIUS

Ay, my good lord.

LEONTES

I' fecks!
Why, that's my bawcock. What, hast
150 smutch'd thy nose?
They say it is a copy out of mine. Come, captain,

It is grace, indeed. According to you, I have spoken well twice:
once to earn a royal husband and again to keep a [friend](#) a
while longer.

LEONTES

(aside) That is too much! To take friendship too far is to make it
a love affair. My heart is trembling and dancing, but not for joy.
This hospitality may have an innocent face, and my wife's
generosity may in fact come from warmth, affection, and the
fact that it makes her more attractive. Maybe. But to hold
hands, as they are doing right now, and flirtatiously smile at
each other as though into a mirror, all the while sighing as loud
as a [horn blast](#), that is not entertainment that pleases my
heart, or my head. Mamillius, are you my son?

MAMILLIUS

Yes, my good lord.

LEONTES

In faith! That's my fine fellow. What, have you smudged your
nose? They say it looks just like mine. Come on, captain, you
must be [neat](#), that is, clean. Yet the steer, the heifer, and the

We must be neat; not neat, but cleanly, captain:
And yet the steer, the heifer and the calf
Are all call'd neat.—Still virginalling
155 Upon his palm!—How now, you wanton calf!
Art thou my calf?

MAMILLIUS

Yes, if you will, my lord.

LEONTES

Thou want'st a rough pash and the shoots that I have,
To be full like me: yet they say we are
160 Almost as like as eggs; women say so,
That will say anything but were they false
As o'er-dyed blacks, as wind, as waters, false
As dice are to be wish'd by one that fixes
No bourn 'twixt his and mine, yet were it true
165 To say this boy were like me. Come, sir page,
Look on me with your welkin eye: sweet villain!
Most dear'st! my collop! Can thy dam?—may't be?—
Affection! thy intention stabs the centre:
Thou dost make possible things not so held,
170 Communicatest with dreams;—how can this be?—
With what's unreal thou coactive art,
And fellow'st nothing: then 'tis very credent
Thou mayst co-join with something; and thou dost,
And that beyond commission, and I find it,

calf are all called neat. Still playing her fingers up and down his palm! What are you up to, you silly calf? Are you my calf?

MAMILLIUS

Yes, if you'd like me to be, my lord.

LEONTES

You need a shaggy head and [horns](#) to be just like me. Still, they say we are as alike as a pair of eggs. Women say that, and they will say anything. But even if they were [as false as Africans or black fabric](#), or as fickle as the wind and the water, or fixed as a cheating gambler wants the dice to be, it would still be true that this boy looks like me. Come, sir page, look at me with your sky blue eye. Sweet villain! Dearest! My flesh! Can your mother have? Could it be? Jealousy's intensity strikes me through to my heart and makes things that are impossible seem possible. That jealousy speaks in dreams. How can this be? It collaborates with what's unreal and corresponds to nothing in real life. Then it's very believable that my jealousy may be real, and she's gone beyond what's permitted, and I would find out and grow insane, and my brow would harden into horns.

175 And that to the infection of my brains
And hardening of my brows.

POLIXENES

What means Sicilia?

HERMIONE

He something seems unsettled.

POLIXENES

How, my lord?

LEONTES

180 What cheer? how is't with you, best brother?

HERMIONE

You look as if you held a brow of much distraction
Are you moved, my lord?

LEONTES

No, in good earnest.
How sometimes nature will betray its folly,
185 Its tenderness, and make itself a pastime
To harder bosoms! Looking on the lines
Of my boy's face, methoughts I did recoil
Twenty-three years, and saw myself unbreech'd,
In my green velvet coat, my dagger muzzled,
190 Lest it should bite its master, and so prove,

POLIXENES

What is Leontes saying?

HERMIONE

He seems upset.

POLIXENES

How are you, my lord?

LEONTES

What news? How are you, my best brother?

HERMIONE

You look distracted. Are you upset, my lord?

LEONTES

No, truly. Sometimes nature shows its weakness, its tenderness, and makes itself a source of amusement for harder hearts. Looking at my boy's face, I thought I had gone back twenty-three years and saw myself [without trousers](#), in my green velvet coat, with my dagger carefully sheathed so I would not hurt myself on it and so it wouldn't prove too dangerous, as toys often do. I thought how alike I was at that age to this child, this young boy, this gentleman. My honest

As ornaments oft do, too dangerous:
How like, methought, I then was to this kernel,
This squash, this gentleman. Mine honest friend,
Will you take eggs for money?

MAMILLIUS

195 No, my lord, I'll fight.

LEONTES

You will! why, happy man be's dole! My brother,
Are you so fond of your young prince as we
Do seem to be of ours?

POLIXENES

If at home, sir,
200 He's all my exercise, my mirth, my matter,
Now my sworn friend and then mine enemy,
My parasite, my soldier, statesman, all:
He makes a July's day short as December,
And with his varying childness cures in me
205 Thoughts that would thick my blood.

LEONTES

So stands this squire
Officed with me: we two will walk, my lord,
And leave you to your graver steps. Hermione,
How thou lovest us, show in our brother's welcome;
210 Let what is dear in Sicily be cheap:

friend, will you accept something relatively worthless in exchange for something valuable?

MAMILLIUS

No, my lord, I'll fight.

LEONTES

You will! May happiness be his fortune! My brother, are you as fond of your young prince as I seem to be of mine?

POLIXENES

When I'm home, sir, he's my occupation, my laughter, all I worry about. First he's my sworn friend, then he's an enemy, a freeloader, a soldier, and a statesman, all together. He makes a long summer's day feel as short as a day in the middle of winter. And his childish ways keep me from gloomy thoughts.

LEONTES

This young squire here does the same for me. He and I will walk along, my lord, and leave you to your slower steps. Hermione, show how much you love us in how you entertain our brother. Give him whatever he wants, no matter how expensive. After you and my young son, he's dearest to me.

Next to thyself and my young rover, he's
Apparent to my heart.

HERMIONE

If you would seek us,
We are yours i' the garden: shall's attend you there?

LEONTES

215 To your own bents dispose you: you'll be found,
Be you beneath the sky.

Aside

I am angling now,
Though you perceive me not how I give line.

220 Go to, go to!
How she holds up the neb, the bill to him!
And arms her with the boldness of a wife
To her allowing husband!

Exeunt POLIXENES, HERMIONE, and Attendants

Gone already!
225 Inch-thick, knee-deep, o'er head and
ears a fork'd one!
Go, play, boy, play: thy mother plays, and I
Play too, but so disgraced a part, whose issue
Will hiss me to my grave: contempt and clamour
230 Will be my knell. Go, play, boy, play.

HERMIONE

If you are looking for us, we'll be in the garden. Should we wait
for you there?

LEONTES

Do whatever pleases you. I'll find you, if you are anywhere
under the sky.

(aside)

I'm fishing now, though no one sees how I set the line. Go on!
Look how she holds up her nose and mouth to him, as if to be
kissed. She acts with the boldness of a wife toward her
husband!

POLIXENES, HERMIONE, and attendants exit.

Gone already! A little here, knee deep there, then grow horns
over my head and behind my ears! Go, boy, play. Your mother
plays around, and I play a role, though my part is one of a
disgrace, with the result that I'll be hissed on my way to the
grave, with contempt as my funeral bells. Go play, boy, play.
Unless I'm mistaken, there have been cuckolds before. Even
now, as I speak, there is many a man who may hold his wife by

There have been,
Or I am much deceived, cuckolds ere now;
And many a man there is, even at this present,
Now while I speak this, holds his wife by the arm,
235 That little thinks she has been sluiced in's absence
And his pond fish'd by his next neighbour, by
Sir Smile, his neighbour: nay, there's comfort in't
Whiles other men have gates and those gates open'd,
As mine, against their will. Should all despair
240 That have revolted wives, the tenth of mankind
Would hang themselves. Physic for't there is none:
It is a bawdy planet, that will strike
Where 'tis predominant; and 'tis powerful, think it,
From east, west, north and south: be it concluded,
245 No barricado for a belly; know't;
It will let in and out the enemy
With bag and baggage: many thousand on's
Have the disease, and feel't not. How now, boy!

MAMILLIUS

I am like you, they say.

LEONTES

250 Why that's some comfort. What, Camillo there?

CAMILLO

Ay, my good lord.

the arm without suspecting that she has been unfaithful in his absence, and his neighbor, call him Sir Smile, has been with the woman that belongs to him. There's comfort in the fact that other men have had wives and those wives have been unfaithful, as mine has, against their will. If everyone whose wife strayed were to despair, a tenth of mankind would hang themselves. There's no remedy for it, since it is a world full of lust, from east to west and north and south. There's no barricade you can build around the womb, and one's enemy will go in and out as he pleases. Thousands of us have the disease and don't know it. What now, boy?

MAMILLIUS

I look like you, they say.

LEONTES

That's some comfort. Camillo, are you there?

CAMILLO

Yes, my good lord.

LEONTES

Go play, Mamillius; thou'rt an honest man.

Exit MAMILLIUS

Camillo, this great sir will yet stay longer.

CAMILLO

You had much ado to make his anchor hold:

255 When you cast out, it still came home.

LEONTES

Didst note it?

CAMILLO

He would not stay at your petitions: made

His business more material.

LEONTES

Didst perceive it?

260 [Aside] They're here with me already, whispering, rounding

'Sicilia is a so-forth: 'tis far gone,

When I shall gust it last. How came't, Camillo,

That he did stay?

CAMILLO

At the good queen's entreaty.

LEONTES**LEONTES**

Go play, Mamillius, that's a good boy.

MAMILLIUS exits.

Camillo, my friend Polixenes will stay longer.

CAMILLO

You had to go to great lengths to make him stay. No matter what you said, he insisted he would leave.

LEONTES

Did you see it?

CAMILLO

He wouldn't heed your pleas, but said his business was too important.

LEONTES

You saw it?

(aside) People know my secret already, and they are whispering and murmuring, "Sicilia is a such-and-such." It is already so well known while I am just figuring it out. Camillo, how did it happen that he stayed?

CAMILLO

Because the good queen asked him.

LEONTES

265 At the queen's be't: 'good' should be pertinent
But, so it is, it is not. Was this taken
By any understanding pate but thine?
For thy conceit is soaking, will draw in
More than the common blocks: not noted, is't.
270 But of the finer natures? by some severals
Of head-piece extraordinary? lower messes
Perchance are to this business purblind? say.

CAMILLO

Business, my lord? I think most understand
Bohemia stays here longer.

LEONTES

275 Ha?

CAMILLO

Stays here longer.

LEONTES

Ay, but why?

CAMILLO

To satisfy your highness and the entreaties
Of our most gracious mistress.

LEONTES

280 Satisfy!

True, because of the queen. "Good" should be an appropriate description, but under the circumstances it isn't. Did anyone else see that it happened this way? Since you notice more than the common idiots, perhaps it is only seen by those intelligent enough, the ones with extraordinary intellects? Perhaps the commoners are blind to what just happened? Tell me.

CAMILLO

What happened, my lord? I think almost everyone understands that Polixenes will stay here longer.

LEONTES

What?

CAMILLO

He will stay here longer.

LEONTES

But why?

CAMILLO

To satisfy your highness and the request of our most gracious mistress.

LEONTES

The entreaties of your mistress! satisfy!
Let that suffice. I have trusted thee, Camillo,
With all the nearest things to my heart, as well
My chamber-councils, wherein, priest-like, thou
285 Hast cleansed my bosom, I from thee departed
Thy penitent reform'd: but we have been
Deceived in thy integrity, deceived
In that which seems so.

CAMILLO

Be it forbid, my lord!

LEONTES

290 To bide upon't, thou art not honest, or,
If thou inclinest that way, thou art a coward,
Which hoxes honesty behind, restraining
From course required; or else thou must be counted
A servant grafted in my serious trust
295 And therein negligent; or else a fool
That seest a game play'd home, the rich stake drawn,
And takest it all for jest.

CAMILLO

My gracious lord,
I may be negligent, foolish and fearful;
300 In every one of these no man is free,
But that his negligence, his folly, fear,

Satisfy! The request of your mistress! Satisfy her! That's enough. I have trusted you, Camillo, with everything dearest to my heart, as well as confessed to you in my chamber. I parted from you there feeling repentant and reformed, as though departing from a visit to a priest. But now I feel that I have been deceived by what appears to be your integrity.

CAMILLO

Forbid the thought, my lord!

LEONTES

Now that I think of it, you are either dishonest or, if you are honest, you are a coward, hiding your honesty for fear of having to follow the correct course of action. Perhaps you neglect your duties as a most trusted servant, or perhaps you are a fool who sees the high stakes of a game but thinks it's all a joke.

CAMILLO

My gracious lord, I may be negligent, foolish, and cowardly. No man is free from all those vices, and they will occasionally turn up. In your affairs, my lord, if I was ever deliberately negligent, it was because of my foolishness. If I ever pretended to be a

Among the infinite doings of the world,
Sometime puts forth. In your affairs, my lord,
If ever I were wilful-negligent,
305 It was my folly; if industriously
I play'd the fool, it was my negligence,
Not weighing well the end; if ever fearful
To do a thing, where I the issue doubted,
Where of the execution did cry out
310 Against the non-performance, 'twas a fear
Which oft infects the wisest: these, my lord,
Are such allow'd infirmities that honesty
Is never free of. But, beseech your grace,
Be plainer with me; let me know my trespass
315 By its own visage: if I then deny it,
'Tis none of mine.

LEONTES

Ha' not you seen, Camillo,—
But that's past doubt, you have, or your eye-glass
Is thicker than a cuckold's horn,—or heard,—
320 For to a vision so apparent rumour
Cannot be mute,—or thought,—for cogitation
Resides not in that man that does not think,—
My wife is slippery? If thou wilt confess,
Or else be impudently negative,
325 To have nor eyes nor ears nor thought, then say

fool, it was because of my neglectfulness and my inability to judge the consequences. If ever I was afraid to do something when I was uncertain of the outcome—and the deed was so necessary it had to be done—it was a fear that even wise men feel. My lord, these are acceptable weaknesses that honesty is always plagued by. But I beg your grace to be blunt: tell me exactly what I did wrong. Then if I deny that I did it, it truly is not my fault.

LEONTES

Haven't you seen? You have, that's not in doubt, unless you are willfully blind. Or perhaps you have heard, since rumors can't be mute in the face of something so obvious. Or maybe you have thought, since every man who thinks must have thought it. Isn't my wife deceiving me? You must confess, unless you want to shamelessly deny that you have either eyes or ears or thought, that my wife is a whore, and deserves a name as awful as any base woman deserves who sleeps with a man before she is married. Say it and affirm it.

My wife's a hobby-horse, deserves a name
As rank as any flax-wench that puts to
Before her troth-plight: say't and justify't.

CAMILLO

I would not be a stander-by to hear
330 My sovereign mistress clouded so, without
My present vengeance taken: 'shrew my heart,
You never spoke what did become you less
Than this; which to reiterate were sin
As deep as that, though true.

LEONTES

335 Is whispering nothing?
Is leaning cheek to cheek? is meeting noses?
Kissing with inside lip? stopping the career
Of laughing with a sigh?—a note infallible
Of breaking honesty—horsing foot on foot?
340 Skulking in corners? wishing clocks more swift?
Hours, minutes? noon, midnight? and all eyes
Blind with the pin and web but theirs, theirs only,
That would unseen be wicked? is this nothing?
Why, then the world and all that's in't is nothing;
345 The covering sky is nothing; Bohemia nothing;
My wife is nothing; nor nothing have these nothings,
If this be nothing.

CAMILLO

I wouldn't stand by and listen to my mistress be slandered like
that without taking revenge immediately. Curse my heart, I've
never heard you speak in a way that suited you less. To say it
again would be as sinful as the crime you are describing, even
if it was true.

LEONTES

Is it nothing that they whisper together? Lean their cheeks
together? Or touch noses? Or kisses? Or interrupt their
laughter with sighs, a certain sign that they're in love? Or
playing footsie? Or lurking in corners? Or wishing that time
would run faster, that hours were minutes and noon midnight,
and that all eyes were blind with cataracts but theirs, so that
they can be wicked without being seen? Is this nothing? Why,
then the world and everything in it is nothing. The sky is
nothing, Polixenes is nothing, my wife is nothing, and they have
nothing, if this is nothing.

CAMILLO

Good my lord, be cured
Of this diseased opinion, and betimes;
350 For 'tis most dangerous.

LEONTES

Say it be, 'tis true.

CAMILLO

No, no, my lord.

LEONTES

It is; you lie, you lie:
I say thou liest, Camillo, and I hate thee,
355 Pronounce thee a gross lout, a mindless slave,
Or else a hovering temporizer, that
Canst with thine eyes at once see good and evil,
Inclining to them both: were my wife's liver
Infected as her life, she would not live
360 The running of one glass.

CAMILLO

Who does infect her?

LEONTES

Why, he that wears her like a medal, hanging
About his neck, Bohemia: who, if I
Had servants true about me, that bare eyes

CAMILLO

My lord, let go of this terrible opinion, and quickly, because it is dangerous.

LEONTES

Say it is, but it is true.

CAMILLO

No, no, my lord.

LEONTES

It is true, and you lie. I say you lie, Camillo, and I hate you. I call you a horrible oaf, a mindless slave, or else nervous and wishy-washy, who's able to see good and evil in the same thing and is inclined to both. If my wife were as diseased physically as she is morally, she wouldn't survive an hour.

CAMILLO

Who corrupts her?

LEONTES

The one who wears her like a medal around his neck: Polixenes. If I had loyal servants, who saw my honor as their business and personal gain, they would act to prevent any

365 To see alike mine honour as their profits,
Their own particular thrifts, they would do that
Which should undo more doing: ay, and thou,
His cupbearer,—whom I from meaner form
Have benched and reared to worship, who mayst see
370 Plainly as heaven sees earth and earth sees heaven,
How I am galled,—mightst bespice a cup,
To give mine enemy a lasting wink;
Which draught to me were cordial.

CAMILLO

Sir, my lord,
375 I could do this, and that with no rash potion,
But with a lingering dram that should not work
Maliciously like poison: but I cannot
Believe this crack to be in my dread mistress,
So sovereignly being honourable.
380 I have loved thee,—

LEONTES

Make that thy question, and go rot!
Dost think I am so muddy, so unsettled,
To appoint myself in this vexation, sully
The purity and whiteness of my sheets,
385 Which to preserve is sleep, which being spotted
Is goads, thorns, nettles, tails of wasps,
Give scandal to the blood o' the prince my son,

more of this affair. And you, his [cupbearer](#) —I brought you up from a low rank, have given you some authority, and brought you up to respectability. You should be able to see plainly how upset I am. You could poison his drink to kill him, which would make me feel better.

CAMILLO

My lord, I could do it with a tiny amount of a slow-working potion that isn't as violent as poison. But I can't believe that my noble mistress would be so flawed, having shown herself always so honorable. I have loved you—

LEONTES

Make that your problem, and go to hell! Do you think I am so dull-witted, so unsettled, that I would give myself all this trouble and dirty up the pure, clean whiteness of my bed? To preserve that purity gives one peace of mind, but if it's tainted it hurts like thorns, nettles, and wasp stings. Do you think I would raise doubt about the legitimacy of my son, who I

Who I do think is mine and love as mine,
Without ripe moving to't? Would I do this?

390 Could man so blench?

CAMILLO

I must believe you, sir:
I do; and will fetch off Bohemia for't;
Provided that, when he's removed, your highness
Will take again your queen as yours at first,
395 Even for your son's sake; and thereby for sealing
The injury of tongues in courts and kingdoms
Known and allied to yours.

LEONTES

Thou dost advise me
Even so as I mine own course have set down:
400 I'll give no blemish to her honour, none.

CAMILLO

My lord,
Go then; and with a countenance as clear
As friendship wears at feasts, keep with Bohemia
And with your queen. I am his cupbearer:
405 If from me he have wholesome beverage,
Account me not your servant.

LEONTES

This is all:

believe is mine and who I love, without compelling reasons?
Would I do this? Could I turn aside from this?

CAMILLO

I must believe you sir, and I do. I'll take care of Polixenes for you, as long as once he's gone you will again treat your wife as your own, at least for your son's sake. That way you will silence all the harmful rumors that might spread to other kingdoms and courts that are allied with you.

LEONTES

You advise me to do what I already determined I would do. I won't tarnish her reputation in any way.

CAMILLO

My lord, then go, and with a face as open and friendly as if you were at a party, keep company with Polixenes and your queen. I am his cupbearer, and I will give him the potion, or no longer think of me as your servant.

LEONTES

Do't and thou hast the one half of my heart;
Do't not, thou split'st thine own.

CAMILLO

410 I'll do't, my lord.

LEONTES

I will seem friendly, as thou hast advised me.

Exit

CAMILLO

O miserable lady! But, for me,
What case stand I in? I must be the poisoner
Of good Polixenes; and my ground to do't
415 Is the obedience to a master, one
Who in rebellion with himself will have
All that are his so too. To do this deed,
Promotion follows. If I could find example
Of thousands that had struck anointed kings
420 And flourish'd after, I'd not do't; but since
Nor brass nor stone nor parchment bears not one,
Let villany itself forswear't. I must
Forsake the court: to do't, or no, is certain
To me a break-neck. Happy star, reign now!
425 Here comes Bohemia.

Re-enter POLIXENES

Do this and you will have one half of my heart. Don't do it and
your own will be split.

CAMILLO

I'll do it, my lord.

LEONTES

I'll act friendly, as you've advised me.

LEONTES exits.

CAMILLO

Oh, unfortunate lady! What have I gotten into? I have to poison
good Polixenes, only because I would obey a master who is
mad and wants all his servants to be mad, too. If I do this, I'll be
promoted. But even if I could find one example of someone
who had struck down a chosen king and prospered, I wouldn't
do it. Since there isn't such an example recorded anywhere in
history, even a villain wouldn't do it. I have to leave the court,
since whether I do it or not I'm certain to be hanged. Oh, good!
Here comes Polixenes.

POLIXENES reenters.

POLIXENES

This is strange: methinks
My favour here begins to warp. Not speak?
Good day, Camillo.

CAMILLO

Hail, most royal sir!

POLIXENES

430 What is the news i' the court?

CAMILLO

None rare, my lord.

POLIXENES

The king hath on him such a countenance
As he had lost some province and a region
Loved as he loves himself: even now I met him
435 With customary compliment; when he,
Wafting his eyes to the contrary and falling
A lip of much contempt, speeds from me and
So leaves me to consider what is breeding
That changeth thus his manners.

CAMILLO

440 I dare not know, my lord.

POLIXENES**POLIXENES**

This is odd. I think I'm losing favor here. He wouldn't speak?
Good day Camillo.

CAMILLO

Hello, most royal sir!

POLIXENES

What is the news of the court?

CAMILLO

Nothing unusual, my lord.

POLIXENES

The king looked as though he had lost a part of his kingdom as dear to him as himself. Just now I met him with the usual cordial greetings, but turning his eyes away and sneering in contempt, he walked away from me, leaving me to wonder what happened to make him act this way.

CAMILLO

I don't dare know, my lord.

POLIXENES

How! dare not! do not. Do you know, and dare not?
Be intelligent to me: 'tis thereabouts;
For, to yourself, what you do know, you must.
And cannot say, you dare not. Good Camillo,
445 Your changed complexions are to me a mirror
Which shows me mine changed too; for I must be
A party in this alteration, finding
Myself thus alter'd with 't.

CAMILLO

There is a sickness
450 Which puts some of us in distemper, but
I cannot name the disease; and it is caught
Of you that yet are well.

POLIXENES

How! caught of me!
Make me not sighted like the basilisk:
455 I have look'd on thousands, who have sped the better
By my regard, but kill'd none so. Camillo,—
As you are certainly a gentleman, thereto
Clerk-like experienced, which no less adorns
Our gentry than our parents' noble names,
460 In whose success we are gentle,—I beseech you,
If you know aught which does behove my knowledge
Thereof to be inform'd, imprison't not
In ignorant concealment.

What? You don't dare, or you don't know? Do you know, but
don't dare? It must be something of the sort, because if you
know something for certain, you can't deny it. Good Camillo,
your face is like a mirror to me, in which your changed
expression shows my own. I must be responsible in some way
for Leontes's altered behavior, since I'm changed, too.

CAMILLO

There is an illness that makes some of us mad, but I can't say
exactly what it is. But even though you are still well, you have
caught it, too.

POLIXENES

What do you mean, I've caught it, too? Don't tell me I have the
deadly stare of the [basilisk](#). I've looked at thousands of people
who have been better off by having been seen by me, but I've
never killed anyone that way. Camillo, I know you are a
gentleman because you are educated, and that makes one a
gentleman as much as having parents who are nobles. I beg
you, if you know something I should know, please don't
pretend not to know and keep it from me.

CAMILLO

I may not answer.

POLIXENES

465 A sickness caught of me, and yet I well!

I must be answer'd. Dost thou hear, Camillo,

I conjure thee, by all the parts of man

Which honour does acknowledge, whereof the least

Is not this suit of mine, that thou declare

470 What incidency thou dost guess of harm

Is creeping toward me; how far off, how near;

Which way to be prevented, if to be;

If not, how best to bear it.

CAMILLO

Sir, I will tell you;

475 Since I am charged in honour and by him

That I think honourable: therefore mark my counsel,

Which must be even as swiftly follow'd as

I mean to utter it, or both yourself and me

Cry lost, and so good night!

POLIXENES

480 On, good Camillo.

CAMILLO

I am appointed him to murder you.

CAMILLO

I can't tell you.

POLIXENES

I've caught an illness, even though I am well! You have to tell me. Do you hear me, Camillo? I appeal to you by all the traits in a man that respond to honor, including this request itself. Tell me why you think I'm in danger, how close the danger is, and how I might prevent it. Or if I can't, how I might best endure it.

CAMILLO

Sir, I will tell you, since I am obligated by my honor and since you're an honorable man. Therefore listen to my advice, which must be followed immediately, or both you and I will be doomed and will meet a bad end.

POLIXENES

Go ahead, good Camillo.

CAMILLO

I have been appointed by him to murder you.

POLIXENES

By whom, Camillo?

CAMILLO

By the king.

POLIXENES

For what?

CAMILLO

485 He thinks, nay, with all confidence he swears,
As he had seen't or been an instrument
To vice you to't, that you have touch'd his queen
Forbiddenly.

POLIXENES

O, then my best blood turn
490 To an infected jelly and my name
Be yoked with his that did betray the Best!
Turn then my freshest reputation to
A savour that may strike the dullest nostril
Where I arrive, and my approach be shunn'd,
495 Nay, hated too, worse than the great'st infection
That e'er was heard or read!

CAMILLO

Swear his thought over
By each particular star in heaven and

POLIXENES

By whom, Camillo?

CAMILLO

By the king.

POLIXENES

Why?

CAMILLO

He thinks, no, he swears with as much confidence as if he had seen it or even helped you do it, that you have touched his queen in a forbidden way.

POLIXENES

If I did, may my blood turn to poison and my name be as despised as Judas's! Let my reputation rot and stink so badly that even the least sensitive nose will be overwhelmed, and when I approach they'll turn their backs! Let me be hated more than the worst disease that has ever been heard of!

CAMILLO

No matter how vehemently you swear his suspicions aren't true, you are as likely to keep the sea from obeying the moon

By all their influences, you may as well
500 Forbid the sea for to obey the moon
As or by oath remove or counsel shake
The fabric of his folly, whose foundation
Is piled upon his faith and will continue
The standing of his body.

POLIXENES

505 How should this grow?

CAMILLO

I know not: but I am sure 'tis safer to
Avoid what's grown than question how 'tis born.
If therefore you dare trust my honesty,
That lies enclosed in this trunk which you
510 Shall bear along impawn'd, away to-night!
Your followers I will whisper to the business,
And will by twos and threes at several posterns
Clear them o' the city. For myself, I'll put
My fortunes to your service, which are here
515 By this discovery lost. Be not uncertain;
For, by the honour of my parents, I
Have utter'd truth: which if you seek to prove,
I dare not stand by; nor shall you be safer
Than one condemn'd by the king's own mouth, thereon
520 His execution sworn.

as you are to change his mind. Neither will oaths or wise words disturb the foundation of his foolish notion, which is built on his faith and will last for the rest of his life.

POLIXENES

How did this come about?

CAMILLO

I don't know, but I'm sure it's safer to avoid his jealousy than to wonder why he feels that way. So if you trust my honesty, which you shall take as my pledge, then leave tonight! I'll quietly let your followers know and get them out of the back gates of the city two or three at a time. As for me, I've lost everything I have by revealing this to you, but I'll put what I have to your service. Don't be uncertain. By the honor of my parents, I'm telling the truth. If you try to prove it, I'll deny I ever said it. You won't be any safer than a man whom the king himself has condemned to be executed.

POLIXENES

I do believe thee:
I saw his heart in 's face. Give me thy hand:
Be pilot to me and thy places shall
Still neighbour mine. My ships are ready and
525 My people did expect my hence departure

Two days ago. This jealousy
Is for a precious creature: as she's rare,
Must it be great, and as his person's mighty,
Must it be violent, and as he does conceive

530 He is dishonour'd by a man which ever
Profess'd to him, why, his revenges must
In that be made more bitter. Fear o'ershades me:
Good expedition be my friend, and comfort
The gracious queen, part of his theme, but nothing
535 Of his ill-ta'en suspicion! Come, Camillo;
I will respect thee as a father if
Thou bear'st my life off hence: let us avoid.

CAMILLO

It is in mine authority to command
The keys of all the posterns: please your highness
540 To take the urgent hour. Come, sir, away.

Exeunt.

POLIXENES

I do believe you. I saw what he felt in his face. Give me your hand. Guide me and our fortunes will remain together. My ships are ready, and my people expected me to depart two days ago. He's jealous over a very precious woman, and so his jealousy will be as great as she is rare, and as violent as he is powerful. And since he thinks that a man who always professed friendship has deceived him, his revenge will be even more bitter. I'm overwhelmed with fear. May my swift exit help me, and may it comfort the good queen, who has no responsibility for his unjustified suspicions. Come, Camillo. I will respect you like a father if you take me away safely. Let us leave.

CAMILLO

I have the authority to pass through all the back gates of the city. Let's go soon. Come, sir, let's leave.

They exit.

Act 2 Scene 1

A room in LEONTES's palace.

Enter **HERMIONE**, **MAMILLIUS**, and *Ladies*

HERMIONE

Take the boy to you: he so troubles me,
'Tis past enduring.

FIRST LADY

Come, my gracious lord,
Shall I be your playfellow?

MAMILLIUS

5 No, I'll none of you.

FIRST LADY

Why, my sweet lord?

MAMILLIUS

You'll kiss me hard and speak to me as if
I were a baby still. I love you better.

SECOND LADY

And why so, my lord?

MAMILLIUS

10 Not for because
Your brows are blacker; yet black brows, they say,
Become some women best, so that there be not

A room in LEONTES's palace.

HERMIONE, **MAMILLIUS**, and *Ladies enter.*

HERMIONE

Take the boy. He is such a pest I can't take it anymore.

FIRST LADY

Come with me, my gracious lord. Shall I play with you?

MAMILLIUS

No, I don't want anything to do with you.

FIRST LADY

Why, my sweet lord?

MAMILLIUS

You'll kiss me too hard and talk baby talk to me. (*to Second Lady*) I love you better.

SECOND LADY

Why is that, my lord?

MAMILLIUS

Not because your eyebrows are blacker, though they say that
black eyebrows suit some women best, as long as there isn't

Too much hair there, but in a semicircle
Or a half-moon made with a pen.

SECOND LADY

15 Who taught you this?

MAMILLIUS

I learnt it out of women's faces. Pray now
What colour are your eyebrows?

FIRST LADY

Blue, my lord.

MAMILLIUS

Nay, that's a mock: I have seen a lady's nose
20 That has been blue, but not her eyebrows.

FIRST LADY

Hark ye;
The queen your mother rounds apace: we shall
Present our services to a fine new prince
One of these days; and then you'd wanton with us,
25 If we would have you.

SECOND LADY

She is spread of late
Into a goodly bulk: good time encounter her!

HERMIONE

too much hair and they are shaped like a semicircle, or drawn like a half-moon.

SECOND LADY

Who taught you that?

MAMILLIUS

I learned it from looking at women's faces. Tell me, what color are your eyebrows?

FIRST LADY

Blue, my lord.

MAMILLIUS

No, you're joking. I've seen a lady's nose that was blue, but not her eyebrows.

FIRST LADY

Listen: your mother the queen is getting rounder by the day.
We'll be serving a fine new prince one day soon, and then
you'll want to play with us, if we'll let you.

SECOND LADY

She has become quite big lately. May it come quickly for her!

HERMIONE

What wisdom stirs amongst you? Come, sir, now
I am for you again: pray you, sit by us,
30 And tell 's a tale.

MAMILLIUS

Merry or sad shall't be?

HERMIONE

As merry as you will.

MAMILLIUS

A sad tale's best for winter: I have one
Of sprites and goblins.

HERMIONE

35 Let's have that, good sir.
Come on, sit down: come on, and do your best
To fright me with your sprites; you're powerful at it.

MAMILLIUS

There was a man—

HERMIONE

Nay, come, sit down; then on.

MAMILLIUS

40 Dwelt by a churchyard: I will tell it softly;
Yond crickets shall not hear it.

What are you talking about now? Come, sir, now I'm ready for
you again. Sit next to me, and tell me a story.

MAMILLIUS

Should it be happy or serious?

HERMIONE

As happy as you'd like.

MAMILLIUS

A sad story is best for the winter. I have one about fairies and
goblins.

HERMIONE

Let's hear it, good sir. Come on, sit down, and try to frighten me
with your fairies. You're good at it.

MAMILLIUS

There was a man—

HERMIONE

No, sit down, and then tell me.

MAMILLIUS

—who lived by a churchyard. I'll tell it quietly, so those other
ladies won't hear it.

HERMIONE

Come on, then,
And give't me in mine ear.

Enter LEONTES, with ANTIGONUS, Lords and others

LEONTES

Was he met there? his train? Camillo with him?

FIRST LORD

45 Behind the tuft of pines I met them; never
Saw I men scour so on their way: I eyed them
Even to their ships.

LEONTES

How blest am I
In my just censure, in my true opinion!
50 Alack, for lesser knowledge! how accursed
In being so blest! There may be in the cup
A spider steep'd, and one may drink, depart,
And yet partake no venom, for his knowledge
Is not infected: but if one present
55 The abhorr'd ingredient to his eye, make known
How he hath drunk, he cracks his gorge, his sides,
With violent hefts. I have drunk,
and seen the spider.
Camillo was his help in this, his pander:

HERMIONE

Come on then, and tell me in my ear.

LEONTES, ANTIGONUS, Lords, and others enter.

HERMIONE and her Ladies exit, surrounded by guards.

LEONTES

Did his men meet him there? Camillo was with him?

FIRST LORD

I ran across them behind the pine grove. I've never seen men move so quickly along. I saw them go all the way to their ships.

LEONTES

I'm so blessed to have such accurate judgment, and such a correct opinion! Alas, if only I knew less! I'm cursed to be so blessed! There may be a spider in your cup, and if you drink without realizing it, you aren't hurt. But if you see the spider and know you have drunk it, you will wretch and heave violently. I have drunk from the cup, and I know that the spider was in it. Camillo helped him and acted as his pimp. There is a plot to kill me and take my place as king. Everything that I suspected is true. That traitorous villain I employed actually worked for Polixenes. He has discovered my plan, and I'm still tormented, a toy for them to play with. How were the gates so easily opened?

60 There is a plot against my life, my crown;
All's true that is mistrusted: that false villain
Whom I employ'd was pre-employ'd by him:
He has discover'd my design, and I
Remain a pinch'd thing; yea, a very trick
65 For them to play at will. How came the posterns
So easily open?

FIRST LORD

By his great authority;
Which often hath no less prevail'd than so
On your command.

LEONTES

70 I know't too well.
Give me the boy: I am glad you did not nurse him:
Though he does bear some signs of me, yet you
Have too much blood in him.

HERMIONE

What is this? sport?

LEONTES

75 Bear the boy hence; he shall not come about her;
Away with him! and let her sport herself
With that she's big with; for 'tis Polixenes
Has made thee swell thus.

FIRST LORD

By Camillo's authority, which he's often wielded by your command.

LEONTES

I know it too well. Give me the boy. I am glad you didn't breastfeed him. He may look a bit like me, but he looks too much like you.

HERMIONE

What is this, a joke?

LEONTES

Take the boy away. He won't be near her anymore. Take him away! Let her play with the one she's pregnant with now, since it is Polixenes's child.

HERMIONE

But I'ld say he had not,
80 And I'll be sworn you would believe my saying,
Howe'er you lean to the nayward.

LEONTES

You, my lords,
Look on her, mark her well; be but about
To say 'she is a goodly lady,' and
85 The justice of your hearts will thereto add
'Tis pity she's not honest, honourable.'
Praise her but for this her without-door form,
Which on my faith deserves high speech, and straight
The shrug, the hum or ha, these petty brands
90 That calumny doth use—O, I am out—
That mercy does, for calumny will sear
Virtue itself: these shrugs, these hums and ha's,
When you have said 'she's goodly,' come between
Ere you can say 'she's honest,' but be 't known,
95 From him that has most cause to grieve it should be,
She's an adulteress.

HERMIONE

Should a villain say so,
The most replenish'd villain in the world,
He were as much more villain: you, my lord,
100 Do but mistake.

HERMIONE

I'll say it is not and will swear that you should believe me,
whatever you think to the contrary.

LEONTES

My lords, look at her closely. If you are tempted to say, "She is a fine lady," the wisdom of your hearts will add, "A shame that she isn't virtuous or honorable." Praise her for anything but her outward form, which does deserve praise, and immediately you must shrug or mutter to yourself. Those are the expressions that slander uses—no, I'm wrong—that mercy uses, because slander only attacks someone who is virtuous. These shrugs and mutterings after you say, "She's goodly" interrupt you before you can say, "She's virtuous." Listen to the man who has the most reason to be upset about it: she's an adulteress.

HERMIONE

If a villain said so, the worst in the world, saying so would make him even more of a villain. My lord, you are mistaken.

LEONTES

You have mistook, my lady,
Polixenes for Leontes: O thou thing!
Which I'll not call a creature of thy place,
Lest barbarism, making me the precedent,
105 Should a like language use to all degrees
And mannerly distinguishment leave out
Betwixt the prince and beggar: I have said
She's an adulteress; I have said with whom:
More, she's a traitor and Camillo is
110 A fedenary with her, and one that knows
What she should shame to know herself
But with her most vile principal, that she's
A bed-swerver, even as bad as those
That vulgars give bold'st titles, ay, and privy
115 To this their late escape.

HERMIONE

No, by my life.
Privy to none of this. How will this grieve you,
When you shall come to clearer knowledge, that
You thus have publish'd me! Gentle my lord,
120 You scarce can right me throughly then to say
You did mistake.

LEONTES

LEONTES

My lady, you have mistaken Polixenes for me. Oh, you creature!
I won't give you the title that goes with your high social status,
or I'll set a precedent allowing rudeness to use the same
names for everyone and not distinguish between a prince and
a beggar. I have said she is an adulteress, and I have said with
whom. Even more than that, she is a traitor, and she is in
league with Camillo, who knows what she should be ashamed
of: that she's an adulteress. She's as bad as the women that
common people give the coarsest name to, and she knew that
they were escaping.

HERMIONE

No, I swear on my life I knew none of this. You'll regret publicly
shaming me like this when you realize you are wrong! My
gentle lord, you can make it all right again by saying you made
a mistake.

LEONTES

No; if I mistake
In those foundations which I build upon,
The centre is not big enough to bear
125 A school-boy's top. Away with her! to prison!
He who shall speak for her is afar off guilty
But that he speaks.

HERMIONE

There's some ill planet reigns:
I must be patient till the heavens look
130 With an aspect more favourable. Good my lords,
I am not prone to weeping, as our sex
Commonly are; the want of which vain dew
Perchance shall dry your pities: but I have
That honourable grief lodged here which burns
135 Worse than tears drown: beseech you all, my lords,
With thoughts so qualified as your charities
Shall best instruct you, measure me; and so
The king's will be perform'd!

LEONTES

Shall I be heard?

HERMIONE

140 Who is't that goes with me? Beseech your highness,
My women may be with me; for you see
My plight requires it. Do not weep, good fools;

No. If I am wrong about this, then the Earth isn't big enough to hold a schoolboy's [top](#). Take her to prison! Anyone who would defend her is indirectly as guilty as she is, just by speaking.

HERMIONE

The stars must be aligned in a way that is making everyone mad! I must be patient until their positions change. My good lords, I don't cry as much as other women do, which might make you think I'm not deserving of pity. But my honorable grief burns more fiercely than tears can extinguish. I beg you all, my lords, judge me in as measured a manner as your sense of charity will allow. And so carry out the king's will!

LEONTES

Will I be obeyed?

HERMIONE

Who will go with me? Your highness, I beg that my women might go with me, since I need help in my condition. Don't cry, my dear ones. There's no reason to. If you ever know that your

There is no cause: when you shall know your mistress
Has deserved prison, then abound in tears

145 As I come out: this action I now go on
Is for my better grace. Adieu, my lord:
I never wish'd to see you sorry; now
I trust I shall. My women, come; you have leave.

LEONTES

Go, do our bidding; hence!

150 Exit HERMIONE, guarded; with Ladies

FIRST LORD

Beseech your highness, call the queen again.

ANTIGONUS

Be certain what you do, sir, lest your justice
Prove violence; in the which three great ones suffer,
Yourself, your queen, your son.

FIRST LORD

155 For her, my lord,
I dare my life lay down and will do't, sir,
Please you to accept it, that the queen is spotless
I' the eyes of heaven and to you; I mean,
In this which you accuse her.

ANTIGONUS

160 If it prove

mistress is guilty and deserves to be in prison, then you can cry when I come out. But since I'm innocent, this trial I'm enduring will make me more virtuous. Goodbye, my lord. I never wanted to see you feeling sorry, but now I know I will. My women, come, you have permission.

LEONTES

Go on, do as I say!

FIRST LORD

Your highness, I beg you, call the queen back.

ANTIGONUS

Be sure of what you are doing, sir, or what you think is justice might prove to be injustice, and three great people might suffer—you, your queen, and your son.

FIRST LORD

My lord, I would lay down my life for the queen in belief that she is virtuous in both the eyes of heaven and to you. She is innocent of what you accuse her of.

ANTIGONUS

She's otherwise, I'll keep my stables where
I lodge my wife; I'll go in couples with her;
Than when I feel and see her no farther trust her;
For every inch of woman in the world,

165 Ay, every dram of woman's flesh is false, If she be.

LEONTES

Hold your peaces.

FIRST LORD

Good my lord,—

ANTIGONUS

It is for you we speak, not for ourselves:
You are abused and by some putter-on
170 That will be damn'd for't; would I knew the villain,
I would land-damn him. Be she honour-flaw'd,
I have three daughters; the eldest is eleven
The second and the third, nine, and some five;
If this prove true, they'll pay for't:
175 by mine honour,
I'll geld 'em all; fourteen they shall not see,
To bring false generations: they are co-heirs;
And I had rather glib myself than they
Should not produce fair issue.

LEONTES

180 Cease; no more.

If it turns out she's unfaithful,

I'll guard my wife as vigilantly as I guard my horses , and I'll go about leashed together with her. I will only trust her when I can touch her or see her, because if the queen is lying, then every woman in the world must be a liar.

LEONTES

Be quiet.

FIRST LORD

My good lord—

ANTIGONUS

We're speaking for your sake, not our own. Some liar has abused your confidence, and he'll be damned for it. If I knew who it was, I would thrash him without pity. If the queen isn't honorable, my three daughters will pay for it, by my honor. The oldest is eleven, the next is nine and the third is about five, and I'll make them all incapable of bearing children. They'll be unable to have illegitimate children by the time they're fourteen. They are all my heirs, and I'd rather castrate myself than have them bear anything other than legitimate children.

LEONTES

You smell this business with a sense as cold
As is a dead man's nose: but I do see't and feel't
As you feel doing thus; and see withal
The instruments that feel.

ANTIGONUS

185 If it be so,
We need no grave to bury honesty:
There's not a grain of it the face to sweeten
Of the whole dungy earth.

LEONTES

What! lack I credit?

FIRST LORD

190 I had rather you did lack than I, my lord,
Upon this ground; and more it would content me
To have her honour true than your suspicion,
Be blamed for't how you might.

LEONTES

Why, what need we
195 Commune with you of this, but rather follow
Our forceful instigation? Our prerogative
Calls not your counsels, but our natural goodness
Imparts this; which if you, or stupefied
Or seeming so in skill, cannot or will not
200 Relish a truth like us, inform yourselves

Stop. Say no more. You're about as perceptive as a dead man, but I see it and feel it [as you feel this](#). And I also see the fingers that feel.

ANTIGONUS

If it is true, we don't need a grave to bury honesty, because it means that there is not a shred of it on this earth.

LEONTES

What? You don't believe me?

FIRST LORD

My lord, I would rather you be wrong than me in this instance. And I'd rather it turn out that she is honorable than that you are right, regardless of how you're blamed for it.

LEONTES

Why do I have to debate this with you, instead of just following my own strong impulse? As king I'm not required to seek your advice, though I tell you this information out of natural goodness. But if you, who are either confused or pretend to be, can't understand the truth as I do, then I don't need any more of your advice. The entire affair is in my hands.

We need no more of your advice: the matter,
The loss, the gain, the ordering on't, is all
Properly ours.

ANTIGONUS

And I wish, my liege,
205 You had only in your silent judgment tried it,
Without more overture.

LEONTES

How could that be?
Either thou art most ignorant by age,
Or thou wert born a fool. Camillo's flight,
210 Added to their familiarity,
Which was as gross as ever touch'd conjecture,
That lack'd sight only, nought for approbation
But only seeing, all other circumstances
Made up to the deed, doth push on this proceeding:
215 Yet, for a greater confirmation,
For in an act of this importance 'twere
Most piteous to be wild, I have dispatch'd in post
To sacred Delphos, to Apollo's temple,
Cleomenes and Dion, whom you know
220 Of stuff'd sufficiency: now from the oracle
They will bring all; whose spiritual counsel had,
Shall stop or spur me. Have I done well?

ANTIGONUS

My lord, I only wish you had spent more time considering your judgment, without making it public.

LEONTES

How do you mean? Either you have become a fool with age, or you were born that way. Camillo's fleeing and their intimacy, which was as obvious as any suspicion that lacked only an eyewitness to confirm it, together push this matter forward. Still, since this is a serious matter and shouldn't be handled rashly, I've sent Cleomenes and Dion to get further confirmation at Apollo's temple in Delphos. You know they are competent. They'll bring word from the oracle, and I'll heed whatever advice it gives, whether for or against my suspicion. Is that good?

FIRST LORD

Well done, my lord.

LEONTES

Though I am satisfied and need no more
225 Than what I know, yet shall the oracle
Give rest to the minds of others, such as he
Whose ignorant credulity will not
Come up to the truth. So have we thought it good
From our free person she should be confined,
230 Lest that the treachery of the two fled hence
Be left her to perform. Come, follow us;
We are to speak in public; for this business
Will raise us all.

ANTIGONUS

[Aside]

235 To laughter, as I take it,
If the good truth were known.

Exeunt

A prison.

Enter PAULINA, a Gentleman, and Attendants

PAULINA

FIRST LORD

Very good, my lord.

LEONTES

Even though I am sure that I am right, the oracle will convince everyone else, such as those who find themselves unable to accept the truth. So I have thought it a good idea to confine her and keep her away from me, so the treachery of Camillo and Polixenes is not left to her to perform. Come, follow me. I'm going to speak to the public, since this matter will incite everyone to action.

ANTIGONUS

(aside)

Incite everyone to laughter, I believe, if the truth were known.

They all exit.

Act 2 Scene 2

A prison.

PAULINA, a gentleman, and attendants enter.

PAULINA

The keeper of the prison, call to him;
let him have knowledge who I am.

Exit Gentleman

Good lady,
No court in Europe is too good for thee;
5 What dost thou then in prison?

Re-enter Gentleman, with the Gaoler

Now, good sir,
You know me, do you not?

GAOLER

For a worthy lady
And one whom much I honour.

PAULINA

10 Pray you then,
Conduct me to the queen.

GAOLER

I may not, madam:
To the contrary I have express commandment.

PAULINA

Here's ado,
15 To lock up honesty and honour from

Call the prison overseer. Tell him who I am.

The gentleman exits.

No court in Europe is good enough for you, good lady, so why are you in prison?

The gentleman re-enters, with the Jailer.

Good sir, you know me, don't you?

JAILER

I know you as a worthy woman and one I have great respect for.

PAULINA

Please, then, take me to the queen.

JAILER

I can't, madam. I have explicit orders not to.

PAULINA

Such a fuss just to keep kind visitors from seeing such an honest and honorable lady! Am I allowed to see her

The access of gentle visitors!
Is't lawful, pray you,
To see her women? any of them? Emilia?

GAOLER

So please you, madam,
20 To put apart these your attendants, I
Shall bring Emilia forth.

PAULINA

I pray now, call her.
Withdraw yourselves.

Exeunt Gentleman and Attendants

GAOLER

And, madam,
25 I must be present at your conference.

PAULINA

Well, be't so, prithee.

Exit Gaoler

Here's such ado to make no stain a stain
As passes colouring.

Re-enter Gaoler, with EMILIA

attendants? Any of them? Emilia?

JAILED

If you would please send away your attendants, I'll bring out
Emilia.

PAULINA

Please, call her. (*to her attendants*) Leave me here.
The gentleman and the attendants exit.

JAILED

Madam, I must be present while you speak with Emilia.

PAULINA

Well, if you must.

The Jailer exits.

What a great effort to make the queen guilty beyond
justification when she is actually innocent.

The Jailer re-enters, with EMILIA.

Dear gentlewoman,

30 How fares our gracious lady?

EMILIA

As well as one so great and so forlorn
May hold together: on her frights and griefs,
Which never tender lady hath born greater,
She is something before her time deliver'd.

PAULINA

35 A boy?

EMILIA

A daughter, and a goodly babe,
Lusty and like to live: the queen receives
Much comfort in't; says 'My poor prisoner,
I am innocent as you.'

PAULINA

40 I dare be sworn

These dangerous unsafe lunes i' the king,
beshrew them!
He must be told on't, and he shall: the office
Becomes a woman best; I'll take't upon me:
45 If I prove honey-mouth'd let my tongue blister
And never to my red-look'd anger be
The trumpet any more. Pray you, Emilia,
Commend my best obedience to the queen:

Dear gentlewoman, how is our gracious lady?

EMILIA

As well as can be expected for one so great and so sad.
Because of her overwhelming grief and fright, which are
greater than a kind woman has ever suffered, she has
delivered her baby prematurely.

PAULINA

A boy?

EMILIA

A strong and healthy daughter. The queen draws comfort from
the child, saying, "My poor prisoner, I am as innocent as you
are."

PAULINA

I swear that the king must give up these dangerous fits of
madness—curse them! He must be told, and I'll do it—it's a
task best suited to a woman. If I am deceitful, let my tongue
blister and never be capable of expressing my anger ever
again. Please, Emilia, tell the queen that I am her devoted
supporter, and if she'll trust me with the baby I'll show her to
the king and be her loudest advocate. Maybe he will soften up
at the sight of the child. Pure silent innocence can sometimes
convince when speech fails to do so.

If she dares trust me with her little babe,
50 I'll show't the king and undertake to be
Her advocate to the loud'st. We do not know
How he may soften at the sight o' the child:
The silence often of pure innocence
Persuades when speaking fails.

EMILIA

55 Most worthy madam,
Your honour and your goodness is so evident
That your free undertaking cannot miss
A thriving issue: there is no lady living
So meet for this great errand. Please your ladyship
60 To visit the next room, I'll presently
Acquaint the queen of your most noble offer;
Who but to-day hammer'd of this design,
But durst not tempt a minister of honour,
Lest she should be denied.

PAULINA

65 Tell her, Emilia.
I'll use that tongue I have: if wit flow from't
As boldness from my bosom, let 't not be doubted
I shall do good.

EMILIA

Now be you blest for it!

EMILIA

Worthy madam, you are so obviously honorable and good that your generous mission cannot fail to have a positive outcome. There is no lady living more suitable for this great errand. If you'll make your way to the next room, I'll tell the queen of your noble offer. Just today she had come up with a similar plan, but was afraid to approach any noble person, fearing she'd be rejected.

PAULINA

Emilia, tell her that I'll speak as well as I can. If I have as much intelligence as I have courage, don't doubt that I'll do some good.

EMILIA

Bless you for it! I'll go to the queen. Please, come closer.

70 I'll to the queen: please you,
come something nearer.

GAOLER

Madam, if't please the queen to send the babe,
I know not what I shall incur to pass it,
Having no warrant.

PAULINA

75 You need not fear it, sir:
This child was prisoner to the womb and is
By law and process of great nature thence
Freed and enfranchised, not a party to
The anger of the king nor guilty of,
80 If any be, the trespass of the queen.

GAOLER

I do believe it.

PAULINA

Do not you fear: upon mine honour,
I will stand betwixt you and danger.

Exeunt

A room in LEONTES' palace.

JAILER

Madam, if the queen wants to send the baby, I don't know how I'll be punished for allowing it, since I don't have any official approval.

PAULINA

Don't worry, sir. The child was a prisoner of the womb, and now by natural law she is free from it. She's not part of the king's anger, or guilty of any trespass of the queen, if any even exists.

JAILER

I believe it.

PAULINA

Don't worry. On my honor, I will defend you myself.

They exit.

Act 2 Scene 3

A room in LEONTES'S palace.

Enter LEONTES, ANTIGONUS, Lords, and Servants

LEONTES

Nor night nor day no rest: it is but weakness
To bear the matter thus; mere weakness. If
The cause were not in being,—part o' the cause,
She the adulteress; for the harlot king
Is quite beyond mine arm, out of the blank
And level of my brain, plot-proof; but she
I can hook to me: say that she were gone,
Given to the fire, a moiety of my rest
Might come to me again. Who's there?

FIRST SERVANT

10 My lord?

LEONTES

How does the boy?

FIRST SERVANT

He took good rest to-night;
'Tis hoped his sickness is discharged.

LEONTES

To see his nobleness!
15 Conceiving the dishonour of his mother,
He straight declined, droop'd, took it deeply,
Fasten'd and fix'd the shame on't in himself,

LEONTES, ANTIGONUS, a Lord, and Servants enter.

LEONTES

I can't rest night or day. It is a kind of weakness to be so affected by this issue. If only the cause of it were no longer alive—part of the cause, at least, the adulteress. The lecherous king is away from here, which puts him beyond my aim and anything I could do to him. But she, the adulteress, I can keep close. If she were [burned at the stake](#), perhaps I would have some small bit of rest. Who's there?

FIRST SERVANT

My lord?

LEONTES

How is the boy doing?

FIRST SERVANT

He slept well tonight, and we hope that he's gotten over his illness.

LEONTES

I'm amazed at his nobility! Recognizing the dishonorable behavior of his mother, he immediately began to decline, to feel the shame himself. He became sad, stopped eating,

Threw off his spirit, his appetite, his sleep,
And downright languish'd. Leave me solely: go,
20 See how he fares.

Exit Servant

Fie, fie! no thought of him:
The thought of my revenges that way
Recoil upon me: in himself too mighty,
And in his parties, his alliance; let him be
25 Until a time may serve: for present vengeance,
Take it on her. Camillo and Polixenes
Laugh at me, make their pastime at my sorrow:
They should not laugh if I could reach them, nor
Shall she within my power.

Enter PAULINA, with a child

FIRST LORD

30 You must not enter.

PAULINA

Nay, rather, good my lords, be second to me:
Fear you his tyrannous passion more, alas,
Than the queen's life? a gracious innocent soul,
More free than he is jealous.

ANTIGONUS

stopped sleeping, and grew weak. Leave me alone, and go see how he's doing.

The Servant exits.

No! I won't think about Polixenes. I fear taking revenge on him. He himself is too powerful, and he has powerful allies. Let him be until an opportunity comes. I'll have revenge now on her. Camillo and Polixenes laugh at me, and find amusement in my sorrow. They wouldn't laugh if I could reach them, and neither will the woman who is within my power to punish.

PAULINA enters, with a child.

FIRST LORD

You must not go in.

PAULINA

No, my good lords, back me. Do you fear his tyrannical anger more than the queen's life? She's a gracious, innocent soul, more innocent than he is jealous.

ANTIGONUS

35 That's enough.

SECOND SERVANT

Madam, he hath not slept tonight; commanded
None should come at him.

PAULINA

Not so hot, good sir:
I come to bring him sleep. 'Tis such as you,
40 That creep like shadows by him and do sigh
At each his needless heavings, such as you
Nourish the cause of his awaking: I
Do come with words as medicinal as true,
Honest as either, to purge him of that humour
45 That presses him from sleep.

LEONTES

What noise there, ho?

PAULINA

No noise, my lord; but needful conference
About some gossips for your highness.

LEONTES

How!
50 Away with that audacious lady! Antigonus,
I charged thee that she should not come about me:
I knew she would.

That's enough.

SECOND SERVANT

Madam, he hasn't slept tonight and has ordered that he be left alone.

PAULINA

Not so hasty, good sir. I'm here to bring him sleep. It's people like you who creep softly around him like shadows and sigh at his unnecessary agitation that feed the cause of his wakefulness. I have something to say to him that's as soothing as it is true, and honest as well, that will rid him of the sickness keeping him from rest.

LEONTES

What is that noise?

PAULINA

It's not noise, my lord, but necessary talk about godparents for your highness.

LEONTES

What! Take this bold woman away! Antigonus, I told you to keep her away from me, because I knew she would come.

ANTIGONUS

I told her so, my lord,
On your displeasure's peril and on mine,
55 She should not visit you.

LEONTES

What, canst not rule her?

PAULINA

From all dishonesty he can: in this,
Unless he take the course that you have done,
Commit me for committing honour, trust it,
60 He shall not rule me.

ANTIGONUS

La you now, you hear:
When she will take the rein I let her run;
But she'll not stumble.

PAULINA

Good my liege, I come;
65 And, I beseech you, hear me, who profess
Myself your loyal servant, your physician,
Your most obedient counsellor, yet that dare
Less appear so in comforting your evils,
Than such as most seem yours: I say, I come
70 From your good queen.

ANTIGONUS

My lord, I told her that she shouldn't visit you, or she'd risk
making us both angry.

LEONTES

What, you can't control her?

PAULINA

He can keep me from dishonesty. Unless he does as you've
done and locks me up for being honorable, he won't control
me in this matter.

ANTIGONUS

You see, when she wants to take control I give her room, but
she'll do what's right.

PAULINA

My good lord, I beg you to listen to me. I'm your loyal servant,
your doctor, your most obedient advisor, though perhaps I
don't seem like it because I won't condone your evil actions, as
do those servants who only seem most loyal. I come from your
good queen.

LEONTES

Good queen!

PAULINA

Good queen, my lord,

Good queen; I say good queen;

And would by combat make her good, so were I

75 A man, the worst about you.

LEONTES

Force her hence.

PAULINA

Let him that makes but trifles of his eyes

First hand me: on mine own accord I'll off;

But first I'll do my errand. The good queen,

80 For she is good, hath brought you forth a daughter;

Here 'tis; commends it to your blessing.

Laying down the child

LEONTES

Out!

A mankind witch! Hence with her, out o' door:

A most intelligencing bawd!

PAULINA

85 Not so:

LEONTES

Good queen!

PAULINA

She is a good queen, my lord. I say she is a good queen, a very good queen. If I were a man I would fight a duel to prove her innocence, even against the most lowly man.

LEONTES

Force her out of here.

PAULINA

The first man who tries to manhandle me better not value his eyes. I'll go by my own accord, but first I'll carry out my errand. The good queen, for she is good, has given birth to a daughter. Here she is. She commends her to you so that you may bless her.

She lays the child down.

LEONTES

Get out! This furious witch! Take her out of here! She's a spying pimp!

PAULINA

I am as ignorant in that as you
In so entitling me, and no less honest
Than you are mad; which is enough, I'll warrant,
As this world goes, to pass for honest.

LEONTES

90 Traitors!
Will you not push her out? Give her the bastard.
Thou dotard! thou art woman-tired, unrooted
By thy dame Partlet here. Take up the bastard;
Take't up, I say; give't to thy crone.

PAULINA

95 [To Antigonus] For ever
Unvenerable be thy hands, if thou
Takest up the princess by that forced baseness
Which he has put upon't!

LEONTES

He dreads his wife.

PAULINA

100 So I would you did; then 'twere past all doubt
You'l'd call your children yours.

LEONTES

A nest of traitors!

Not at all. I know nothing about that, while you show your knowledge of it by calling me that name. I'm as honest as you are mad, which, I assure you, is as honest as you can expect in this world.

LEONTES

Traitors! Won't you shove her out? Hand her the bastard child! You dolt! You are hen-pecked and kicked out of your place of authority by your hen here. Pick up that bastard. Pick it up, I say, and give it to your hag.

PAULINA

(to Antigonus) Your hands will forever be unworthy of respect if you take up the princess under that terrible name he called her!

LEONTES

He fears his wife.

PAULINA

I wish you did, too, and then you would undoubtedly call your children your own.

LEONTES

A nest of traitors!

ANTIGONUS

I am none, by this good light.

PAULINA

Nor I, nor any

105 But one that's here, and that's himself, for he
The sacred honour of himself, his queen's,
His hopeful son's, his babe's, betrays to slander,
Whose sting is sharper than the sword's;
and will not—

110 For, as the case now stands, it is a curse
He cannot be compell'd to't—once remove
The root of his opinion, which is rotten
As ever oak or stone was sound.

LEONTES

A callat

115 Of boundless tongue, who late hath beat her husband
And now baits me! This brat is none of mine;
It is the issue of Polixenes:
Hence with it, and together with the dam
Commit them to the fire!

PAULINA

120 It is yours;
And, might we lay the old proverb to your charge,
So like you, 'tis the worse. Behold, my lords,

ANTIGONUS

I'm not one.

PAULINA

Nor am I, nor is anyone else here other than himself, since he has betrayed his own honor, the honor of his wife, of his son, and of his baby with slander, which is sharper than any sword. It's a curse that he can't be forced to revise his opinion, which is as rotten as oak or stone is solid.

LEONTES

A constantly chattering harlot, who has recently beat her husband and now provokes me. This brat isn't mine—it's Polixenes's child. Take it away, and send it and its mother to the fire!

PAULINA

It is yours. It looks so much like you, and for the worse, as the proverb puts it. See, my lords, how the baby has all the features of her father in miniature: the eyes, nose, lips, her

Although the print be little, the whole matter
And copy of the father, eye, nose, lip,
125 The trick of's frown, his forehead, nay, the valley,
The pretty dimples of his chin and cheek,
His smiles,
The very mould and frame of hand, nail, finger:
And thou, good goddess Nature, which hast made it
130 So like to him that got it, if thou hast
The ordering of the mind too, 'mongst all colours
No yellow in't, lest she suspect, as he does,
Her children not her husband's!

LEONTES

[to Antigonus] A gross hag
135 And, lozel, thou art worthy to be hang'd,
That wilt not stay her tongue.

ANTIGONUS

Hang all the husbands
That cannot do that feat, you'll leave yourself
Hardly one subject.

LEONTES

140 Once more, take her hence.

PAULINA

A most unworthy and unnatural lord
Can do no more.

father's frown and forehead, the dimples on his chin and cheeks, his smile. They have the same hands, nails, fingers. And so good goddess Nature has made the baby just like the man who conceived her. If Nature has control over temperament, too, don't let her have any jealousy, or she'll suspect, as her father does, that her children are not her husband's!

LEONTES

(to Antigonus) A horrible woman. Scoundrel, you ought to be hanged for not stopping her from speaking.

ANTIGONUS

If you hang all the husbands who can't keep their wives from talking, you'll have hardly any subjects left.

LEONTES

Once again, get her out of here.

PAULINA

A most unworthy and unnatural lord can do only that.

LEONTES

I'll ha' thee burnt.

PAULINA

I care not:

145 It is an heretic that makes the fire,
Not she which burns in't. I'll not call you tyrant;
But this most cruel usage of your queen,
Not able to produce more accusation
Than your own weak-hinged fancy, something savours
150 Of tyranny and will ignoble make you,
Yea, scandalous to the world.

LEONTES

On your allegiance,
Out of the chamber with her! Were I a tyrant,
Where were her life? she durst not call me so,
155 If she did know me one. Away with her!

PAULINA

I pray you, do not push me; I'll be gone.
Look to your babe, my lord; 'tis yours:
Jove send her
A better guiding spirit! What needs these hands?
160 You, that are thus so tender o'er his follies,
Will never do him good, not one of you.
So, so: farewell; we are gone.

LEONTES

I'll have you burnt.

PAULINA

I don't care. It would be a heretic building the fire, not the woman burning in it. I won't call you a tyrant, but your cruel mistreatment of your queen seems something like tyranny, since you can't produce any evidence beyond your own weak imaginings. It will make you dishonorable, even scandalous, to all the world.

LEONTES

Be loyal to me and take her out of the room! If I were a tyrant, would she still be alive? If she knew I was a tyrant, truly, she wouldn't dare call me one. Take her away!

PAULINA

Please don't push me. I'll go. Look at your baby, my lord. She's yours. May Jove send her a better protector! (*to attendants*) Why do you put your hands on me? All of you who are so accepting of his misbehavior won't do him any good, not one of you. So, goodbye, I'm going.

Exit

LEONTES

[to Antigonus] Thou, traitor, hast set on thy wife to this.
My child? away with't! Even thou, that hast
165 A heart so tender o'er it, take it hence
And see it instantly consumed with fire;
Even thou and none but thou. Take it up straight:
Within this hour bring me word 'tis done,
And by good testimony, or I'll seize thy life,
170 With what thou else call'st thine. If thou refuse
And wilt encounter with my wrath, say so;
The bastard brains with these my proper hands
Shall I dash out. Go, take it to the fire;
For thou set'st on thy wife.

ANTIGONUS

175 I did not, sir:
These lords, my noble fellows, if they please,
Can clear me in't.

LORDS

We can: my royal liege,
He is not guilty of her coming hither.

LEONTES

180 You're liars all.

She exits.

LEONTES

(to Antigonus) You traitor! You put your wife up to this. My child? Get rid of it! You, who have such a tender heart for it, take it away and see that it's burned immediately. You, and no one but you. Do it now. Within the hour I want to hear that it is done, and with witnesses, or I'll have your life, and all else that you call your own. If you refuse and will face my anger, say so. I'll dash the bastard's brains out with my own hands. Go, take it to the fire, since you put your wife up to this.

ANTIGONUS

I didn't, sir. These lords, my noble fellows, will clear my name.

LORDS

We can, my royal lord. He isn't responsible for her appearance here.

LEONTES

You are all liars.

FIRST LORD

Beseech your highness, give us better credit:
We have always truly served you, and beseech you
So to esteem of us, and on our knees we beg,
As recompense of our dear services

185 Past and to come, that you do change this purpose,
Which being so horrible, so bloody, must
Lead on to some foul issue: we all kneel.

LEONTES

I am a feather for each wind that blows:
Shall I live on to see this bastard kneel
190 And call me father? better burn it now
Than curse it then. But be it; let it live.
It shall not neither. You, sir, come you hither;
You that have been so tenderly officious
With Lady Margery, your midwife there,
195 To save this bastard's life,—for 'tis a bastard,
So sure as this beard's grey,
—what will you adventure
To save this brat's life?

ANTIGONUS

Any thing, my lord,
200 That my ability may undergo
And nobleness impose: at least thus much:

FIRST LORD

Please, your highness, we are more honorable than that. We have always served you faithfully and beg you to think of us that way. We beg you on our knees, as repayment for all our services of the past and future, that you'll change your mind. This plan is so horrible and bloody that it can only lead to something terrible.

LEONTES

I am asked to follow every opinion I hear. Should I allow this bastard to grow up and call me father? I'd rather burn it now than curse it then. But, fine, let it live. (*to Antigonus*) You, sir, come here. You have interfered so kindly along with your wench in order to save this bastard's life—and I'm as certain it's a bastard as I am that your beard is gray—so what will you risk to save the brat's life?

ANTIGONUS

Anything that my ability will allow and that nobility would demand. I'd give what little blood I might have left to save this innocent child. I'll do whatever is possible.

I'll pawn the little blood which I have left
To save the innocent: any thing possible.

LEONTES

It shall be possible. Swear by this sword
205 Thou wilt perform my bidding.

ANTIGONUS

I will, my lord.

LEONTES

Mark and perform it, see'st thou! for the fail
Of any point in't shall not only be
Death to thyself but to thy lewd-tongued wife,
210 Whom for this time we pardon. We enjoin thee,
As thou art liege-man to us, that thou carry
This female bastard hence and that thou bear it
To some remote and desert place quite out
Of our dominions, and that there thou leave it,
215 Without more mercy, to its own protection
And favour of the climate. As by strange fortune
It came to us, I do in justice charge thee,
On thy soul's peril and thy body's torture,
That thou command it strangely to some place
220 Where chance may nurse or end it. Take it up.

ANTIGONUS

I swear to do this, though a present death

LEONTES

It will be possible. Swear by this sword that you will do what I demand.

ANTIGONUS

I will, my lord.

LEONTES

Make note of what I tell you, and perform it, because if you fail to do any part of it not only will you die, but so will your crudely outspoken wife, whom I'll pardon for now. I command you, as my loyal servant, to take this female bastard away to some deserted place far from my kingdom, and to leave it there without mercy, left to its own abilities and the whims of the weather. Since it came to me because of a foreigner, it is only just that I order you, on pain of death and torture, to take it to a foreign place where luck might nurture or kill it. Pick it up.

ANTIGONUS

Had been more merciful. Come on, poor babe:
Some powerful spirit instruct the kites and ravens
To be thy nurses! Wolves and bears, they say
225 Casting their savageness aside have done
Like offices of pity. Sir, be prosperous
In more than this deed does require! And blessing
Against this cruelty fight on thy side,
Poor thing, condemn'd to loss!

Exit with the child

LEONTES

230 No, I'll not rear
Another's issue.

Enter a Servant

SERVANT

Please your highness, posts
From those you sent to the oracle are come
An hour since: Cleomenes and Dion,
235 Being well arrived from Delphos, are both landed,
Hasting to the court.

FIRST LORD

So please you, sir, their speed
Hath been beyond account.

I swear to carry out your orders, though killing her right now
would have been more merciful. Come on, poor baby. May
some powerful angel call on the vultures and ravens to take
care of you. They say that wolves and bears have given up
their savageness to perform similar acts of pity. Sir, be
prosperous in more ways than this act deserves! (*to the baby*)
And may a prayer against this cruel act help you, poor thing,
condemned to die!

He exits with the child.

LEONTES

No, I won't raise another man's child.

A Servant enters.

SERVANT

Your highness, messages from the men you sent to the oracle
arrived an hour ago. Cleomenes and Dion have both arrived
safely from Delphos and are hurrying here to the court.

FIRST LORD

Their speed is astonishing.

LEONTES

Twenty-three days

240 They have been absent: 'tis good speed; foretells
The great Apollo suddenly will have
The truth of this appear. Prepare you, lords;
Summon a session, that we may arraign
Our most disloyal lady, for, as she hath
245 Been publicly accused, so shall she have
A just and open trial. While she lives
My heart will be a burthen to me. Leave me,
And think upon my bidding.

Exeunt.

A sea-port in Sicilia.

Enter CLEOMENES and DION

CLEOMENES

The climate's delicate, the air most sweet,
Fertile the isle, the temple much surpassing
The common praise it bears.

DION

I shall report,
5 For most it caught me, the celestial habits,

LEONTES

They've been gone twenty-three days. Their speedy return
predicts that great Apollo wants the truth of this matter
revealed. Prepare yourselves, lords. Convene an open trial for
this disloyal lady. Since she was publicly accused, she'll have
an open and just trial. While she lives my heart is heavy. Leave
me, and consider my orders.

They exit.

Act 3 Scene 1

A seaport in Sicilia

CLEOMENES and DION enter

They exit.

CLEOMENES

Delphos's climate is exquisite, the air very sweet, the island
fertile, and the temple is even more beautiful than people say.

DION

What most charmed me were the divine clothes and the great
respect held by the wise men who wore them. And the

Methinks I so should term them, and the reverence
Of the grave wearers. O, the sacrifice!
How ceremonious, solemn and unearthly
It was i' the offering!

CLEOMENES

10 But of all, the burst
And the ear-deafening voice o' the oracle,
Kin to Jove's thunder, so surprised my sense.
That I was nothing.

DION

If the event o' the journey
15 Prove as successful to the queen,—O be't so!—
As it hath been to us rare, pleasant, speedy,
The time is worth the use on't.

CLEOMENES

Great Apollo
Turn all to the best! These proclamations,
20 So forcing faults upon Hermione,
I little like.

DION

The violent carriage of it
Will clear or end the busine when the oracle,
Thus by Apollo's great divine seal'd up,
25 Shall the contents discover, something rare

sacrifice! The offering was so ceremonious, solemn, and otherworldly!

CLEOMENES

Of everything, the sudden and deafening voice of the oracle,
like a clap of thunder, shocked me most and made me feel like
I was nothing.

DION

If only the outcome of the journey is as successful for the
queen as it was wonderful, pleasant, and quick for us, it would
be a worthwhile trip.

CLEOMENES

May great Apollo make all turn out well! I don't like these
claims accusing Hermione of faults.

DION

The rash way it has been conducted will either clear up this
business or end it. This judgment, sealed by Apollo's priest, will
reveal some wonderful knowledge to us once it is open.

Even then will rush to knowledge. Go! fresh horses!
And gracious be the issue!
Exeunt.

Act 3 Scene 2

A court of Justice.

Enter LEONTES, Lords, and Officers

LEONTES

This sessions, to our great grief we pronounce,
Even pushes 'gainst our heart: the party tried
The daughter of a king, our wife, and one
Of us too much beloved. Let us be clear'd
5 Of being tyrannous, since we so openly
Proceed in justice, which shall have due course,
Even to the guilt or the purgation.
Produce the prisoner.

OFFICER

It is his highness' pleasure that the queen
10 Appear in person here in court. Silence!

Enter HERMIONE guarded; PAULINA and Ladies attending

LEONTES

Read the indictment.

A courtroom.

LEONTES, lords, and Officers enter.

LEONTES

We call this session with great grief and heartache. The defendant is the daughter of a king, my wife, and one I have loved too much. Let me be cleared of acting like a tyrant, since I have been so open about this course of justice, whether it end in guilt or acquittal. Bring out the prisoner.

OFFICER

It is the king's request that the queen appear in person in the courtroom. Silence!

HERMIONE enters, guarded. PAULINA and ladies come in with her.

LEONTES

Read the indictment.

OFFICER

[Reads] Hermione, queen to the worthy Leontes, king of Sicilia, thou art here accused and arraigned of high treason, in committing adultery 15 with Polixenes, king of Bohemia, and conspiring with Camillo to take away the life of our sovereign lord the king, thy royal husband: the pretence whereof being by circumstances partly laid open, thou, Hermione, contrary to the faith and allegiance 20 of a true subject, didst counsel and aid them, for their better safety, to fly away by night.

HERMIONE

Since what I am to say must be but that
Which contradicts my accusation and
The testimony on my part no other
25 But what comes from myself, it shall scarce boot me
To say 'not guilty:' mine integrity
Being counted falsehood, shall, as I express it,
Be so received. But thus: if powers divine
Behold our human actions, as they do,
30 I doubt not then but innocence shall make
False accusation blush and tyranny
Tremble at patience. You, my lord, best know,
Who least will seem to do so, my past life
Hath been as continent, as chaste, as true,

OFFICER

(reads) Hermione, queen of the worthy Leontes, king of Sicilia, you are accused and arraigned for high treason, for committing adultery with Polixenes, king of Bohemia, and conspiring with Camillo to kill our sovereign king, your royal husband. Then, when the plot was accidentally discovered, you, Hermione, against the duty and faith of a loyal subject, advised them to flee by night for safety, and helped them to leave.

HERMIONE

Since what I'm going to say must contradict this accusation and the only testimony in my favor comes from me, it hardly helps to say "not guilty." I'm believed to be a liar, so whatever I say will be considered false. But if the gods watch what we humans do, I don't doubt that innocence will win out against false accusation and tyranny. You, my lord, know that my past life has been faithful, pure, and true, though you seem to know this least of anyone. Those qualities are now matched by my unhappiness, which is greater than history has ever seen, even if it were created and performed to enthrall an audience. Look at me, who has slept in the royal bed, who owns part of the throne as the daughter of a great king, the mother of the prince who will one day take the throne, forced to defend my life and

35 As I am now unhappy; which is more
Than history can pattern, though devised
And play'd to take spectators. For behold me
A fellow of the royal bed, which owe
A moiety of the throne a great king's daughter,
40 The mother to a hopeful prince, here standing
To prate and talk for life and honour 'fore
Who please to come and hear. For life, I prize it
As I weigh grief, which I would spare: for honour,
'Tis a derivative from me to mine,
45 And only that I stand for. I appeal
To your own conscience, sir, before Polixenes
Came to your court, how I was in your grace,
How merited to be so; since he came,
With what encounter so uncurrent I
50 Have strain'd to appear thus: if one jot beyond
The bound of honour, or in act or will
That way inclining, harden'd be the hearts
Of all that hear me, and my near'st of kin
Cry fie upon my grave!

my honor in front of anyone who cares to come and hear. I care as much for life as I do for grief, which I could do without. Honor, though, is passed down from me to my children, so I will make a stand for that. I appeal to your conscience to remember how you held me in good graces before Polixenes came to court, and how I deserved to be regarded so. Since he came to court, think of what was so unacceptable about my behavior that I now appear on trial. If I have acted in any way dishonorably, or even seemed inclined to do so, may all that hear me harden their hearts, and may even my closest relatives curse my grave!

LEONTES

55 I ne'er heard yet
That any of these bolder vices wanted
Less impudence to gainsay what they did
Than to perform it first.

LEONTES

The same audacity that allows someone to perform a terrible deed also lets her deny it.

HERMIONE

That's true enough;
60 Through 'tis a saying, sir, not due to me.

LEONTES

You will not own it.

HERMIONE

More than mistress of
Which comes to me in name of fault, I must not
At all acknowledge. For Polixenes,
65 With whom I am accused, I do confess
I loved him as in honour he required,
With such a kind of love as might become
A lady like me, with a love even such,
So and no other, as yourself commanded:
70 Which not to have done I think had been in me
Both disobedience and ingratitude
To you and toward your friend, whose love had spoke,
Even since it could speak, from an infant, freely
That it was yours. Now, for conspiracy,
75 I know not how it tastes; though it be dish'd
For me to try how: all I know of it
Is that Camillo was an honest man;
And why he left your court, the gods themselves,
Wotting no more than I, are ignorant.

HERMIONE

That's true enough, but that has nothing to do with me.

LEONTES

You won't admit it.

HERMIONE

I take full ownership of my faults, but I won't acknowledge any faults that aren't mine. I confess that I loved Polixenes in the manner his honor required, and with a love that was befitting a lady like me—with such a love, even, as you yourself commanded. If I hadn't love him in this way, I would have been disobeying you and showing ingratitude to both you and your friend, who has loved you since childhood. Now, as for conspiracy, I don't even know what it is like, even if it is being aimed at me. All I know is that Camillo was an honest man, and the gods know as little as I do about why he left your court.

LEONTES

80 You knew of his departure, as you know
What you have underta'en to do in's absence.

HERMIONE

Sir,
You speak a language that I understand not:
My life stands in the level of your dreams,
85 Which I'll lay down.

LEONTES

Your actions are my dreams;
You had a bastard by Polixenes,
And I but dream'd it. As you were past all shame,—
Those of your fact are so—so past all truth:
90 Which to deny concerns more than avails; for as
Thy brat hath been cast out, like to itself,
No father owning it,—which is, indeed,
More criminal in thee than it,—so thou
Shalt feel our justice, in whose easiest passage
95 Look for no less than death.

HERMIONE

Sir, spare your threats:
The bug which you would fright me with I seek.
To me can life be no commodity:
The crown and comfort of my life, your favour,

LEONTES

You knew that he was leaving, and you know what you have tried to do in his absence.

HERMIONE

Sir, I don't understand what you are saying. I'll give up my life, which is the target of your delusions.

LEONTES

My "delusions" are made of your actions. You had a bastard child with Polixenes—maybe I just dreamed it! You are past any shame, as women like you are, or any truth. Just as I've cast out your brat, whose lack of a father is more your fault than the child's, I'll devise a punishment for you, the least of which will be death.

HERMIONE

Sir, save your threats. I'd seek out the terrible punishment you threaten me with. Life has no value for me now. Having your favor was my highest goal and my comfort, and I give it up as lost now, though I don't know how. My second joy in life, my

100 I do give lost; for I do feel it gone,
But know not how it went. My second joy
And first-fruits of my body, from his presence
I am barr'd, like one infectious. My third comfort
Starr'd most unluckily, is from my breast,
105 The innocent milk in its most innocent mouth,
Haled out to murder: myself on every post
Proclaimed a strumpet: with immodest hatred
The child-bed privilege denied, which 'longs
To women of all fashion; lastly, hurried
110 Here to this place, i' the open air, before
I have got strength of limit. Now, my liege,
Tell me what blessings I have here alive,
That I should fear to die? Therefore proceed.
But yet hear this: mistake me not; no life,
115 I prize it not a straw, but for mine honour,
Which I would free, if I shall be condemn'd
Upon surmises, all proofs sleeping else
But what your jealousies awake, I tell you
'Tis rigor and not law. Your honours all,
120 I do refer me to the oracle:
Apollo be my judge!

FIRST LORD

This your request
Is altogether just: therefore bring forth,

first son, is kept from me as though I have a disease. My third comfort, that unlucky child with the innocent milk still in its innocent mouth, has been taken from my breast and dragged out to be murdered. I've been publicly declared a whore, with outrageous hatred denied the rest after childbirth that all women of my rank deserve, and hurried here into the open air before I've regained my strength. Now, my lord, tell me what I have to live for, and why I should fear death. Go ahead. But listen to what I say, which I say not for the sake of my life but for my honor: if I am condemned on mere guesses and your jealousy without any proof, it is merely severity and not justice. Your honors, I commend myself to the oracle, and let Apollo be my judge!

FIRST LORD

Your request is just. Bring forth the oracle of Apollo.

And in Apollos name, his oracle.

Exeunt certain Officers

HERMIONE

125 The Emperor of Russia was my father:
O that he were alive, and here beholding
His daughter's trial! that he did but see
The flatness of my misery, yet with eyes
Of pity, not revenge!

Re-enter Officers, with CLEOMENES and DION

OFFICER

130 You here shall swear upon this sword of justice,
That you, Cleomenes and Dion, have
Been both at Delphos, and from thence have brought
The seal'd-up oracle, by the hand deliver'd
Of great Apollo's priest; and that, since then,
135 You have not dared to break the holy seal
Nor read the secrets in't.

CLEOMENES DION

All this we swear.

LEONTES

Break up the seals and read.

Some officers exit.

HERMIONE

If only my father, the Emperor of Russia, were alive and could be here to see his daughter's trial! If only he could see my misery with eyes of pity, not revenge!

The Officers re-enter, with CLEOMENES and DION.

OFFICER

You will swear upon this sword of justice that you, Cleomenes and Dion, have both been at Delphos and have brought back with you the sealed oracle, delivered by great Apollo's priest, and that you have not broken the holy seal nor read the secrets in it.

CLEOMENES AND DION

We swear all this.

LEONTES

Break the seal and read.

OFFICER

[Reads] Hermione is chaste;

140 Polixenes blameless; Camillo a true subject; Leontes a jealous tyrant; his innocent babe truly begotten; and the king shall live without an heir, if that which is lost be not found.

LORDS

Now blessed be the great Apollo!

HERMIONE

145 Praised!

LEONTES

Hast thou read truth?

OFFICER

Ay, my lord; even so
As it is here set down.

LEONTES

There is no truth at all i' the oracle:
150 The sessions shall proceed: this is mere falsehood.

Enter Servant

SERVANT

My lord the king, the king!

OFFICER

(reads) Hermione is chaste, Polixenes is innocent, Camillo is a loyal subject, Leontes is a jealous tyrant, and his innocent baby is legitimately born. The king will live without an heir if the baby that was lost is not found.

LORDS

Blessed be the great Apollo!

HERMIONE

Praise him!

LEONTES

Have you read the truth?

OFFICER

Yes, my lord, exactly as it is written here.

LEONTES

There is no truth in what the oracle says. The trial will proceed.
These are simply lies.

A Servant enters.

SERVANT

My lord the king!

LEONTES

What is the business?

SERVANT

O sir, I shall be hated to report it!
The prince your son, with mere conceit and fear
155 Of the queen's speed, is gone.

LEONTES

How! gone!

SERVANT

Is dead.

LEONTES

Apollo's angry; and the heavens themselves
Do strike at my injustice.

HERMIONE swoons

160 How now there!

PAULINA

This news is mortal to the queen: look down
And see what death is doing.

LEONTES

Take her hence:
Her heart is but o'ercharged; she will recover:

LEONTES

What's going on?

SERVANT

Sir, you'll hate me when I tell you! The prince, your son,
imagining and fearing the queen's fate, is gone.

LEONTES

What, gone?

SERVANT

He's dead.

LEONTES

Apollo is angry, and the heavens themselves strike back at my
injustice.

HERMIONE swoons.

What now?

PAULINA

The news is deadly to the queen. Look at her and see how she
is dying.

LEONTES

Take her out of here. She's just overwhelmed, she'll get better.
I've believed too firmly in my own suspicions. Please, give her

165 I have too much believed mine own suspicion:
Beseech you, tenderly apply to her
Some remedies for life.

Exeunt PAULINA and Ladies, with HERMIONE

Apollo, pardon
My great profaneness 'gainst thine oracle!
170 I'll reconcile me to Polixenes,
New woo my queen, recall the good Camillo,
Whom I proclaim a man of truth, of mercy;
For, being transported by my jealousies
To bloody thoughts and to revenge, I chose
175 Camillo for the minister to poison
My friend Polixenes: which had been done,
But that the good mind of Camillo tardied
My swift command, though I with death and with
Reward did threaten and encourage him,
180 Not doing 't and being done: he, most humane
And fill'd with honour, to my kingly guest
Unclasp'd my practise, quit his fortunes here,
Which you knew great, and to the hazard
Of all encertainties himself commended,
185 No richer than his honour: how he glisters
Thorough my rust! and how his pity
Does my deeds make the blacker!

something to help her recover.

PAULA and the ladies exit with HERMIONE.

Apollo, forgive how I have insulted your oracle! I'll make it up to Polixenes, court my queen again, and call back good Camillo, whom I declare an honest and merciful man. When I was made mad by my jealousies and plotted bloody revenge, I asked Camillo to poison my friend Polixenes. It would have been done if Camillo hadn't delayed doing it, even though I threatened to kill him if he didn't and to reward him if he did. Even so, he was so humane and honorable that he revealed my plot, left his great fortunes here, and giving himself over to uncertainty, departed with only his honor. How much finer he appears next to me! And how his good deeds make my actions seem even worse!

Re-enter PAULINA

PAULINA

Woe the while!
O, cut my lace, lest my heart, cracking it,
190 Break too.

FIRST LORD

What fit is this, good lady?

PAULINA

What studied torments, tyrant, hast for me?
What wheels? racks? fires? what flaying? boiling?
In leads or oils? what old or newer torture
195 Must I receive, whose every word deserves
To taste of thy most worst? Thy tyranny
Together working with thy jealousies,
Fancies too weak for boys, too green and idle
For girls of nine, O, think what they have done
200 And then run mad indeed, stark mad! for all
Thy by-gone fooleries were but spices of it.
That thou betray'dst Polixenes, 'twas nothing;
That did but show thee, of a fool, inconstant
And damnable ingrateful: nor was't much,
205 Thou wouldst have poison'd good Camillo's honour,
To have him kill a king: poor trespasses,

PAULINA re-enters.

They exit.

PAULINA

Alas! Cut my corset, so that my heart, in cracking through it,
won't break as well.

FIRST LORD

What is wrong, good lady?

PAULINA

How have you decided to torment me, tyrant? With
wheels, racks, fires, or flaying? With lead or oil? What old or
new torture must I receive, since my every word deserves the
worst you could give me? Think of what your jealousy—which
is too silly even for boys, and too immature and foolish for a
nine-year-old girl—together with your tyranny has done, and
then you'll go mad! All of your earlier insanities were just a
foretaste of this. Your betrayal of Polixenes was nothing—it just
showed you to be a fickle and ungrateful fool. Neither was it
much that you tried to tarnish Camillo's honor by
commissioning him to assassinate a king. These are just small
misdeeds, with a more monstrous one waiting. I suppose the
fact that you threw your baby daughter to the crows is little or
nothing beside this, even though a devil would have shed tears
from his fiery eyes before he did that. And the death of the

More monstrous standing by: whereof I reckon
The casting forth to crows thy baby-daughter
To be or none or little; though a devil
210 Would have shed water out of fire ere done't:
Nor is't directly laid to thee, the death
Of the young prince, whose honourable thoughts,
Thoughts high for one so tender, cleft the heart
That could conceive a gross and foolish sire
215 Blemish'd his gracious dam: this is not, no,
Laid to thy answer: but the last,—O lords,
When I have said, cry 'woe!' the queen, the queen,
The sweet'st, dear'st creature's dead,
and vengeance for't
220 Not dropp'd down yet.

FIRST LORD

The higher powers forbid!

PAULINA

I say she's dead; I'll swear't. If word nor oath
Prevail not, go and see: if you can bring
Tincture or lustre in her lip, her eye,
225 Heat outwardly or breath within, I'll serve you
As I would do the gods. But, O thou tyrant!
Do not repent these things, for they are heavier
Than all thy woes can stir; therefore betake thee
To nothing but despair. A thousand knees

young prince isn't directly your fault. His heart tore in two at the thought that his gracious mother had been so disgraced by his vulgar and foolish father. This is not the worst act you'll have to answer for. But this last deed—Oh, lords, when I have told you to grieve, it is because the queen, that dearest, sweetest creature, is dead, and she has not yet been avenged.

FIRST LORD

The gods forbid!

PAULINA

I swear that she is dead. If my word and oath don't convince you, go look. If you can bring any color or life to her lip or her eye, warm her body or cause her to breathe again, I'll serve you as I would serve the gods. But, oh, you tyrant! Don't try to repent now, because all your sorrow won't change it. All you can do now is despair. If you had ten thousand years to spend naked, on your knees, fasting on a barren, wintry mountain in perpetual storms, the gods wouldn't take pity on you.

230 Ten thousand years together, naked, fasting,
Upon a barren mountain and still winter
In storm perpetual, could not move the gods
To look that way thou wert.

LEONTES

Go on, go on
235 Thou canst not speak too much; I have deserved
All tongues to talk their bitterest.

FIRST LORD

Say no more:
Howe'er the business goes, you have made fault
I' the boldness of your speech.

PAULINA

240 I am sorry for't:
All faults I make, when I shall come to know them,
I do repent. Alas! I have show'd too much
The rashness of a woman: he is touch'd
To the noble heart. What's gone and what's past help
245 Should be past grief: do not receive affliction
At my petition; I beseech you, rather
Let me be punish'd, that have minded you
Of what you should forget. Now, good my liege
Sir, royal sir, forgive a foolish woman:
250 The love I bore your queen—lo, fool again!—

LEONTES

Go on, you can't say too much. I've deserved all the bitterest words people can say.

FIRST LORD

Don't say any more. However it happened, you are wrong to speak so boldly.

PAULINA

I'm sorry for it. I always repent for my faults once I am aware of them. Alas! I have been too rash, and he feels it in his heart. What has happened and can't be fixed should be past grieving over. Don't let my words make you feel bad. I beg you, instead, to punish me for reminding you of what you should forget. Now, my good and royal sir, forgive a foolish woman. The love I had for your queen—ah, I'm behaving like a fool again!—I won't speak about her anymore, or of your children, and I won't remind you of my husband, who is gone, too. Be patient, and I'll be quiet.

I'll speak of her no more, nor of your children;
I'll not remember you of my own lord,
Who is lost too: take your patience to you,
And I'll say nothing.

LEONTES

255 Thou didst speak but well
When most the truth; which I receive much better
Than to be pitied of thee. Prithee, bring me
To the dead bodies of my queen and son:
One grave shall be for both: upon them shall
260 The causes of their death appear, unto
Our shame perpetual. Once a day I'll visit
The chapel where they lie, and tears shed there
Shall be my recreation: so long as nature
Will bear up with this exercise, so long
265 I daily vow to use it. Come and lead me
Unto these sorrows.
Exeunt

LEONTES

You spoke best when you told the truth, and I prefer it to being pitied. Please, take me to the dead bodies of my queen and son. I'll bury them in one grave, and I'll inscribe their gravestone with the cause of their death, to memorialize my shame. I'll visit the chapel where they lie daily, and my pastime will be to shed tears. I'll do it daily, as long as I am able to. Come, take me to this sorrowful sight.

Act 3 Scene 3

Bohemia. A desert country near the sea.

Enter ANTIGONUS with a Child, and a Mariner

ANTIGONUS

Thou art perfect then, our ship hath touch'd upon

Bohemia, a desert country near the sea.

ANTIGONUS, who is carrying a child, and a Mariner enter.

ANTIGONUS

The deserts of Bohemia?

MARINER

Ay, my lord: and fear
We have landed in ill time: the skies look grimly
5 And threaten present blusters. In my conscience,
The heavens with that we have in hand are angry
And frown upon 's.

ANTIGONUS

Their sacred wills be done! Go, get aboard;
Look to thy bark: I'll not be long before
10 I call upon thee.

MARINER

Make your best haste, and go not
Too far i' the land: 'tis like to be loud weather;
Besides, this place is famous for the creatures
Of prey that keep upon't.

ANTIGONUS

15 Go thou away:
I'll follow instantly.

MARINER

I am glad at heart
To be so rid o' the business.

You are sure that our ship has landed at the desert of
Bohemia?

MARINER

Yes, my lord, and I fear we've landed at a bad time. The sky is dark, and it looks as though a storm approaches. It seems to me that the heavens are angry at what we are about to do and are unhappy with us.

ANTIGONUS

Let their sacred will be done! Go aboard, and see to your ship.
I'll call for you shortly.

MARINER

Go as quickly as you can, and don't venture too far inland. It promises to be a dreadful storm, and this area is famous for its predators.

ANTIGONUS

Go away. I'll be right behind you.

MARINER

I'm happy to be done with this business.

Exit

ANTIGONUS

Come, poor babe:

20 I have heard, but not believed,
the spirits o' the dead

May walk again: if such thing be, thy mother
Appear'd to me last night, for ne'er was dream
So like a waking. To me comes a creature,

25 Sometimes her head on one side, some another;
I never saw a vessel of like sorrow,

So fill'd and so becoming: in pure white robes,
Like very sanctity, she did approach

My cabin where I lay; thrice bow'd before me,

30 And gasping to begin some speech, her eyes
Became two spouts: the fury spent, anon

Did this break-from her: 'Good Antigonus,
Since fate, against thy better disposition,

Hath made thy person for the thrower-out

35 Of my poor babe, according to thine oath,

Places remote enough are in Bohemia,

There weep and leave it crying; and, for the babe
Is counted lost for ever, Perdita,

I prithee, call't. For this ungentle business

40 Put on thee by my lord, thou ne'er shalt see
Thy wife Paulina more.' And so, with shrieks

He exits.

ANTIGONUS

Come, poor child. I've heard but never believed that the spirits of the dead might walk the earth. But perhaps it is true, because last night your mother appeared to me, and no dream ever seemed so real. She comes to me with her head to one side or the other, and I've never seen anyone so filled with sorrow and so beautiful. Dressed in pure white robes, she came to my room where I was resting. She bowed three times to me, and struggling to speak, she broke into tears. Once her fury was spent, these words came out: "Good Antigonus, since fate, against your good nature, has chosen you to cast out my child according to your oath, leave her in the remote places of Bohemia. There you weep, and leave the child crying. Since she is lost forever, I ask you to call her *Perdita*. Because of this terrible business forced upon you, you will never see your wife Paulina again." And then she disappeared, shrieking. Very frightened, I finally got myself together and decided it had truly happened and wasn't a dream. Dreams are just trifles, but for this once, even if it's superstition, I'll be ruled by one. I believe that Hermione has died, and that this child is truly the child of King Polixenes, so Apollo would want her to be left, whether to life or death, on the land of her real father. Blossom, fare you well! (*he lays down the child and a scroll*) Lie there, and I'll put an account of your parentage with you. (*he puts down a*

She melted into air. Affrighted much,
I did in time collect myself and thought
This was so and no slumber. Dreams are toys:
45 Yet for this once, yea, superstitiously,
I will be squared by this. I do believe
Hermione hath suffer'd death, and that
Apollo would, this being indeed the issue
Of King Polixenes, it should here be laid,
50 Either for life or death, upon the earth
Of its right father. Blossom, speed thee well!
There lie, and there thy character: there these;
Which may, if fortune please, both breed thee, pretty,
And still rest thine. The storm begins; poor wretch,
55 That for thy mother's fault art thus exposed
To loss and what may follow! Weep I cannot,
But my heart bleeds; and most accursed am I
To be by oath enjoin'd to this. Farewell!
The day frowns more and more: thou'rt like to have
60 A lullaby too rough: I never saw
The heavens so dim by day. A savage clamour!
Well may I get aboard! This is the chase:
I am gone for ever.

Exit, pursued by a bear

Enter a Shepherd

box) These jewels and gold will help pay for your upbringing,
and if fortune pleases, leave some left over for you. (*thunder*)
The storm is beginning. Poor child, because of your mother's
transgressions you are left out to die! I can't weep, but my
heart bleeds, and I'm cursed for having to do this deed.
Farewell! The day gets worse and worse. You are likely to be
 lulled to sleep with a rough lullaby. I've never seen the sky look
 so dark during the day. What a savage noise! I'll be lucky to get
 on board! This is the hunt! I'm gone forever.

He exits, chased by a bear.

A SHEPHERD enters.

SHEPHERD

I would there were no age between sixteen and
65 three-and-twenty, or that youth would sleep out the
rest; for there is nothing in the between but
getting wenches with child, wronging the ancientry,
stealing, fighting—Hark you now! Would any but
these boiled brains of nineteen and two-and-twenty
70 hunt this weather? They have scared away two of my
best sheep, which I fear the wolf will sooner find
than the master: if any where I have them, 'tis by
the seaside, browsing of ivy. Good luck, an't be thy
will what have we here! Mercy on 's, a barne a very
75 pretty barne! A boy or a child, I wonder? A
pretty one; a very pretty one: sure, some 'scape:
though I am not bookish, yet I can read
waiting-gentlewoman in the 'scape. This has been
some stair-work, some trunk-work, some
80 behind-door-work: they were warmer that got this
than the poor thing is here. I'll take it up for
pity: yet I'll tarry till my son come; he hallooed
but even now. Whoa, ho, ho!

Enter Clown

CLOWN

Hilloa, loa!

SHEPHERD

I wish that the ages between sixteen and twenty-three didn't
exist, or that young men would spend them asleep. Otherwise
there is nothing between those ages but getting girls pregnant,
acting dishonestly toward their elders, stealing, fighting—look
at this! Would anyone but an addlebrained nineteen or twenty-
two-year-old hunt in this weather? They've scared away two of
my best sheep, which I'm afraid the wolf will find before I do. If
I find them anywhere it'll be by the shore, eating ivy. What is
this here? Mercy, it's a baby, a pretty baby! A boy or a girl, I
wonder? A pretty one, a very pretty one. Here is the product of
some forbidden affair. I'm not a scholar, but I can read the signs
of a lady-in-waiting behind this. It must have been some secret
sexual relationship carried out in back stairs, in large chests, or
behind closed doors. The man and woman who conceived this
child were more hot-blooded than the poor baby is. Out of pity
I'll take it, but I'll wait here until my son comes. I heard him
shout just a moment ago. Hallo!

A **YOKEL** enters.

YOKEL

Hallo!

SHEPHERD

85 What, art so near? If thou'l see a thing to talk
on when thou art dead and rotten, come hither. What
ailest thou, man?

CLOWN

I have seen two such sights, by sea and by land!
but I am not to say it is a sea, for it is now the
90 sky: betwixt the firmament and it you cannot thrust
a bodkin's point.

SHEPHERD

Why, boy, how is it?

CLOWN

I would you did but see how it chafes, how it rages,
how it takes up the shore! but that's not the
95 point. O, the most piteous cry of the poor souls!
sometimes to see 'em, and not to see 'em; now the
ship boring the moon with her main-mast, and anon
swallowed with yest and froth, as you'l thrust a
cork into a hogshead. And then for the
100 land-service, to see how the bear tore out his
shoulder-bone; how he cried to me for help and said
his name was Antigonus, a nobleman. But to make an
end of the ship, to see how the sea flap-dragoned
it: but, first, how the poor souls roared, and the

SHEPHERD

What, are you near? If you want to see something to talk about
when you are dead and rotten, come here. What is wrong with
you?

YOKEL

I've seen two such sights, on sea and on land! But I won't say it
is a sea, since the sky is just as wet from the storm. You
couldn't squeeze a needle's point between the sky and the
sea.

SHEPHERD

Why, boy, what's happening there?

YOKEL

I wish you could see how it rages and rushes up the shore! But
that's not the point. Oh, the pitiful cries of the men, coming in
and out of sight. Then the ship would rise up so its mast looked
like it hit the moon, and the next moment it was swallowed by
the frothing waves. And then on land, I saw how the bear tore
out his shoulder, and he cried to me for help. He said his name
was Antigonus, and he was a nobleman. But to finish telling
you about the ship, you should have seen how the sea
swallowed it up. But first the poor men roared, and the sea
mocked them, and then the poor gentleman roared, and the
bear mocked him, and they both roared louder than either the
sea or the storm.

105 sea mocked them; and how the poor gentleman roared
and the bear mocked him, both roaring louder than
the sea or weather.

SHEPHERD

Name of mercy, when was this, boy?

CLOWN

Now, now: I have not winked since I saw these
110 sights: the men are not yet cold under water, nor
the bear half dined on the gentleman: he's at it
now.

SHEPHERD

Would I had been by, to have helped the old man!

CLOWN

I would you had been by the ship side, to have
115 helped her: there your charity would have lacked footing.

SHEPHERD

Heavy matters! heavy matters! but look thee here,
boy. Now bless thyself: thou mettest with things
dying, I with things newborn. Here's a sight for
thee; look thee, a bearing-cloth for a squire's
120 child! look thee here; take up, take up, boy;
open't. So, let's see: it was told me I should be
rich by the fairies. This is some changeling:

SHEPHERD

Goodness me, when did this happen?

YOKEL

Just now—I haven't even blinked since I saw these sights. The
men aren't yet cold under the water, and the bear has only
partly dined on the gentleman—he's still eating now.

SHEPHERD

If only I'd been close by to help the gentleman!

YOKEL

I wish you had been near the ship so you could have helped it
—on the water you wouldn't have had a place to stand.

SHEPHERD

Sad affairs, sad affairs! But look here, boy. Say a blessing. While
you were watching things dying, I was meeting with things
newly born. Here's a sight for you. Look, baby clothes for a
[squire's child](#)! Look here, pick it up, boy, and open it. Let's see
what's in it. I've been told that the fairies would make me rich.
This is some [changeling](#). Open it. What's in it, boy?

open't. What's within, boy?

CLOWN

You're a made old man: if the sins of your youth
125 are forgiven you, you're well to live. Gold! all gold!

SHEPHERD

This is fairy gold, boy, and 'twill prove so: up
with't, keep it close: home, home, the next way.
We are lucky, boy; and to be so still requires
nothing but secrecy. Let my sheep go: come, good
130 boy, the next way home.

CLOWN

Go you the next way with your findings. I'll go see
if the bear be gone from the gentleman and how much
he hath eaten: they are never curst but when they
are hungry: if there be any of him left, I'll bury
135 it.

SHEPHERD

That's a good deed. If thou mayest discern by that
which is left of him what he is, fetch me to the
sight of him.

CLOWN

Marry, will I; and you shall help to put him i' the ground.

YOKEL

You are set, old man! As long as the sins of your youth have
been forgiven, you'll live well. It's gold, all gold!

SHEPHERD

This is fairy gold, boy, and will prove to be. Pick it up, and hold
it close. Let's go home. We are lucky, boy, and to keep it that
way we have to keep this matter a secret. Let the sheep go.
Come, good boy, let's go home.

YOKEL

Go home yourself with what you've found. I'll go see if the bear
has left the gentleman and how much of him he ate. They are
only vicious when they are hungry. If there is anything left of
the gentleman, I'll bury it.

SHEPHERD

That's a good deed. If you can tell by what's left of him who he
was, bring me to the body.

YOKEL

I will, and then you can help me bury him.

SHEPHERD

140 'Tis a lucky day, boy, and we'll do good deeds on't.

Exeunt.

Enter Time, the Chorus

TIME

I, that please some, try all, both joy and terror

Of good and bad, that makes and unfolds error,

Now take upon me, in the name of Time,

To use my wings. Impute it not a crime

5 To me or my swift passage, that I slide

O'er sixteen years and leave the growth untried

Of that wide gap, since it is in my power

To o'erthrow law and in one self-born hour

To plant and o'erwhelm custom. Let me pass

10 The same I am, ere ancient'st order was

Or what is now received: I witness to

The times that brought them in; so shall I do

To the freshest things now reigning and make stale

The glistering of this present, as my tale

15 Now seems to it. Your patience this allowing,

I turn my glass and give my scene such growing

As you had slept between: Leontes leaving,

The effects of his fond jealousies so grieving

SHEPHERD

It's a lucky day, boy, and we'll do good deeds to mark it.

They exit.

Act 4 Scene 1

TIME enters as the chorus. .

TIME

I am taking up my wings, in the name of Time, which pleases some, tests all, brings both joy and terror, makes errors and corrects them. Don't see it as a crime that I pass quickly over sixteen years and leave that wide gap unexamined, as I have the power to overthrow the laws of nature and, in one hour, to establish or topple custom. Let me remain as I've been since before civilization began through what currently is. I saw the times that led to the present, and as I did to the past, I'll make the youngest things old and dim the shine of the present until it, too, is old. If your patience allows, I'll turn my hourglass and move the scene forward as if you had slept through it all.

Leontes mourns the terrible results of his foolish jealousy so much that he shuts himself away. Then imagine, dear spectators, that I am now in fair Bohemia, where a son of the king, named Florizel, lives. And quickly I'll speak of Perdita, grown into a young woman so graceful she inspires admiration. I won't prophecy what will happen to her, but let Time reveal it. She is a shepherd's daughter, and what pertains to her is the

That he shuts up himself, imagine me,
20 Gentle spectators, that I now may be
In fair Bohemia, and remember well,
I mentioned a son o' the king's, which Florizel
I now name to you; and with speed so pace
To speak of Perdita, now grown in grace
25 Equal with wondering: what of her ensues
I list not prophecy; but let Time's news
Be known when 'tis brought forth.
A shepherd's daughter,
And what to her adheres, which follows after,
30 Is the argument of Time. Of this allow,
If ever you have spent time worse ere now;
If never, yet that Time himself doth say
He wishes earnestly you never may.

Exit

Bohemia. The palace of POLIXENES.

Enter POLIXENES and CAMILLO

POLIXENES

I pray thee, good Camillo, be no more importunate:
'tis a sickness denying thee any thing; a death to
grant this.

provenance of Time. Allow this leap in time if ever before now
you've spent time in a worse way. If you haven't, Time himself
hopes you never will.

He exits.

Act 4 Scene 2

Bohemia. The palace of POLIXENES

POLIXENES and CAMILLO enter.

POLIXENES

I beg you, Camillo, stop being so persistent. It's terrible to deny
you anything, but it would be death to grant this.

CAMILLO

It is sixteen years since I saw my country: though
5 I have for the most part been aired abroad, I
desire to lay my bones there. Besides, the penitent
king, my master, hath sent for me; to whose feeling
sorrows I might be some allay, or I o'erween to
think so, which is another spur to my departure.

POLIXENES

10 As thou lovest me, Camillo, wipe not out the rest of
thy services by leaving me now: the need I have of
thee thine own goodness hath made; better not to
have had thee than thus to want thee: thou, having
made me businesses which none without thee can
15 sufficiently manage, must either stay to execute
them thyself or take away with thee the very
services thou hast done; which if I have not enough
considered, as too much I cannot, to be more
thankful to thee shall be my study, and my profit
20 therein the heaping friendships. Of that fatal
country, Sicilia, prithee speak no more; whose very
naming punishes me with the remembrance of that
penitent, as thou callest him, and reconciled king,
my brother; whose loss of his most precious queen
25 and children are even now to be afresh lamented.

Say to me, when sawest thou the Prince Florizel, my

CAMILLO

It's been sixteen years since I've seen my country. Although
I've lived abroad so long, I want to be buried at home. Besides,
my master, the king, regrets his actions and has sent for me.
Perhaps I can ease his grief, if I'm not too presumptuous in
thinking I might, and that makes my departure all the more
urgent.

POLIXENES

If you love me, Camillo, don't renounce the rest of your service
to me by leaving me now. It's your own excellence that makes
me need you so much. It would have been better not to have
known you at all than to miss you. Since you've managed
matters here in a way that no one can do without you, you
must either stay and see them through or take them with you.
If I haven't been thankful enough—and I can't be too thankful—
I'll apply myself to it even more and find my profit in your great
friendship. Please don't speak of that deadly country, Sicilia,
anymore. Its very name hurts by making me remember that
remorseful—as you call him—and reconciled king, whose loss
of his precious queen and children should be mourned anew
even now. Tell me, when did you last see my son, Prince
Florizel? Kings are just as unhappy when their children are not
virtuous as when they lose them after they've proved their
virtues.

son? Kings are no less unhappy, their issue not being gracious, than they are in losing them when they have approved their virtues.

CAMILLO

30 Sir, it is three days since I saw the prince. What his happier affairs may be, are to me unknown: but I have missingly noted, he is of late much retired from court and is less frequent to his princely exercises than formerly he hath appeared.

POLIXENES

35 I have considered so much, Camillo, and with some care; so far that I have eyes under my service which look upon his removedness; from whom I have this intelligence, that he is seldom from the house of a most homely shepherd; a man, they say, that from 40 very nothing, and beyond the imagination of his neighbours, is grown into an unspeakable estate.

CAMILLO

I have heard, sir, of such a man, who hath a daughter of most rare note: the report of her is extended more than can be thought to begin from such a cottage.

POLIXENES

45 That's likewise part of my intelligence; but, I

CAMILLO

Sir, it has been three days since I saw the prince. I don't know what happiness he might have, but I have noticed that lately he's more often absent from the court and neglectful of his princely duties than in the past.

POLIXENES

I have thought about this, and with some concern, Camillo, so much so that I've had some of my servants keep an eye on him while he's been absent. From them I've learned that he is often at the home of a simple shepherd, a man, they say, who has gone from nothing to amazing riches, greater than any of his neighbors could have imagined.

CAMILLO

I've heard of such a man, sir, who has a most exceptional daughter. What people say of her is beyond what one would expect to have come from such a cottage.

POLIXENES

fear, the angle that plucks our son thither. Thou
shalt accompany us to the place; where we will, not
appearing what we are, have some question with the
shepherd; from whose simplicity I think it not
50 uneasy to get the cause of my son's resort thither.
Prithee, be my present partner in this business, and
lay aside the thoughts of Sicilia.

CAMILLO

I willingly obey your command.

POLIXENES

My best Camillo! We must disguise ourselves.

Exeunt

A road near the Shepherd's cottage.

Enter AUTOLYCUS, singing

AUTOLYCUS

When daffodils begin to peer,
With heigh! the doxy over the dale,
Why, then comes in the sweet o' the year;
For the red blood reigns in the winter's pale.
5 The white sheet bleaching on the hedge,
With heigh! the sweet birds, O, how they sing!

I've heard the same thing, and I fear that she's what takes my son there. You shall go with me to that place, and in disguise we'll question the shepherd, whose simple nature I think will make it easy to find out why my son visits there. Please, be my partner in this matter and forget about Sicilia.

CAMILLO

I willingly obey your command.

POLIXENES

Wonderful Camillo! We must disguise ourselves.

They exit.

Act 4 Scene 3

A road near the Shepherd's cottage.

AUTOLYCUS enters, singing.

AUTOLYCUS

When daffodils begin to sprout, with the poor wench over the hills, why then it's the sweetest part of the year as red blood reigns in flesh made pale by winter. The white sheet airing out on the hedge, and oh, the sweet birds singing, makes my thieving fingers itch, and a quart of beer is a drink for a king! The lark chants "tirra-lyra," and the thrush and the jay sing,

Doth set my pugging tooth on edge;
For a quart of ale is a dish for a king.
The lark, that tirra-lyra chants,
10 With heigh! with heigh! the thrush and the jay,
Are summer songs for me and my aunts,
While we lie tumbling in the hay.
I have served Prince Florizel and in my time
wore three-pile; but now I am out of service:
15 But shall I go mourn for that, my dear?
The pale moon shines by night:
And when I wander here and there,
I then do most go right.
If tinkers may have leave to live,
20 And bear the sow-skin budget,
Then my account I well may, give,
And in the stocks avouch it.
My traffic is sheets; when the kite builds, look to
lesser linen. My father named me Autolycus; who
25 being, as I am, littered under Mercury, was likewise
a snapper-up of unconsidered trifles. With die and
drab I purchased this caparison, and my revenue is
the silly cheat. Gallows and knock are too powerful
on the highway: beating and hanging are terrors to
30 me: for the life to come, I sleep out the thought
of it. A prize! a prize!

while my mistress and I tumble about in the hay. I have served Prince Florizel and worn [three-piled velvet](#), but now I'm unemployed. But should I mourn for that, my dear? The pale moon shines at night, and in wandering here and there, I take the right course through life. If menders of metal pots have the right to live and bear the burden of their tool bag, then I can tell my own story and in [the stocks](#). I deal in sheets, and when the thieving bird builds his nest, he takes up poorer linen. My father named me [Autolycus](#). Like me he was born under [Mercury](#), and like me he would steal those little things left unsecured. By gambling and pimping I bought this outfit, and my income is from little deceptions. Being a highwayman might get me hanged or beat, which are terrors to me, and as for the afterlife, I try not to think about it. Oh, look—a prize!

Enter Clown

CLOWN

Let me see: every 'leven wether tod; every tod
yields pound and odd shilling; fifteen hundred
shorn. what comes the wool to?

AUTOLYCUS

35 [Aside]

If the springe hold, the cock's mine.

CLOWN

I cannot do't without counters. Let me see; what am
I to buy for our sheep-shearing feast? Three pound
of sugar, five pound of currants, rice,—what will
40 this sister of mine do with rice? But my father
hath made her mistress of the feast, and she lays it
on. She hath made me four and twenty nose-gays for
the shearers, three-man-song-men all, and very good
ones; but they are most of them means and bases; but
45 one puritan amongst them, and he sings psalms to
horn-pipes. I must have saffron to colour the warden
pies; mace; dates?—none, that's out of my note;
nutmegs, seven; a race or two of ginger, but that I
may beg; four pound of prunes, and as many of
50 raisins o' the sun.

The YOKEL enters.

YOKEL

Let's see. Every eleven sheep gives about twenty-eight
pounds of wool. Every twenty-eight pounds of wool earns a
pound and some shillings. If we've shorn fifteen hundred
sheep, how much does that come to?

AUTOLYCUS

(aside)

If the trap holds, the bird is mine.

YOKEL

I can't do it without something to add it up. Let's see, what do I
need to buy for our [sheep-shearing feast](#)? Three pounds of
sugar, five pounds of currants, rice. What does my sister need
rice for? But my father has put her in charge of the feast, and
she is doing a good job with it. She's made twenty-four small
bouquets for the shearers, who can all sing three-part songs,
and very well. But they are mostly tenors and basses, and one
is so saintly he sings psalms for dances. I have to get saffron to
color the pear pies. Do I need [mace](#) and dates? No, that's not
on my list. Seven nutmegs, some ginger root—though I might
be able to get that for free—and four pounds each of prunes
and raisins.

AUTOLYCUS

O that ever I was born!

Grovelling on the ground

CLOWN

I' the name of me—

AUTOLYCUS

O, help me, help me! pluck but off these rags; and then, death, death!

CLOWN

55 Alack, poor soul! thou hast need of more rags to lay on thee, rather than have these off.

AUTOLYCUS

O sir, the loathsomeness of them offends me more than the stripes I have received, which are mighty ones and millions.

CLOWN

60 Alas, poor man! a million of beating may come to a great matter.

AUTOLYCUS

I am robbed, sir, and beaten; my money and apparel ta'en from me, and these detestable things put upon me.

AUTOLYCUS

Oh, that I was ever born!

He lies flat on the ground.

YOKEL

What in the world—

AUTOLYCUS

Oh, help me! Take off these rags, and then I can die!

YOKEL

Alas, poor soul! You need more rags to cover you, not to take your rags off.

AUTOLYCUS

Oh, sir, their awfulness offends me more than the blows I received, which were numerous and painful.

YOKEL

Alas, poor man! To have suffered a million blows is a serious problem.

AUTOLYCUS

I've been robbed, sir, and beaten, my money and clothes taken from me, and these horrible rags put on me instead.

CLOWN

65 What, by a horseman, or a footman?

AUTOLYCUS

A footman, sweet sir, a footman.

CLOWN

Indeed, he should be a footman by the garments he
has left with thee: if this be a horseman's coat,
it hath seen very hot service. Lend me thy hand,
70 I'll help thee: come, lend me thy hand.

AUTOLYCUS

O, good sir, tenderly, O!

CLOWN

Alas, poor soul!

AUTOLYCUS

O, good sir, softly, good sir! I fear, sir, my
shoulder-blade is out.

CLOWN

75 How now! canst stand?

AUTOLYCUS

[Picking his pocket]

Softly, dear sir; good sir, softly. You ha' done me

YOKEL

What, by a man on horse or on foot?

AUTOLYCUS

A man on foot, sweet sir, on foot.

YOKEL

Indeed, he should be a man on foot, judging by those clothes.
If it were the coat of a man on a horse, it has seen some
terrible service. Give me your hand, and I'll help you. Here, give
me your hand.

AUTOLYCUS

Oh, good sir, be gentle!

YOKEL

Alas, poor soul!

AUTOLYCUS

Oh, good sir, carefully! I'm afraid my shoulder might be
dislocated.

YOKEL

What else? Can you stand?

AUTOLYCUS

(picking the Yokel's pocket) Careful, dear sir, careful. You have
done me a charitable deed.

a charitable office.

CLOWN

Dost lack any money? I have a little money for thee.

AUTOLYCUS

80 No, good sweet sir; no, I beseech you, sir: I have a kinsman not past three quarters of a mile hence, unto whom I was going; I shall there have money, or any thing I want: offer me no money, I pray you; that kills my heart.

CLOWN

85 What manner of fellow was he that robbed you?

AUTOLYCUS

A fellow, sir, that I have known to go about with troll-my-dames; I knew him once a servant of the prince: I cannot tell, good sir, for which of his virtues it was, but he was certainly whipped out of the court.

CLOWN

90 His vices, you would say; there's no virtue whipped out of the court: they cherish it to make it stay there; and yet it will no more but abide.

AUTOLYCUS

Vices, I would say, sir. I know this man well: he

YOKEL

Do you need money? I have a little I can give you.

AUTOLYCUS

No, good kind sir, I beg you. I have a relative less than a mile from here whom I was going to visit. He can give me money or whatever I need. Please, don't offer me money. That kills me.

YOKEL

What did the fellow who robbed you look like?

AUTOLYCUS

A fellow, sir, that I have known to go about with prostitutes. I know he was once a servant of the prince. I'm not sure, good sir, for which of his virtues it was, but he certainly got whipped out of court.

YOKEL

Vices, you mean, since virtues aren't whipped out of court. They cherish virtues there, and yet they won't stay there long.

AUTOLYCUS

hath been since an ape-bearer; then a
95 process-server, a bailiff; then he compassed a motion of the Prodigal Son, and married a tinker's wife within a mile where my land and living lies; and, having flown over many knavish professions, he settled only in rogue: some call him Autolycus.

CLOWN

100 Out upon him! prig, for my life, prig: he haunts wakes, fairs and bear-baitings.

AUTOLYCUS

Very true, sir; he, sir, he; that's the rogue that put me into this apparel.

CLOWN

Not a more cowardly rogue in all Bohemia: if you had 105 but looked big and spit at him, he'd have run.

AUTOLYCUS

I must confess to you, sir, I am no fighter: I am false of heart that way; and that he knew, I warrant him.

CLOWN

How do you now?

I would say vices, sir. I know this man well. Since he left he has been a performer with a monkey, then a summons server, a bailiff, and then he came up with a puppet show about the Prodigal Son, and then he married a pot-mender's wife within a mile of my property. Having entered and abandoned all these disreputable professions, he finally settled on being a rogue. Some call him Autolycus.

YOKEL

A curse on him! A crook, upon my life, a crook. He lingers about funerals, fairs, and bear-baitings.

AUTOLYCUS

Very true, sir, that's him, the rogue that put me in these clothes.

YOKEL

There's no more cowardly rogue in all of Bohemia. If you had looked large and had spit at him, he would have run.

AUTOLYCUS

I have to confess to you, sir, I'm not a fighter. I'm too faint at heart, and I'm sure he knew it.

YOKEL

How are you now?

AUTOLYCUS

110 Sweet sir, much better than I was; I can stand and walk: I will even take my leave of you, and pace softly towards my kinsman's.

CLOWN

Shall I bring thee on the way?

AUTOLYCUS

No, good-faced sir; no, sweet sir.

CLOWN

115 Then fare thee well: I must go buy spices for our sheep-shearing.

AUTOLYCUS

Prosper you, sweet sir!

Exit Clown

Your purse is not hot enough to purchase your spice. I'll be with you at your sheep-shearing too: if I
120 make not this cheat bring out another and the shearers prove sheep, let me be unrolled and my name put in the book of virtue!

Sings

Jog on, jog on, the foot-path way,

AUTOLYCUS

Kind sir, much better now than before. I can stand on my own and walk. I'll even say goodbye to you, and make my way carefully to my relative's home.

YOKEL

Shall I help you there?

AUTOLYCUS

No, pretty sir. No, kind sir.

YOKEL

Then best of luck to you. I have to go buy spices for our sheep-shearing.

AUTOLYCUS

May you prosper, sweet sir!

The YOKEL exits.

Your purse is not full enough to purchase your spices. I'll join you at your sheep-shearing, too. If I don't make this deception lead to another and prove the shearers as stupid as sheep, let me be removed from the list of thieves and my name become known for virtue!

He sings

Jog on, jog on, along the foot-path, and merrily grasp the gate.

And merrily hent the stile-a:

125 A merry heart goes all the day,

Your sad tires in a mile-a.

Exit

The Shepherd's cottage.

Enter **FLORIZEL** and **PERDITA**

FLORIZEL

These your unusual weeds to each part of you
Do give a life: no shepherdess, but Flora
Peering in April's front. This your sheep-shearing
Is as a meeting of the petty gods,
5 And you the queen on't.

PERDITA

Sir, my gracious lord,
To chide at your extremes it not becomes me:
O, pardon, that I name them! Your high self,
The gracious mark o' the land, you have obscured
10 With a swain's wearing, and me, poor lowly maid,
Most goddess-like prank'd up: but that our feasts
In every mess have folly and the feeders
Digest it with a custom, I should blush
To see you so attired, swoon, I think,

A merry heart can go all day, a sad heart tires after just a mile.

He exits.

Act 4 Scene 4

The Shepherd's cottage.

FLORIZEL and **PERDITA** enter.

FLORIZEL

Your festival clothes give you a new look. No longer a shepherdess, but the goddess of flowers appearing at the beginning of April. Your sheep-shearing is like a meeting of minor gods, and you are the queen of them.

PERDITA

My gracious lord, it doesn't suit me to rebuke you for exaggerations. Oh, pardon me for naming them! You, the one whose charms make him admired by the public, have hidden yourself in rustic clothing, while I, just a poor lowly girl, am made up like a goddess. If there weren't foolishness at every table during our feasts, and if people weren't accustomed to such foolishness by now, I'd feel embarrassed to see you dressed like that and would faint to see myself in the mirror.

15 To show myself a glass.

FLORIZEL

I bless the time
When my good falcon made her flight across
Thy father's ground.

PERDITA

Now Jove afford you cause!
20 To me the difference forges dread; your greatness
Hath not been used to fear. Even now I tremble
To think your father, by some accident,
Should pass this way as you did: O, the Fates!
How would he look, to see his work so noble
25 Vilely bound up? What would he say? Or how
Should I, in these my borrow'd flaunts, behold
The sternness of his presence?

FLORIZEL

Apprehend
Nothing but jollity. The gods themselves,
30 Humbling their deities to love, have taken
The shapes of beasts upon them: Jupiter
Became a bull, and bellow'd; the green Neptune
A ram, and bleated; and the fire-robed god,
Golden Apollo, a poor humble swain,
35 As I seem now. Their transformations

FLORIZEL

I bless the day when my hunting bird flew across your father's land.

PERDITA

Now may Jove give you reason to be glad! For me the difference in rank between us fills me with dread, though you in your greatness aren't used to fear. Even now I tremble to think that your father might by some accident pass this way, like you did. Oh, the Fates! How would he look when he discovered that his noble son was so humbly dressed! What would he say? How should I, in this borrowed finery, look upon his stern presence?

FLORIZEL

Imagine only happiness. The gods themselves have taken on the form of beasts when they're in love. Jupiter became a bull and bellowed; Neptune became a ram and bleated. And the god of the sun, golden Apollo, became a humble shepherd just as I appear today. But their transformations were never for someone so beautiful, and neither were their loves as chaste as mine, because my desires are secondary to my honor, and my faith burns hotter than my lusts.

Were never for a piece of beauty rarer,
Nor in a way so chaste, since my desires
Run not before mine honour, nor my lusts
Burn hotter than my faith.

PERDITA

40 O, but, sir,
Your resolution cannot hold, when 'tis
Opposed, as it must be, by the power of the king:
One of these two must be necessities,
Which then will speak, that you must
45 change this purpose,
Or I my life.

FLORIZEL

Thou dearest Perdita,
With these forced thoughts, I prithee, darken not
The mirth o' the feast. Or I'll be thine, my fair,
50 Or not my father's. For I cannot be
Mine own, nor any thing to any, if
I be not thine. To this I am most constant,
Though destiny say no. Be merry, gentle;
Strangle such thoughts as these with any thing
55 That you behold the while. Your guests are coming:
Lift up your countenance, as it were the day
Of celebration of that nuptial which
We two have sworn shall come.

PERDITA

But sir, your feelings toward me might falter when they are opposed, as they must be, by the power of the king. Then one of the two must happen: either you will change your feelings or I will lose my life.

FLORIZEL

Dearest Perdita, don't let these farfetched thoughts dampen the high-spirits of the feast. I'll be yours, my fair love, and not my father's. I can't be myself, or anything to anyone, if I'm not yours. My feelings won't change, even if destiny says we are not to be together. Be happy, dearest. Get rid of these thoughts by busying yourself with something else. Your guests are coming. Look happy, as if it were the day we're getting married, as we've sworn we will.

PERDITA

O lady Fortune,

60 Stand you auspicious!

FLORIZEL

See, your guests approach:

Address yourself to entertain them sprightly,

And let's be red with mirth.

Enter Shepherd, Clown, MOPSA, DORCAS, and others, with

POLIXENES and **CAMILLO** disguised

SHEPHERD

Fie, daughter! when my old wife lived, upon

65 This day she was both pantler, butler, cook,

Both dame and servant; welcomed all, served all;

Would sing her song and dance her turn; now here,

At upper end o' the table, now i' the middle;

On his shoulder, and his; her face o' fire

70 With labour and the thing she took to quench it,

She would to each one sip. You are retired,

As if you were a feasted one and not

The hostess of the meeting: pray you, bid

These unknown friends to's welcome; for it is

75 A way to make us better friends, more known.

Come, quench your blushes and present yourself

That which you are, mistress o' the feast: come on,

PERDITA

Oh, Fortune, remain favorable!

FLORIZEL

See, your guests are approaching. Prepare yourself to entertain them in a lively manner, and let's be red-faced from all our laughter.

The SHEPHERD, YOKEL, MOPSA, DORCAS, and others enter.

POLIXENES and **CAMILLO**, who are in disguise, also enter.

SHEPHERD

Oh, daughter, when my old wife was still alive, on this day she was a pantry maid, butler, cook, mistress of the house, and servant. She welcomed all, served all, would sing her song and dance her share. She would sit first at the head of the table, then in the middle. She'd be on this man's shoulder, and then on that one's. Her face would be red from work and what she drank to quench her thirst, and she would drink a toast to each person. You are withdrawn, as if you were a guest and not the hostess of this party. Please, welcome these strangers so that we can become better acquainted. Come, stop blushing and present yourself as that which you are: the mistress of the feast. Come on and welcome us to your sheep-shearing, so that your flock will prosper.

And bid us welcome to your sheep-shearing,
As your good flock shall prosper.

PERDITA

80 [To POLIXENES] Sir, welcome:
It is my father's will I should take on me
The hostess-ship o' the day.

To CAMILLO

You're welcome, sir.
Give me those flowers there, Dorcas. Reverend sirs,
85 For you there's rosemary and rue; these keep
Seeming and savour all the winter long:
Grace and remembrance be to you both,
And welcome to our shearing!

POLIXENES

Shepherdess,
90 A fair one are you—well you fit our ages
With flowers of winter.

PERDITA

Sir, the year growing ancient,
Not yet on summer's death, nor on the birth
Of trembling winter, the fairest
95 flowers o' the season
Are our carnations and streak'd gillyvors,

PERDITA

(to Polixenes) Sir, welcome. My father wishes me to be the hostess here today.

To Camillo

You are welcome here, sir. Give me those flowers there, Dorcas. Honored sirs, for you there are [rosemary and rue](#), which keep their appearance and scent all through the winter. May you both have grace and remembrance, and welcome to our shearing!

POLIXENES

Fair shepherdess, since we are old, you do well to pair us with [winter flowers](#).

PERDITA

Sir, the year is growing old, with the summer not yet over and the winter not yet starting. The fairest flowers of this season are carnations and two-toned gillyflowers, which some call nature's bastards. But we don't have any of those flowers in our garden, and I don't care to get any cuttings of them.

Which some call nature's bastards: of that kind
Our rustic garden's barren; and I care not
To get slips of them.

POLIXENES

100 Wherefore, gentle maiden,
Do you neglect them?

PERDITA

For I have heard it said
There is an art which in their piedness shares
With great creating nature.

POLIXENES

105 Say there be;
Yet nature is made better by no mean
But nature makes that mean: so, over that art
Which you say adds to nature, is an art
That nature makes. You see, sweet maid, we marry
110 A gentler scion to the wildest stock,
And make conceive a bark of baser kind
By bud of nobler race: this is an art
Which does mend nature, change it rather, but
The art itself is nature.

PERDITA

115 So it is.

POLIXENES

Kind maiden, why do you reject them?

PERDITA

Because I've heard that their many colors are due as much to cross-breeding as to nature.

POLIXENES

Perhaps that's true. But any technique used to improve nature is itself made by nature, so any form of artifice that adds to nature is really a natural artifice. You see, sweet maid, we marry a more noble stem to a wild stem, so that a lesser plant produces one that is superior. This is an art that improves nature, or rather changes it, but the art itself is natural.

PERDITA

So it is.

POLIXENES

Then make your garden rich in gillyvors,
And do not call them bastards.

PERDITA

I'll not put
The dibble in earth to set one slip of them;
120 No more than were I painted I would wish
This youth should say 'twere well and only therefore
Desire to breed by me. Here's flowers for you;
Hot lavender, mints, savoury, marjoram;
The marigold, that goes to bed wi' the sun
125 And with him rises weeping: these are flowers
Of middle summer, and I think they are given
To men of middle age. You're very welcome.

CAMILLO

I should leave grazing, were I of your flock,
And only live by gazing.

PERDITA

130 Out, alas!
You'd be so lean, that blasts of January
Would blow you through and through.
Now, my fair'st friend,
I would I had some flowers o' the spring that might
135 Become your time of day; and yours, and yours,

POLIXENES

Then fill your garden with gillyflowers, and don't call them
bastards.

PERDITA

I won't put a shovel in the dirt to plant a single one of them, just
as I wouldn't want this youth here to think I'm attractive and
want to sleep with me only because I'm wearing makeup. Here
are flowers for you: lavender, mint, savory, marjoram, and the
marigold, which sets with the sun and rises with it filled with
dew. These are flowers that bloom in the middle of summer,
and I think they should be given to men of middle age. You're
very welcome here.

(She gives them flowers.)

CAMILLO

If I were part of your flock, I would stop grazing and instead
gaze on you as my only nourishment.

PERDITA

Oh, not at all! You'd be so skinny that the icy winds of January
would blow right through you. (*to Florizel*) Now, my fairest
friend, I wish I had flowers of the spring that would match your
age, (*to Mopsa and Dorcas*) and yours, and yours, who are still
in your adolescence. Oh, [Proserpina, if only we had the flowers](#)
that you, frightened, let fall from Dis's chariot! (In Greek myth,

That wear upon your virgin branches yet
Your maidenheads growing; O Proserpina,
For the flowers now, that frightened thou let'st fall
From Dis's waggon! daffodils,

140 That come before the swallow dares, and take
The winds of March with beauty; violets dim,
But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes
Or Cytherea's breath; pale primroses
That die unmarried, ere they can behold
145 Bight Phoebus in his strength—a malady
Most incident to maids; bold oxlips and
The crown imperial; lilies of all kinds,
The flower-de-luce being one! O, these I lack,
To make you garlands of, and my sweet friend,
150 To strew him o'er and o'er!

FLORIZEL

What, like a corse?

PERDITA

No, like a bank for love to lie and play on;
Not like a corse; or if, not to be buried,
But quick and in mine arms. Come, take your flowers:
155 Methinks I play as I have seen them do
In Whitsun pastorals: sure this robe of mine
Does change my disposition.

Proserpina was abducted by Dis, also known as Pluto, while she was collecting flowers.) Daffodils that bloom before the swallows dare return from the south, and that charm the winds of March with their beauty. Modest violets that are sweeter than Juno's eyes or Cytherea's breath . Pale primroses that die unmarried, before they can see the bright sun at full strength—a sickness that often affects young women. Bold oxlips and the crown imperial lily, lilies of all kinds, the flower-de-luce being one! Oh, if only I had these flowers to make garlands and to throw over my sweet friend!

FLORIZEL

What, like a corpse?

PERDITA

No, like a riverbank for love to lie and play on. Not like a corpse—or, if so, not one to be buried, but one alive and in my arms. Come, take your flowers. I think I am playing as I've seen them do during Whitsun festivities. This outfit I'm wearing certainly changes my attitude.

FLORIZEL

What you do

Still betters what is done. When you speak, sweet.

160 I'd have you do it ever: when you sing,

I'd have you buy and sell so, so give alms,

Pray so; and, for the ordering your affairs,

To sing them too: when you do dance, I wish you

A wave o' the sea, that you might ever do

165 Nothing but that; move still, still so,

And own no other function: each your doing,

So singular in each particular,

Crowns what you are doing in the present deed,

That all your acts are queens.

PERDITA

170 O Doricles,

Your praises are too large: but that your youth,

And the true blood which peepeth fairly through't,

Do plainly give you out an unstain'd shepherd,

With wisdom I might fear, my Doricles,

175 You woo'd me the false way.

FLORIZEL

I think you have

As little skill to fear as I have purpose

To put you to't. But come; our dance, I pray:

Your hand, my Perdita: so turtles pair,

FLORIZEL

What you do is always better than what is normally done.

When you speak, sweet, I'd have you do it forever. When you sing, I'd have you buy and sell with songs, and give alms, pray, and arrange your affairs with singing. When you dance, I wish you were a wave in the sea, so that you would only ever do that and have no other purpose in life. Everything you do is so perfect that whatever you do is the best.

PERDITA

Oh, [Doricles](#), you praise me too much. If your youth and your noble character didn't shine through your disguise and reveal your purity, I might worry that you were trying to lead me astray.

FLORIZEL

I think you have as little cause to fear as I have intention to make you feel afraid. But come, dance with me please. Give me your hand, my Perdita, just as turtledoves pair for life and never part from one another.

180 That never mean to part.

PERDITA

I'll swear for 'em.

POLIXENES

This is the prettiest low-born lass that ever
Ran on the green-sward: nothing she does or seems
But smacks of something greater than herself,

185 Too noble for this place.

CAMILLO

He tells her something
That makes her blood look out: good sooth, she is
The queen of curds and cream.

CLOWN

Come on, strike up!

DORCAS

190 Mopsa must be your mistre marry, garlic,
To mend her kissing with!

MOPSA

Now, in good time!

CLOWN

Not a word, a word; we stand upon our manners.
Come, strike up!

PERDITA

I'll swear to their philosophy.

POLIXENES

She is the prettiest common girl that's ever run across the
lawn. Everything she does has an air of something greater than
herself, something too noble for this place.

CAMILLO

He's saying something that makes her blush. Goodness, her
complexion is as creamy as milk.

YOKEL

Come on, play the music!

DORCAS

Mopsa will be your dance partner. Give her garlic to make her
breath better!

MOPSA

Now, that's enough!

YOKEL

Don't say a word. We'll act with manners. Come, play the
music!

Music. Here a dance of Shepherds and Shepherdesses

POLIXENES

195 Pray, good shepherd, what fair swain is this
Which dances with your daughter?

SHEPHERD

They call him Doricles; and boasts himself
To have a worthy feeding: but I have it
Upon his own report and I believe it;
200 He looks like sooth. He says he loves my daughter:
I think so too; for never gazed the moon
Upon the water as he'll stand and read
As 'twere my daughter's eyes: and, to be plain,
I think there is not half a kiss to choose
205 Who loves another best.

POLIXENES

She dances feately.

SHEPHERD

So she does any thing; though I report it,
That should be silent: if young Doricles
Do light upon her, she shall bring him that
210 Which he not dreams of.

Enter Servant

Music plays. The shepherds and shepherdesses dance.

POLIXENES

Good shepherd, can you tell me who is the handsome young
man dancing with your daughter?

SHEPHERD

They call him Doricles and say he has a valuable pasture. He's
told me so himself, and I believe him. He looks honest. He says
he loves my daughter, and I think he does. He gazes into my
daughter's eyes as intently as the moon shines onto water.
And, to be blunt, I don't think there's a way to tell from their kiss
who loves the other more.

POLIXENES

She dances well.

SHEPHERD

She does everything well. I'll tell you something I shouldn't: if
young Doricles does marry her, she'll bring him greater fortune
than he guesses.

A servant enters.

SERVANT

O master, if you did but hear the pedlar at the door, you would never dance again after a tabour and pipe; no, the bagpipe could not move you: he sings several tunes faster than you'll tell money; he 215 utters them as he had eaten ballads and all men's ears grew to his tunes.

CLOWN

He could never come better; he shall come in. I love a ballad but even too well, if it be doleful matter merrily set down, or a very pleasant thing 220 indeed and sung lamentably.

SERVANT

He hath songs for man or woman, of all sizes; no milliner can so fit his customers with gloves: he has the prettiest love-songs for maids; so without bawdry, which is strange; with such delicate 225 burthens of dildos and fadings, 'jump her and thump her;' and where some stretch-mouthed rascal would, as it were, mean mischief and break a foul gap into the matter, he makes the maid to answer 'Whoop, do me no harm, good man;' puts him off, slight him, with 230 'Whoop, do me no harm, good man.'

POLIXENES

SERVANT

Oh, master, if you had heard the peddler at the door, you'd never again dance to a tambourine and a pipe, and a bagpipe wouldn't tempt you. He sings several songs faster than you can count money. He sings them as readily as if he had digested them completely, and all men can't help but listen.

YOKEL

He couldn't have come at a better time. Let him in. I love a ballad almost too much, especially a sad subject set to a happy tune, or a pleasant subject sung mournfully.

SERVANT

He has songs for all men and women. He fits them to his customers closer than gloves. He has pretty love songs for the maid, without any lewdness, which is unusual, and with [delicate refrains full of dildos and orgasms](#), like "jump her and thump her." And if an obscene rascal would try to make mischief and interrupt the song, the peddler makes the maid answer, "Hey, do me no harm, good man," and puts him off that way.

POLIXENES

This is a brave fellow.

CLOWN

Believe me, thou talkest of an admirable conceited fellow. Has he any unbraided wares?

SERVANT

He hath ribbons of an the colours i' the rainbow;
235 points more than all the lawyers in Bohemia can learnedly handle, though they come to him by the gro inkles, caddisses, cambrics, lawns: why, he sings 'em over as they were gods or goddesses; you would think a smock were a she-angel, he so chants
240 to the sleeve-hand and the work about the square on't.

CLOWN

Prithee bring him in; and let him approach singing.

PERDITA

Forewarn him that he use no scurrilous words in 's tunes.

Exit Servant

CLOWN

You have of these pedlars, that have more in them than you'd think, sister.

PERDITA

245 Ay, good brother, or go about to think.

This is an excellent fellow.

YOKEL

Believe me, you are talking about a very witty fellow. Does he have any new items to sell?

SERVANT

He has ribbons in all the colors of the rainbow, and countless laces that he gets wholesale. He has linen tape and yarn tape, fine linens, too. Why, he sings about them as if they were gods and goddesses. You would think a ladies' undergarment were an angel, the way he sings to the cuff and embroidery about the bodice.

YOKEL

Please, let him in, and have him sing while he's approaching us.

PERDITA

Warn him that he musn't use bad words in his songs.

The Servant exits.

YOKEL

There are some peddlers who have more bad words in them than you would think.

PERDITA

Ay, good brother, or wish to think.

Enter AUTOLYCUS, singing

AUTOLYCUS

Lawn as white as driven snow;
Cyprus black as e'er was crow;
Gloves as sweet as damask roses;
Masks for faces and for noses;
250 Bugle bracelet, necklace amber,
Perfume for a lady's chamber;
Golden quoifs and stomachers,
For my lads to give their dears:
Pins and poking-sticks of steel,
255 What maids lack from head to heel:
Come buy of me, come; come buy, come buy;
Buy lads, or else your lasses cry: Come buy.

CLOWN

If I were not in love with Mopsa, thou shouldst take
no money of me; but being enthralled as I am, it
260 will also be the bondage of certain ribbons and gloves.

MOPSA

I was promised them against the feast; but they come
not too late now.

DORCAS

He hath promised you more than that, or there be liars.

AUTOLYCUS enters, singing.

AUTOLYCUS

Linen as white as wind-whipped snow;
[Crepe](#) as black as a crow;
Gloves as sweet-smelling as damask roses;
Masks to cover faces and noses;
A glittering bracelet, a necklace made of amber;
Perfume made for a ladies room;
Golden caps and dress fronts
For my young men to give to their sweethearts;
Pins and rods of steel;
Whatever young woman need from head to toe;
Come buy them from me, or your ladies will cry. Come buy.

YOKEL

If I weren't in love with Mopsa, I wouldn't give you a dime. But
being infatuated as I am, I'll have to get a few ribbons and
gloves.

MOPSA

You promised them to me in time for the feast, but I guess it's
not too late.

DORCAS

He's promised more than that, or he is a liar.

MOPSA

He hath paid you all he promised you; may be, he has
265 paid you more, which will shame you to give him again.

CLOWN

Is there no manners left among maids? will they wear their plackets where they should bear their faces? Is there not milking-time, when you are going to bed, or kiln-hole, to whistle off these
270 secrets, but you must be tittle-tattling before all our guests? 'tis well they are whispering: clamour your tongues, and not a word more.

MOPSA

I have done. Come, you promised me a tawdry-lace and a pair of sweet gloves.

CLOWN

275 Have I not told thee how I was cozened by the way and lost all my money?

AUTOLYCUS

And indeed, sir, there are cozeners abroad; therefore it behoves men to be wary.

CLOWN

Fear not thou, man, thou shalt lose nothing here.

MOPSA

He has given you all he promised, and maybe a baby on top of it. It will shame you to pay him back with that baby in nine months.

YOKEL

Don't you maids have any manners? Will you reveal your most intimate affairs in public? Isn't there a time to tell these secrets while you are milking, or going to bed, or at the fireplace, rather than tattling in front of our guests? Good thing they are whispering among themselves. Bite your tongues, and don't say another word.

MOPSA

I won't. Come on, you promised me a cheap neckerchief and a pair of gloves.

YOKEL

Didn't I tell you I was tricked along my way and lost all my money?

AUTOLYCUS

It's true, sir. There are tricksters out there, so it's in a man's best interest to watch out.

YOKEL

Don't fear, man, you won't lose anything here.

AUTOLYCUS

280 I hope so, sir; for I have about me many parcels of charge.

CLOWN

What hast here? ballads?

MOPSA

Pray now, buy some: I love a ballad in print o'
life, for then we are sure they are true.

AUTOLYCUS

Here's one to a very doleful tune, how a usurer's
285 wife was brought to bed of twenty money-bags at a
burthen and how she longed to eat adders' heads and
toads carbonadoed.

MOPSA

Is it true, think you?

AUTOLYCUS

Very true, and but a month old.

DORCAS

290 Bless me from marrying a usurer!

AUTOLYCUS

Here's the midwife's name to't, one Mistress
Tale-porter, and five or six honest wives that were

AUTOLYCUS

I hope not, sir, since I have so many parcels of value.

YOKEL

What do you have here? Ballads?

MOPSA

Please, buy some. I love having a ballad written out, because
then we are sure it's true.

AUTOLYCUS

Here's one that's sung to a very mournful tune: how a money
lender's wife delivered twenty bags of money in one birth, and
she wanted to eat snakes' heads and toads grilled.

MOPSA

Do you think it's true?

AUTOLYCUS

Very true, and only a month old.

DORCAS

May I never marry a loan shark!

AUTOLYCUS

Here's the name of the midwife who helped at the birth, one
Mistress Taleporter, and the five or six who witnessed it. Why

present. Why should I carry lies abroad?

MOPSA

Pray you now, buy it.

CLOWN

295 Come on, lay it by: and let's first see more ballads; we'll buy the other things anon.

AUTOLYCUS

Here's another ballad of a fish, that appeared upon the coast on Wednesday the four-score of April, forty thousand fathom above water, and sung this
300 ballad against the hard hearts of maids: it was thought she was a woman and was turned into a cold fish for she would not exchange flesh with one that loved her: the ballad is very pitiful and as true.

DORCAS

Is it true too, think you?

AUTOLYCUS

305 Five justices' hands at it, and witnesses more than my pack will hold.

CLOWN

Lay it by too: another.

AUTOLYCUS

should I spread lies around?

MOPSA

Please, buy it.

YOKEL

Come on, put it aside, and let's see more ballads before we buy anything.

AUTOLYCUS

Here's another ballad about a fish that appeared on the shore on Wednesday, the eightieth of April, two hundred and forty thousand feet above sea level, and sang this song to soften the hearts of young women. Some thought it was a woman who had been changed into a cold fish because she wouldn't sleep with the man who loved her. The ballad is as sad as it is true.

DORCAS

You think it's true, too?

AUTOLYCUS

Five judges would swear to it, and there are more witnesses' statements than I could pack along with me.

YOKEL

Put that one aside, too, and let's see another.

AUTOLYCUS

This is a merry ballad, but a very pretty one.

MOPSA

Let's have some merry ones.

AUTOLYCUS

310 Why, this is a passing merry one and goes to the tune of 'Two maids wooing a man:' there's scarce a maid westward but she sings it; 'tis in request, I can tell you.

MOPSA

We can both sing it: if thou'l bear a part, thou
315 shalt hear; 'tis in three parts.

DORCAS

We had the tune on't a month ago.

AUTOLYCUS

I can bear my part; you must know 'tis my occupation; have at it with you.

SONG

AUTOLYCUS

Get you hence, for I must go
320 Where it fits not you to know.

DORCAS

This is a happy ballad, and very pretty.

MOPSA

Let's have some happy ones.

AUTOLYCUS

Here's a very merry one, which goes to the tune of "Two Maids Courting a Man." There's hardly a woman west of here that doesn't sing it. It's in great demand, I can tell you.

MOPSA

We can both sing it. If you will sing one part, we can do it, since there are three parts and three of us.

DORCAS

We learned the tune for it a month ago.

AUTOLYCUS

I can sing my part. As you know, I'm a singer by trade. Go ahead.

They sing.

AUTOLYCUS

Go away, because I must go to a place that you don't know.

DORCAS

Whither?

MOPSA

O, whither?

DORCAS

Whither?

MOPSA

It becomes thy oath full well,

325 Thou to me thy secrets tell.

DORCAS

Me too, let me go thither.

MOPSA

Or thou goest to the orange or mill.

DORCAS

If to either, thou dost ill.

AUTOLYCUS

Neither.

DORCAS

330 What, neither?

AUTOLYCUS

Neither.

Where?

MOPSA

Oh, where?

DORCAS

Where?

MOPSA

It wouldn't be breaking your promise to tell me your secrets.

DORCAS

Me, too, let me go with you.

MOPSA

Or perhaps you are going to the farmhouse or the mill.

DORCAS

If you are going either place, you are doing wrong.

AUTOLYCUS

I'm not going to either one.

DORCAS

What, neither one?

AUTOLYCUS

Neither one.

DORCAS

Thou hast sworn my love to be.

MOPSA

Thou hast sworn it more to me:

Then whither goest? say, whither?

CLOWN

335 We'll have this song out anon by ourselves: my father and the gentlemen are in sad talk, and we'll not trouble them. Come, bring away thy pack after me. Wenches, I'll buy for you both. Pedlar, let's have the first choice. Follow me, girls.

Exit with DORCAS and MOPSA

AUTOLYCUS

340 And you shall pay well for 'em.

Follows singing

Will you buy any tape,
Or lace for your cape,
My dainty duck, my dear-a?
Any silk, any thread,
345 Any toys for your head,
Of the new'st and finest, finest wear-a?
Come to the pedlar;

DORCAS

You've sworn to be my love.

MOPSA

You've sworn it more to me. Then where are you going? Tell me, where?

YOKEL

We'll finish this song soon by ourselves. My father and the gentlemen are having a serious talk, and we should leave them alone. Come, bring your pack and follow me. Girls, I'll buy things for you both. Peddler, give me first choice. Follow me, girls.

YOKEL, DORCAS, and MOPSA exit.

AUTOLYCUS

And you will pay a great deal for them!

He follows them, singing.

Will you buy any ribbon,
Or lace for your cape,
My dainty little dear,
Any silk, any thread
Any ornaments for your head,
The newest and finest to wear?
Come to the peddler

Money's a medler.

That doth utter all men's ware-a.

Exit

Re-enter Servant

SERVANT

350 Master, there is three carters, three shepherds,
three neat-herds, three swine-herds, that have made
themselves all men of hair, they call themselves
saltiers, and they have a dance which the wenches
say is a gallimaufry of gambols, because they are
355 not in't; but they themselves are o' the mind, if it
be not too rough for some that know little but
bowling, it will please plentifully.

SHEPHERD

Away! we'll none on 't: here has been too much
homely foolery already. I know, sir, we weary you.

POLIXENES

360 You weary those that refresh us: pray, let's see
these four threes of herdsmen.

SERVANT

One three of them, by their own report, sir, hath

Money is a meddler

When it offers all a man's items for sale.

He exits.

The Servant re-enters.

SERVANT

Master, three cart drivers, three shepherds, three cowherds,
and three swineherds have arrived, dressed up in animal skins.
They call themselves jumpers, and they have a dance that the
wenches say is filled with many leaps and hops. If it isn't too
energetic for those more used to sedate sports like bowling, it
will be greatly pleasing.

SHEPHERD

Send them away! We'll have none of it. There has been too
much vulgar foolishness already. I know, sir, that we are tiring
you.

POLIXENES

You'll tire those that entertain us. Please, let's see these four
trios of herdsmen.

SERVANT

danced before the king; and not the worst of the three but jumps twelve foot and a half by the squier.

SHEPHERD

365 Leave your prating; since these good men are pleased, let them come in; but quickly now.

SERVANT

Why, they stay at door, sir.

Exit

Here a dance of twelve Satyrs

POLIXENES

O, father, you'll know more of that hereafter.

To CAMILLO

Is it not too far gone? 'Tis time to part them.

370 He's simple and tells much.

To FLORIZEL

How now, fair shepherd!

Your heart is full of something that does take
Your mind from feasting. Sooth, when I was young
And handed love as you do, I was wont
375 To load my she with knacks: I would have ransack'd

One trio tells me that they have danced before the king. And even the worst of the three jumps twelve and half feet exactly.

SHEPHERD

Stop your chattering. Since these good men would be pleased to see them, let them in, and quickly.

SERVANT

Why, they're right at the door, sir.

He exits.

The twelve satyrs dance.

POLIXENES

Oh, father, you'll know more about that soon.

To CAMILLO

Hasn't it gone too far? It's time to separate them.

He's naïve and tells them too much.

To FLORIZEL

Come now, handsome shepherd!

There is something in your heart that is keeping your mind from enjoying the feast. When I was young and enjoyed love the way you do, I tended to give my girl lots of gifts. I would have ransacked the peddler's silks and treasures and given her

The pedlar's silken treasury and have pour'd it
To her acceptance; you have let him go
And nothing marted with him. If your lass
Interpretation should abuse and call this

380 Your lack of love or bounty, you were straited
For a reply, at least if you make a care
Of happy holding her.

FLORIZEL

Old sir, I know
She prizes not such trifles as these are:

385 The gifts she looks from me are pack'd and lock'd
Up in my heart; which I have given already,
But not deliver'd. O, hear me breathe my life
Before this ancient sir, who, it should seem,
Hath sometime loved! I take thy hand, this hand,

390 As soft as dove's down and as white as it,
Or Ethiopian's tooth, or the fann'd
snow that's bolted
By the northern blasts twice o'er.

POLIXENES

What follows this?

395 How prettily the young swain seems to wash
The hand was fair before! I have put you out:
But to your protestation; let me hear
What you profess.

them for her approval. You've let him go without buying a thing. If your lass interprets this as a lack of love or a lack of money, you'll have a hard time explaining it, at least if you want her to stay with you.

FLORIZEL

Old sir, I know she doesn't care for such trifles as these. The gifts she wants from me are from my heart, and they are hers already, though I haven't delivered them yet. (*to Perdita*) Oh, listen to me telling my private thoughts to this old man, who it seems has been in love on occasion! I take your hand, as soft and as white as a dove's downy feather, or the snow that is blown about by the wind.

POLIXENES

What does this mean? How delicately the young man seems to wash the hand that was already beautiful. I've interrupted. But back to your declaration. Let me hear more about your love.

FLORIZEL

Do, and be witness to 't.

POLIXENES

400 And this my neighbour too?

FLORIZEL

And he, and more

Than he, and men, the earth, the heavens, and all:

That, were I crown'd the most imperial monarch,

Thereof most worthy, were I the fairest youth

405 That ever made eye swerve, had force and knowledge

More than was ever man's, I would not prize them

Without her love; for her employ them all;

Commend them and condemn them to her service

Or to their own perdition.

POLIXENES

410 Fairly offer'd.

CAMILLO

This shows a sound affection.

SHEPHERD

But, my daughter,

Say you the like to him?

PERDITA**FLORIZEL**

Do, and witness how I feel.

POLIXENES

And my companion, too?

FLORIZEL

Him, and others, and all men, the earth, the heavens and everything. If I were the most powerful and worthy king, or the most handsome youth to ever draw people's eyes, or if I had greater strength and knowledge than any other man, they would mean nothing to me without her love. I would dedicate them to her service or sentence them to damnation.

POLIXENES

Well said.

CAMILLO

This shows his strong affection for her.

SHEPHERD

But, my daughter, would you say the same to him?

PERDITA

I cannot speak

415 So well, nothing so well; no, nor mean better:
By the pattern of mine own thoughts I cut out
The purity of his.

SHEPHERD

Take hands, a bargain!

And, friends unknown, you shall bear witness to 't:
420 I give my daughter to him, and will make
Her portion equal his.

FLORIZEL

O, that must be
I' the virtue of your daughter: one being dead,
I shall have more than you can dream of yet;
425 Enough then for your wonder. But, come on,
Contract us 'fore these witnesses.

SHEPHERD

Come, your hand;
And, daughter, yours.

POLIXENES

Soft, swain, awhile, beseech you;
430 Have you a father?

FLORIZEL

I have: but what of him?

I can't speak as well, not nearly as well. But I couldn't say anything more. My own thoughts are echoed in his pure words.

SHEPHERD

Shake hands. It's a deal! And, friendly strangers, you'll be a witness to this. I give my daughter to him in marriage and will make her dowry equal to his fortune.

FLORIZEL

Then her dowry must be her virtue, since once my father is dead I will inherit more than you can dream of. It will be enough for you to wonder at it. But, come, bind us together before these witnesses.

SHEPHERD

Give me your hand, and daughter, give me yours.

POLIXENES

Gentle young shepherd, wait, please. Do you have a father?

FLORIZEL

I do, but what about him?

POLIXENES

Knows he of this?

FLORIZEL

He neither does nor shall.

POLIXENES

Methinks a father

435 Is at the nuptial of his son a guest
That best becomes the table. Pray you once more,
Is not your father grown incapable
Of reasonable affairs? is he not stupid
With age and altering rheums? can he speak? hear?
440 Know man from man? dispute his own estate?
Lies he not bed-rid? and again does nothing
But what he did being childish?

FLORIZEL

No, good sir;

He has his health and ampler strength indeed

445 Than most have of his age.

POLIXENES

By my white beard,
You offer him, if this be so, a wrong
Something unfilial: reason my son
Should choose himself a wife, but as good reason

POLIXENES

Does he know about this?

FLORIZEL

He doesn't, and he won't.

POLIXENES

I think a father is the best guest at his son's wedding. Please, once more, has your father become incapable of doing normal tasks? Is he senile from age and illness? Can he speak and hear? Does he know one man from another? Can he handle his own estate? Is he confined to his bed and unable to do the things he did when he was younger?

FLORIZEL

No, good sir, he is healthy, and indeed he is even stronger than most people of his age.

POLIXENES

By my white beard, if this is so then you are wronging him in a way unsuitable for a son. It's reasonable that a son should choose a wife, but it's just as reasonable that his father should

450 The father, all whose joy is nothing else
But fair posterity, should hold some counsel
In such a business.

FLORIZEL

I yield all this;
But for some other reasons, my grave sir,
455 Which 'tis not fit you know, I not acquaint
My father of this business.

POLIXENES

Let him know't.

FLORIZEL

He shall not.

POLIXENES

Prithee, let him.

FLORIZEL

460 No, he must not.

SHEPHERD

Let him, my son: he shall not need to grieve
At knowing of thy choice.

FLORIZEL

Come, come, he must not.
Mark our contract.

be able to have some say in the matter, since all his joy is in his family.

FLORIZEL

I agree with all you're saying. But there are other reasons, my serious sir, which it's best you don't know regarding why I don't tell my father of this.

POLIXENES

Let him know about it.

FLORIZEL

He won't know about it.

POLIXENES

Please, let him.

FLORIZEL

No, he must not.

SHEPHERD

Let him know, my son. He won't grieve when he hears your choice.

FLORIZEL

Come, come, he must not know. Sign our contract.

POLIXENES

465 Mark your divorce, young sir,

Discovering himself

Whom son I dare not call; thou art too base
To be acknowledged: thou a sceptre's heir,
That thus affect'st a sheep-hook! [To the Shepherd] Thou old
traitor,

I am sorry that by hanging thee I can
470 But shorten thy life one week. [To PERDITA] And thou, fresh
piece

Of excellent witchcraft, who of force must know
The royal fool thou copest with,—

SHEPHERD

O, my heart!

POLIXENES

I'll have thy beauty scratch'd with briers, and made
475 More homely than thy state. For thee, fond boy,
If I may ever know thou dost but sigh
That thou no more shalt see this knack, as never
I mean thou shalt, we'll bar thee from succession;
Not hold thee of our blood, no, not our kin,
480 Far than Deucalion off: mark thou my words:
Follow us to the court. Thou churl, for this time,

POLIXENES

Sign your divorce, young sir!

He takes off his disguise.

I don't dare call you son. You are too lowly for me to
acknowledge. You are the heir of a king, and you want to be a
shepherd! (to the Shepherd) You old traitor, I'm sorry that
hanging you will only shorten your life by a week! (to Perdita)
And you, you skilled little witch, you must know you are
dealing with a royal fool—

SHEPHERD

Oh, my heart!

POLIXENES

I'll have your beautiful face scratched with thorns and made
worse than your social rank. (*to Florizel*) As for you, foolish boy,
if I ever find out that you've so much as sighed about not
seeing this whore again—as I mean you won't—I'll bar you from
inheriting the throne. I won't consider you related to me at all.
Listen to me: follow me to the court, you delinquent, because
this time I'll let you off easy, even though I am full of rage. (*to
Perdita*) And you, witch, you're only good enough for a

Though full of our displeasure, yet we free thee
From the dead blow of it. And you, enchantment.—
Worthy enough a herdsman: yea, him too,
485 That makes himself, but for our honour therein,
Unworthy thee,—if ever henceforth thou
These rural latches to his entrance open,
Or hoop his body more with thy embraces,
I will devise a death as cruel for thee
490 As thou art tender to't.

Exit

PERDITA

Even here undone!
I was not much afeard; for once or twice
I was about to speak and tell him plainly,
The selfsame sun that shines upon his court
495 Hides not his visage from our cottage but
Looks on alike. Will't please you, sir, be gone?
I told you what would come of this: beseech you,
Of your own state take care: this dream of mine,—
Being now awake, I'll queen it no inch farther,
500 But milk my ewes and weep.

CAMILLO

Why, how now, father!
Speak ere thou diest.

herdsman, and would be for Florizel, too, who lowers himself to the position of shepherd, if not for the royal blood in his veins. If you ever come near him or put your arms around him again, I'll devise a death for you that is as cruel as you are vulnerable to it.

He exits.

PERDITA

We're ruined even here! I was not very afraid. Once or twice I was about to speak and tell him bluntly that the same sun that illuminates his court doesn't hide its face from our cottage but looks down here all the same. Will you please leave, sir? I told you what would come of this. Please, take care of yourself. Now that I'm awake, I won't act the queen anymore but will milk my ewes and weep.

Why, what about you, father? Speak before you die.

SHEPHERD

I cannot speak, nor think
Nor dare to know that which I know. O sir!
505 You have undone a man of fourscore three,
That thought to fill his grave in quiet, yea,
To die upon the bed my father died,
To lie close by his honest bones: but now
Some hangman must put on my shroud and lay me
510 Where no priest shovels in dust. O cursed wretch,
That knew'st this was the prince,
and wouldst adventure
To mingle faith with him! Undone! undone!
If I might die within this hour, I have lived
515 To die when I desire.

Exit

FLORIZEL

Why look you so upon me?
I am but sorry, not afeard; delay'd,
But nothing alter'd: what I was, I am;
More straining on for plucking back, not following
520 My leash unwillingly.

CAMILLO

Gracious my lord,
You know your father's temper: at this time

SHEPHERD

I can't speak, or think, or dare to know what I know. Oh. sir! You have ruined a man of sixty-three. I thought I would go to my grave in peace, to die in the bed my father died in, and be buried close to his honest bones. But now a hangman will put a burial shroud on me and put me in an unconsecrated grave. (to Perdita) Oh, cursed girl, you knew this was the prince and dared to exchange vows with him! Undone! If I can die within the hour, I will have died when I wish.

He exits.

FLORIZEL

(to Perdita) Why do you look at me like that? I am only sorry, not afraid. Our plans are delayed, but not altered. I was in love, and I still am. Now I'm all the more determined to move forward for having been held back. I won't be pulled against my will.

CAMILLO

My gracious lord, you know your father's temper. Just now he won't let you speak, which I guess you don't plan to do

He will allow no speech, which I do guess
You do not purpose to him; and as hardly
525 Will he endure your sight as yet, I fear:
Then, till the fury of his highness settle,
Come not before him.

FLORIZEL

I not purpose it.
I think, Camillo?

CAMILLO

530 Even he, my lord.

PERDITA

How often have I told you 'twould be thus!
How often said, my dignity would last
But till 'twere known!

FLORIZEL

It cannot fail but by
535 The violation of my faith; and then
Let nature crush the sides o' the earth together
And mar the seeds within! Lift up thy looks:
From my succession wipe me, father; I
Am heir to my affection.

CAMILLO

540 Be advised.

anyway, and I fear he can hardly stand to look at you yet. So,
until his anger settles, don't approach him.

FLORIZEL

I won't try it. Is it you, Camillo?

CAMILLO

It is I, my lord.

PERDITA

How often have I told you it would be this way! How often have
I said that my dignity would only last as long we weren't
discovered!

FLORIZEL

Your dignity will only be hurt if I break my promise to you, and
if I do, may nature crush the Earth and any sources of life
within it! Lift up your eyes. Let my father disown me as his heir.
I am heir to my love.

CAMILLO

Be careful.

FLORIZEL

I am, and by my fancy: if my reason
Will thereto be obedient, I have reason;
If not, my senses, better pleased with madness,
Do bid it welcome.

CAMILLO

545 This is desperate, sir.

FLORIZEL

So call it: but it does fulfil my vow;
I needs must think it honesty. Camillo,
Not for Bohemia, nor the pomp that may
Be thereat glean'd, for all the sun sees or
550 The close earth wombs or the profound sea hides
In unknown fathoms, will I break my oath
To this my fair beloved: therefore, I pray you,
As you have ever been my father's honour'd friend,
When he shall miss me,—as, in faith, I mean not
555 To see him any more,—cast your good counsels
Upon his passion; let myself and fortune
Tug for the time to come. This you may know
And so deliver, I am put to sea
With her whom here I cannot hold on shore;
560 And most opportune to our need I have
A vessel rides fast by, but not prepared
For this design. What course I mean to hold

FLORIZEL

I am, by my heart. If my reason will obey love, I'll welcome
reason. If not, I will be happier with madness and will welcome
it gladly.

CAMILLO

This is a desperate act, sir.

FLORIZEL

You may call it that, but it does make good on what I just said,
so I think it is an honest act. Camillo, I won't break my promise
to Perdita for Bohemia, or all the glamour of being its king, or
even for all the world the sun shines on, or the caves under the
earth, or the depths hidden by the sea. I don't mean to see my
father again. So, please, as you have been his closest friend,
speak wise words to him and soothe his anger when he
realizes I'm gone. Let me wrestle with fortune for some time.
You can tell my father that I've gone to sea with the woman I'm
not allowed to hold on shore. Luckily for us, a vessel is close
by, though it was not there for this purpose. It won't help either
of us for me to tell you where we're going.

Shall nothing benefit your knowledge, nor
Concern me the reporting.

CAMILLO

565 O my lord!
I would your spirit were easier for advice,
Or stronger for your need.

FLORIZEL

Hark, Perdita.

Drawing her aside

I'll hear you by and by.

CAMILLO

570 He's irremoveable,
Resolved for flight. Now were I happy, if
His going I could frame to serve my turn,
Save him from danger, do him love and honour,
Purchase the sight again of dear Sicilia

575 And that unhappy king, my master, whom
I so much thirst to see.

FLORIZEL

Now, good Camillo;
I am so fraught with curious business that
I leave out ceremony.

CAMILLO

Oh, my lord! I wish you had a greater inclination to take advice,
or that you were stronger.

FLORIZEL

Listen, Perdita.

Drawing Perdita aside

(to Camillo) Camillo, I'll listen to you in a moment.

CAMILLO

He's made his mind up to flee. I would be happy if I could
make this departure serve my own purposes. I can save him
from danger and treat him with love and honor, and I can also
gain sight of dear Sicilia and that unhappy king who is my
master, and whom I long to see again.

FLORIZEL

Now, good Camillo, I'm so overwhelmed with this strange
undertaking that I've forgotten my manners.

CAMILLO

580 Sir, I think

You have heard of my poor services, i' the love
That I have borne your father?

FLORIZEL

Very nobly

Have you deserved: it is my father's music

585 To speak your deeds, not little of his care

To have them recompensed as thought on.

CAMILLO

Well, my lord,

If you may please to think I love the king

And through him what is nearest to him, which is

590 Your gracious self, embrace but my direction:

If your more ponderous and settled project

May suffer alteration, on mine honour,

I'll point you where you shall have such receiving

As shall become your highness; where you may

595 Enjoy your mistress, from the whom, I see,

There's no disjunction to be made, but by—

As heavens forefend!—your ruin; marry her,

And, with my best endeavours in your absence,

Your discontenting father strive to qualify

600 And bring him up to liking.

CAMILLO

Sir, I think you have heard of the modest services and the love I
have given your father?

FLORIZEL

The praise is well-deserved. My father delights to speak of
your actions, and he hopes that he repays them as much as he
praises them.

CAMILLO

Well, my lord, if you do believe that I love the king and what he
holds most dear, which is you, take my advice: if your
determined course might be altered a bit, I swear I'll show you
a place where you'll be received in a manner fit for your
highness. There you'll be able to enjoy life with your
sweetheart, from whom I can see there is no chance of
separating you except—heaven forbid!—through your ruin.
Marry her, and I'll strive in your absence to talk down your
unhappy father and turn him to approval.

FLORIZEL

How, Camillo,
May this, almost a miracle, be done?
That I may call thee something more than man
And after that trust to thee.

CAMILLO

505 Have you thought on
A place whereto you'll go?

FLORIZEL

Not any yet:
But as the unthought-on accident is guilty
To what we wildly do, so we profess
510 Ourselves to be the slaves of chance and flies
Of every wind that blows.

CAMILLO

Then list to me:
This follows, if you will not change your purpose
But undergo this flight, make for Sicilia,
615 And there present yourself and your fair princess,
For so I see she must be, 'fore Leontes:
She shall be habited as it becomes
The partner of your bed. Methinks I see
Leontes opening his free arms and weeping
620 His welcomes forth; asks thee the son forgiveness,

FLORIZEL

How might this near miracle be accomplished, Camillo? If you can do it, I would say you're something more than a man and would always trust you.

CAMILLO

Have you thought about where you'll go?

FLORIZEL

Not any place yet. But since an unforeseen accident caused us to take this course of action, we'll pledge ourselves to fate and go where the wind blows us.

CAMILLO

Then listen to me. If you won't change your mind and are determined to flee, head to Sicilia, and present yourself and your fair princess before Leontes. She should be dressed in a way suitable for the wife of a prince. I think Leontes will open his arms and will weep as he bids you welcome. He'll ask your forgiveness as though he were your father, and he'll kiss your princess's hands. He's caught between berating himself for his past unkindness to your father and trying to be more kind now.

As 'twere i' the father's person; kisses the hands
Of your fresh princess; o'er and o'er divides him
'Twixt his unkindness and his kindness; the one
He chides to hell and bids the other grow

525 Faster than thought or time.

FLORIZEL

Worthy Camillo,
What colour for my visitation shall I
Hold up before him?

CAMILLO

Sent by the king your father
530 To greet him and to give him comforts. Sir,
The manner of your bearing towards him, with
What you as from your father shall deliver,
Things known betwixt us three, I'll write you down:
The which shall point you forth at every sitting
535 What you must say; that he shall not perceive
But that you have your father's bosom there
And speak his very heart.

FLORIZEL

I am bound to you:
There is some sap in this.

CAMILLO

540 A cause more promising

FLORIZEL

Worthy Camillo, what reason should I give him for my visit?

CAMILLO

Tell him you are sent by your father to greet him and comfort him. I'll write you a note containing things known by the three of us telling you what to say. That and the manner with which you greet him will make him believe that you represent your father's feelings.

FLORIZEL

I owe you for this. There's life in this plan.

CAMILLO

Than a wild dedication of yourselves
To unpath'd waters, undream'd shores, most certain
To miseries enough; no hope to help you,
But as you shake off one to take another;
345 Nothing so certain as your anchors, who
Do their best office, if they can but stay you
Where you'll be loath to be: besides you know
Prosperity's the very bond of love,
Whose fresh complexion and whose heart together
350 Affliction alters.

PERDITA

One of these is true:
I think affliction may subdue the cheek,
But not take in the mind.

CAMILLO

Yea, say you so?
355 There shall not at your father's house these
seven years
Be born another such.

FLORIZEL

My good Camillo,
She is as forward of her breeding as
360 She is i' the rear our birth.

CAMILLO

It's a much more promising way of doing things than simply throwing yourself on unmarked waters and strange shores, which will certainly lead you to plenty of misery. There would be no hope to help you aside from casting off one shore to find another. Your anchors would be your only certainty, and the best they can do is hold you in a place you'll be loath to remain. Besides, you know that good fortune keeps love strong, and that affliction will change the freshness of your affection and the feelings of your heart.

PERDITA

One of those is true. Affliction may make us less fresh, but it won't alter our feelings.

CAMILLO

Do you say so? There won't be anyone like you born at your father's house for many years.

FLORIZEL

My good Camillo, she is as superior to her upbringing as she is inferior to our noble rank.

I cannot say 'tis pity
She lacks instructions, for she seems a mistress
To most that teach.

PERDITA

Your pardon, sir; for this

365 I'll blush you thanks.

FLORIZEL

My prettiest Perdita!
But O, the thorns we stand upon! Camillo,
Preserver of my father, now of me,
The medicine of our house, how shall we do?
370 We are not furnish'd like Bohemia's son,
Nor shall appear in Sicilia.

CAMILLO

My lord,
Fear none of this: I think you know my fortunes
Do all lie there: it shall be so my care
375 To have you royally appointed as if
The scene you play were mine. For instance, sir,
That you may know you shall not want, one word.

They talk aside

Re-enter AUTOLYCUS

CAMILLO

I can't say it's a pity she's uneducated, because she seems more intelligent than those that teach.

PERDITA

Pardon me, sir, I'll thank you with my blushing.

FLORIZEL

My pretty Perdita! But, oh, the danger we're in! Camillo, you've rescued my father and now me. You heal our family. What will we do? I'm not dressed like the king's son, and I certainly won't look like royalty once we reach Sicilia.

CAMILLO

My lord, don't worry about it. I think you know that my fortune is still in Sicilia. I'll make sure you are dressed as royally as if I were dressing you for a play I had written. Let me have a word with you, to reassure you that you won't be left in need.

They talk off to the side.

AUTOLYCUS reenters.

AUTOLYCUS

Ha, ha! what a fool Honesty is! and Trust, his
sworn brother, a very simple gentleman! I have sold
580 all my trumpery; not a counterfeit stone, not a
ribbon, glass, pomander, brooch, table-book, ballad,
knife, tape, glove, shoe-tie, bracelet, horn-ring,
to keep my pack from fasting: they throng who
should buy first, as if my trinkets had been
585 hallowed and brought a benediction to the buyer:
by which means I saw whose purse was best in
picture; and what I saw, to my good use I
remembered. My clown, who wants but something to
be a reasonable man, grew so in love with the
590 wenches' song, that he would not stir his pettitoes
till he had both tune and words; which so drew the
rest of the herd to me that all their other senses
stuck in ears: you might have pinched a placket, it
was senseless; 'twas nothing to geld a codpiece of a
595 purse; I could have filed keys off that hung in
chains: no hearing, no feeling, but my sir's song,
and admiring the nothing of it. So that in this
time of lethargy I picked and cut most of their
festival purses; and had not the old man come in
700 with a whoo-bub against his daughter and the king's
son and scared my choughs from the chaff, I had not
left a purse alive in the whole army.

AUTOLYCUS

Ha ha! Honesty is such a fool, and Trust, his brother, is so naïve!
I have sold all my goods—not a fake stone, or a ribbon, glass,
brooch, book, ballad, knife, tape, glove, shoelace, bracelet, or
ring made of horn remains in my pack. They crowded around
me to see who could buy first, as if my trinkets were blessed
and brought grace to the buyer. It let me know who had the
fullest purse, and what I saw I remembered to put to use later.
The yokel, who lacks just one quality to be a reasonable man,
loved the girls' song so much that he wouldn't leave until he
had bought both the tune and the words. And all the others
were so entranced that it was as though all their other senses
were committed to hearing. You could have stolen a skirt
because no one could feel anything. It was easy to strip a
purse from a [codpiece](#), and I could have used a file to take
keys off a chain. There was no hearing or feeling anything
except for that song, and admiration for it. So while they were
spellbound I stole most of their purses, which were filled with
money for the festival. If the old man hadn't come in wailing
about his daughter and the king's son and scared my little
birds from the feed, I would have taken purses from every one.

CAMILLO, FLORIZEL, and PERDITA come forward

CAMILLO

Nay, but my letters, by this means being there
So soon as you arrive, shall clear that doubt.

FLORIZEL

705 And those that you'll procure from King Leontes—

CAMILLO

Shall satisfy your father.

PERDITA

Happy be you!
All that you speak shows fair.

CAMILLO

Who have we here?

Seeing AUTOLYCUS

710 We'll make an instrument of this, omit
Nothing may give us aid.

AUTOLYCUS

If they have overheard me now, why, hanging.

CAMILLO

How now, good fellow! why shakest thou so? Fear

CAMILLO, FLORIZEL, and PERDITA approach.

CAMILLO

No, but my letters will be there as soon as you arrive, and
they'll clear up that question.

FLORIZEL

And the letter that you'll get from King Leontes—

CAMILLO

Will set your father at ease.

PERDITA

May you be happy! All your plans are good.

CAMILLO

Who is this?

Seeing Autolycus.

We'll use this man, since we should use anything that will help.

AUTOLYCUS

If they've overheard me, I'll be hanged.

CAMILLO

not, man; here's no harm intended to thee.

AUTOLYCUS

715 I am a poor fellow, sir.

CAMILLO

Why, be so still; here's nobody will steal that from thee: yet for the outside of thy poverty we must make an exchange; therefore discase thee instantly, —thou must think there's a necessity in't,—and
720 change garments with this gentleman: though the pennyworth on his side be the worst, yet hold thee, there's some boot.

AUTOLYCUS

I am a poor fellow, sir.

[Aside]

725 I know ye well enough.

CAMILLO

Nay, prithee, dispatch: the gentleman is half flayed already.

AUTOLYCUS

Are you in earnest, sir?

[Aside]

730 I smell the trick on't.

How are you, good fellow? Why are you shaking? Don't worry, man, we don't intend you any harm.

AUTOLYCUS

I am a poor man, sir.

CAMILLO

Why, be still. No one here will steal from you. But we need your poor-looking clothes. Undress right now—it's urgent—and swap clothes with this gentleman. The bargain is bad for him, but wait, (*giving him money*) there's something more in it for you.

AUTOLYCUS

I am a poor man, sir.

(aside)

I know you well enough.

CAMILLO

No, please, hurry. The gentleman is already half undressed.

AUTOLYCUS

Are you serious, sir?

(aside)

I think it's a trick.

FLORIZEL

Dispatch, I prithee.

AUTOLYCUS

Indeed, I have had earnest: but I cannot with conscience take it.

CAMILLO

Unbuckle, unbuckle.

FLORIZEL and AUTOLYCUS exchange garments

735 Fortunate mistress,—let my prophecy
Come home to ye!—you must retire yourself
Into some covert: take your sweetheart's hat
And pluck it o'er your brows, muffle your face,
Dismantle you, and, as you can, disliken
740 The truth of your own seeming; that you may—
For I do fear eyes over—to shipboard
Get undescribed.

PERDITA

I see the play so lies
That I must bear a part.

CAMILLO

745 No remedy.
Have you done there?

FLORIZEL

Hurry, I beg you.

AUTOLYCUS

Indeed, I think it is sincere, but I can't believe it.

CAMILLO

Unbuckle, unbuckle.

Florizel and Autolycus exchange clothing.

(to Perdita) Lucky mistress—may you be lucky yet! You must take a disguise. Put on your sweetheart's hat and pull it down over your eyes, wrap up your face, take off your outer garments, and, as much as you can, change your appearance as much as possible. That way I hope you'll get to the ship without being discovered, for I fear that people are watching for you.

PERDITA

I understand that what we're doing means I have to play a role.

CAMILLO

There's no helping it. Are you done there?

FLORIZEL

Should I now meet my father,
He would not call me son.

CAMILLO

Nay, you shall have no hat.

Giving it to PERDITA

750 Come, lady, come. Farewell, my friend.

AUTOLYCUS

Adieu, sir.

FLORIZEL

O Perdita, what have we twain forgot!
Pray you, a word.

CAMILLO

[Aside] What I do next, shall be to tell the king
755 Of this escape and whither they are bound;
Wherein my hope is I shall so prevail
To force him after: in whose company
I shall review Sicilia, for whose sight
I have a woman's longing.

FLORIZEL

760 Fortune speed us!

FLORIZEL

If I ran into my father now, he wouldn't know me as his son.

CAMILLO

No, you won't have a hat.

He gives it to Perdita.

Come along, lady, come. Farewell, my friend.

AUTOLYCUS

Goodbye, sir.

FLORIZEL

Oh, Perdita, we've forgotten something now! Please, let's have a word.

CAMILLO

(aside) Next I'll tell the king that they've escaped and where they are going. Then I hope I can persuade him to follow after them, and in his company I'll then return to Sicilia, which I've longed to see again.

FLORIZEL

May fortune speed us! So we set forth to sea, Camillo.

Thus we set on, Camillo, to the sea-side.

CAMILLO

The swifter speed the better.

Exeunt FLORIZEL, PERDITA, and CAMILLO

AUTOLYCUS

I understand the business, I hear it: to have an open ear, a quick eye, and a nimble hand, is
765 necessary for a cut-purse; a good nose is requisite also, to smell out work for the other senses. I see this is the time that the unjust man doth thrive.

What an exchange had this been without boot! What a boot is here with this exchange! Sure the gods do
770 this year connive at us, and we may do any thing extempore. The prince himself is about a piece of iniquity, stealing away from his father with his clog at his heels: if I thought it were a piece of honesty to acquaint the king withal, I would not
775 do't: I hold it the more knavery to conceal it; and therein am I constant to my profession.

Re-enter Clown and Shepherd

Aside, aside; here is more matter for a hot brain: every lane's end, every shop, church, session, hanging, yields a careful man work.

CAMILLO

The faster the better.

FLORIZEL, PERDITA, and CAMILLO exit.

AUTOLYCUS

I think I understand this matter and am hearing it right. It's necessary for a thief to have an open ear, a quick eye, and a nimble hand. A good nose is needed, too, to find work for the other senses. I see that this is a time when the unfair man thrives. What an exchange this would have been even without payment! What a profit I got through this exchange! Surely the gods are indulging us, and we can do whatever we want on a whim. The prince himself is doing wrong, sneaking away from his father with his girlfriend. If I thought it were an honest deed to tell the king, I wouldn't do it. I think it is more dishonest to conceal it, so I'll remain true to my profession and say nothing.

The YOKEL and the SHEPHERD reenter.

Aha, here is more to do for a sharp mind. Every lane, every shop, church, meeting, or hanging gives a careful man an opportunity.

CLOWN

780 See, see; what a man you are now!
There is no other way but to tell the king
she's a changeling and none of your flesh and blood.

SHEPHERD

Nay, but hear me.

CLOWN

Nay, but hear me.

SHEPHERD

785 Go to, then.

CLOWN

She being none of your flesh and blood, your flesh
and blood has not offended the king; and so your
flesh and blood is not to be punished by him. Show
those things you found about her, those secret
790 things, all but what she has with her: this being
done, let the law go whistle: I warrant you.

SHEPHERD

I will tell the king all, every word, yea, and his
son's pranks too; who, I may say, is no honest man,
neither to his father nor to me, to go about to make
795 me the king's brother-in-law.

YOKEL

See, look at the situation you are in now! There's no way out
but to tell the king that she's a [changeling](#) and not your flesh
and blood.

SHEPHERD

Perhaps, but listen to me.

YOKEL

No, listen to me.

SHEPHERD

Go on, then.

YOKEL

Since she's not actually related to you, your family hasn't
offended the king, and so he shouldn't punish your family.
Show him what secret things you've found with her, everything
but what she has on her. Once that's done, the law will have
nothing on you, I guarantee you.

SHEPHERD

I'll tell the king everything, yes, every word, and I'll reveal his
son's pranks, too. I must say, his son isn't an honest man to
either his father or to me, trying to make me the king's brother-
in-law.

CLOWN

Indeed, brother-in-law was the farthest off you could have been to him and then your blood had been the dearer by I know how much an ounce.

AUTOLYCUS

[Aside] Very wisely, puppies!

SHEPHERD

300 Well, let us to the king: there is that in this fardel will make him scratch his beard.

AUTOLYCUS

[Aside] I know not what impediment this complaint may be to the flight of my master.

CLOWN

Pray heartily he be at palace.

AUTOLYCUS

305 [Aside] Though I am not naturally honest, I am so sometimes by chance: let me pocket up my pedlar's excrement.

Takes off his false beard

How now, rustics! whither are you bound?

SHEPHERD**YOKEL**

Indeed, brother-in-law is the furthest you could be from him, and your blood would have been not at all more valuable.

AUTOLYCUS

(aside) Very wise, gullible men!

SHEPHERD

Well, let's go to the king. There is something in this bundle that will make him reconsider things.

AUTOLYCUS

(aside) I don't know how this complaint might hinder the flight of Florizel, my master.

YOKEL

Let's hope that he's at the palace.

AUTOLYCUS

(aside) Even if I'm not naturally honest, sometimes I happen to be. Let me take off my peddler's beard.

He takes off his false beard.

Hello, countrymen! Where are you going?

SHEPHERD

To the palace, an it like your worship.

AUTOLYCUS

Your affairs there, what, with whom, the condition
810 of that fardel, the place of your dwelling, your
names, your ages, of what having, breeding, and any
thing that is fitting to be known, discover.

CLOWN

We are but plain fellows, sir.

AUTOLYCUS

A lie; you are rough and hairy. Let me have no
815 lying: it becomes none but tradesmen, and they
often give us soldiers the lie: but we pay them for
it with stamped coin, not stabbing steel; therefore
they do not give us the lie.

CLOWN

Your worship had like to have given us one, if you
320 had not taken yourself with the manner.

SHEPHERD

Are you a courtier, an't like you, sir?

AUTOLYCUS

Whether it like me or no, I am a courtier. Seest
thou not the air of the court in these enfoldings?

To the palace, if it pleases your worship.

AUTOLYCUS

Tell me what your business is there, and with whom, what's in
that bundle, where you live, your names, ages, what you own
and your parents, or anything else that ought to be known.

YOKEL

We're just ordinary fellows, sir.

AUTOLYCUS

That's a lie. You're ragged-looking and hairy. Don't lie to me. It
only works for tradesmen, and they often call us soldiers liars
and cheat us at the same time. But we pay them for it with
coins rather than swords, so they're not really *giving* us lies
since we're paying.

YOKEL

You would have given us a lie if you hadn't stopped yourself in
the middle.

SHEPHERD

Are you from the court, if you please, sir?

AUTOLYCUS

I am from the court, whether it please me or not. Don't you see
an air of the court in my clothes? Don't I walk as though I'm

hath not my gait in it the measure of the court?

325 receives not thy nose court-odor from me? reflect I
not on thy baseness court-contempt? Thinkest thou,
for that I insinuate, or toaze from thee thy
business, I am therefore no courtier? I am courtier
cap-a-pe; and one that will either push on or pluck

330 back thy business there: whereupon I command thee to
open thy affair.

SHEPHERD

My business, sir, is to the king.

AUTOLYCUS

What advocate hast thou to him?

SHEPHERD

I know not, an't like you.

CLOWN

335 Advocate's the court-word for a pheasant: say you
have none.

SHEPHERD

None, sir; I have no pheasant, cock nor hen.

AUTOLYCUS

How blessed are we that are not simple men!

from the court? Don't you smell the odor of the court on me?
Don't I treat your base rank with the contempt of the court? Do
you think that because I subtly draw out your business from
you, that I'm not from the court? I am a courtier from head to
foot. And I'll either push along or prevent your business there,
so I command you to tell me what it's about.

SHEPHERD

My business, sir, is with the king.

AUTOLYCUS

Do you have an advocate with him?

SHEPHERD

I don't know.

YOKEL

An [advocate means a pheasant at the court](#); say you don't
have one.

SHEPHERD

None, sir. I don't have a pheasant, either a male or a female
one.

AUTOLYCUS

Yet nature might have made me as these are,

340 Therefore I will not disdain.

CLOWN

This cannot be but a great courtier.

SHEPHERD

His garments are rich, but he wears
them not handsomely.

CLOWN

He seems to be the more noble in being fantastical:
345 a great man, I'll warrant; I know by the picking
on's teeth.

AUTOLYCUS

The fardel there? what's i' the fardel?
Wherfore that box?

SHEPHERD

Sir, there lies such secrets in this fardel and box,
350 which none must know but the king; and which he
shall know within this hour, if I may come to the
speech of him.

AUTOLYCUS

Age, thou hast lost thy labour.

SHEPHERD

How blessed are we that are smart! Yet nature could have
made me just like them, so I won't treat them with contempt.

YOKEL

He must be a great man at the court.

SHEPHERD

His garments look expensive, but he doesn't wear them well.

YOKEL

His oddness makes him seem even more noble. I'll bet that
he's a great man. I know by the [toothpicks he uses](#).

AUTOLYCUS

What about that bundle there? What is in the bundle? And in
the box?

SHEPHERD

Sir, the bundle and the box hold secrets that only the king may
know, and which he'll know within the hour if I can speak to
him.

AUTOLYCUS

Old man, you have wasted your work.

SHEPHERD

Why, sir?

AUTOLYCUS

355 The king is not at the palace; he is gone aboard a new ship to purge melancholy and air himself: for, if thou beest capable of things serious, thou must know the king is full of grief.

SHEPHERD

So 'tis said, sir; about his son, that should have
360 married a shepherd's daughter.

AUTOLYCUS

If that shepherd be not in hand-fast, let him fly:
the curses he shall have, the tortures he shall
feel, will break the back of man, the heart of monster.

CLOWN

Think you so, sir?

AUTOLYCUS

365 Not he alone shall suffer what wit can make heavy
and vengeance bitter; but those that are germane to
him, though removed fifty times, shall all come
under the hangman: which though it be great pity,
yet it is necessary. An old sheep-whistling rogue a
370 ram-tender, to offer to have his daughter come into
grace! Some say he shall be stoned; but that death

Why, sir?

AUTOLYCUS

The king isn't at the palace. He's gone on a new ship to ease his sadness and to refresh himself. If you are able to grasp such serious things, you know that the king is full of grief.

SHEPHERD

So it is said, sir, because his son meant to marry a shepherd's daughter.

AUTOLYCUS

If the shepherd hasn't been arrested already, he should flee. He'll suffer curses so fierce and tortures so terrible that it would break the back of a man and the heart of even a monster.

YOKEL

Do you think so, sir?

AUTOLYCUS

He won't suffer these harsh and bitter punishments alone, either. All those who are related to him, even if they are very distant relatives, will hang, too. It's a great pity, but it's necessary. That an old shepherd and rogue would act as a broker and offer to have his daughter marry into the royal family! Some say he'll be stoned, but that manner of death is too soft for someone who tried to drag the throne into a

is too soft for him, say I draw our throne into a
sheep-cote! all deaths are too few, the sharpest too easy.

CLOWN

Has the old man e'er a son, sir, do you hear, an't
375 like you, sir?

AUTOLYCUS

He has a son, who shall be flayed alive; then
'nointed over with honey, set on the head of a
wasp's nest; then stand till he be three quarters
and a dram dead; then recovered again with
380 aqua-vitae or some other hot infusion; then, raw as
he is, and in the hottest day prognostication
proclaims, shall he be set against a brick-wall, the
sun looking with a southward eye upon him, where he
is to behold him with flies blown to death. But what
385 talk we of these traitorly rascals, whose miseries
are to be smiled at, their offences being so
capital? Tell me, for you seem to be honest plain
men, what you have to the king: being something
gently considered, I'll bring you where he is
390 aboard, tender your persons to his presence,
whisper him in your behalfs; and if it be in man
besides the king to effect your suits, here is man
shall do it.

sheep's pen! He can't die too many times, or in too painful a
way.

YOKEL

Have you heard if the old man has a son?

AUTOLYCUS

He has a son who will be whipped, then covered with honey
and put on a wasp's nest until he is three quarters of the way to
death. Then he'll be revived with liquor or some other hot
drink. Then, raw as his flesh is, on the hottest day that can be
predicted he'll be set against a brick wall with the sun beating
down upon him, and where he will be swarmed with flies. But
why are we talking about these traitors, whose offences are so
terrible that their misery should cause us happiness? Tell me,
since you seem to be honest, ordinary men, what business do
you have with the king? Since I'm well-respected at court, I'll
take you to his ship, bring you into his presence, and whisper to
him a recommendation on your behalf. If there is any man
beside the king who can help your case, that's me.

CLOWN

He seems to be of great authority: close with him,
395 give him gold; and though authority be a stubborn
bear, yet he is oft led by the nose with gold: show
the inside of your purse to the outside of his hand,
and no more ado. Remember 'stoned,' and 'flayed alive.'

SHEPHERD

An't please you, sir, to undertake the business for
400 us, here is that gold I have: I'll make it as much
more and leave this young man in pawn till I bring it you.

AUTOLYCUS

After I have done what I promised?

SHEPHERD

Ay, sir.

AUTOLYCUS

Well, give me the moiety. Are you a party in this business?

CLOWN

405 In some sort, sir: but though my case be a pitiful
one, I hope I shall not be flayed out of it.

AUTOLYCUS

O, that's the case of the shepherd's son: hang him,

YOKEL

He seems to have a great deal of authority. Approach him and
give his some money. No matter how stubborn and untamable
authority may be, a little money can make him docile. Let him
put his hand into your purse, and no more fuss. Remember:
"stoned," and "flayed alive."

SHEPHERD

If it pleases you, sir, to take on this business for us, here is all
the gold I have. I'll pay you an equal amount more, and I'll
leave you this young man as a guarantee until I can bring the
rest to you.

AUTOLYCUS

After I have done what I have promised?

SHEPHERD

Yes, sir.

AUTOLYCUS

Well then, give me the first half. Are you part of this deal?

YOKEL

In a way, sir. But even if my skin is pitiful, I hope I won't be
whipped out of it.

AUTOLYCUS

he'll be made an example.

CLOWN

Comfort, good comfort! We must to the king and show
910 our strange sights: he must know 'tis none of your
daughter nor my sister; we are gone else. Sir, I
will give you as much as this old man does when the
business is performed, and remain, as he says, your
pawn till it be brought you.

AUTOLYCUS

915 I will trust you. Walk before toward the sea-side;
go on the right hand: I will but look upon the
hedge and follow you.

CLOWN

We are blest in this man, as I may say, even blest.

SHEPHERD

Let's before as he bids us: he was provided to do us good.

Exeunt SHEPHERD and CLOWN

AUTOLYCUS

920 If I had a mind to be honest, I see Fortune would
not suffer me: she drops booties in my mouth. I am

Oh no, that's what will happen to the shepherd's son. He'll be hanged as an example.

YOKEL

(to the Shepherd) What a comfort! We must go to the king and show him our amazing proof. He must know that Perdita isn't your daughter or my sister, or we'll be dead. (to Autolycus) Sir, I will give you as much money as this old man does once the business is concluded, and until then, I'll stay with you as a guarantee for payment.

AUTOLYCUS

I trust you. Walk straight ahead toward the sea. Go along the right hand side of the road. I just need to go to the bathroom and I'll follow you.

YOKEL

We're blessed to have this man with us, I say, blessed.

SHEPHERD

Let's go before he has to tell us again. He was put here to help us.

The SHEPHERD and the YOKEL exit.

AUTOLYCUS

Even if I wanted to be honest, I see Fate wouldn't let me. She drops profits right in my pocket. I have two opportunities here:

courted now with a double occasion, gold and a means
to do the prince my master good; which who knows how
that may turn back to my advancement? I will bring
925 these two moles, these blind ones, aboard him: if he
think it fit to shore them again and that the
complaint they have to the king concerns him
nothing, let him call me rogue for being so far
officious; for I am proof against that title and
930 what shame else belongs to't. To him will I present
them: there may be matter in it.

Exit

A room in LEONTES' palace.

Enter LEONTES, CLEOMENES, DION, PAULINA, and Servants

CLEOMENES

Sir, you have done enough, and have perform'd
A saint-like sorrow: no fault could you make,
Which you have not redeem'd; indeed, paid down
More penitence than done trespa at the last,
5 Do as the heavens have done, forget your evil;
With them forgive yourself.

LEONTES

to get gold and to do something good for my master the
prince—and who knows how that will help me in the future. I
will bring these two gullible men aboard the ship with him. If
he thinks their complaint to the king has nothing to do with him
and wants to put them back on shore again, let him call me a
rogue for being so interfering. I can't be hurt by that name, or
any shame attached to it. I'll present them to him. There might
be money in it.

He exits.

Act 5 Scene 1

A room in LEONTES'S palace.

*LEONTES, CLEOMENES, DION, PAULINA, and several servants
enter.*

CLEOMENES

(to Leontes) Sir, you have done enough and have shown the
sorrow and piety of a saint. You have redeemed every mistake
you might have made, and have paid more penance than you
have done wrong. At last, forgive your sins as Heaven has
forgiven it, and forgive yourself.

Whilst I remember
Her and her virtues, I cannot forget
My blemishes in them, and so still think of
10 The wrong I did myself; which was so much,
That heirless it hath made my kingdom and
Destroy'd the sweet'st companion that e'er man
Bred his hopes out of.

PAULINA

True, too true, my lord:
15 If, one by one, you wedded all the world,
Or from the all that are took something good,
To make a perfect woman, she you kill'd
Would be unparallel'd.

LEONTES

I think so. Kill'd!
20 She I kill'd! I did so: but thou strikest me
Sorely, to say I did; it is as bitter
Upon thy tongue as in my thought: now, good now,
Say so but seldom.

CLEOMENES

Not at all, good lady:
25 You might have spoken a thousand things that would
Have done the time more benefit and graced
Your kindness better.

LEONTES

As long as I remember her and her virtue, I can't forget how I attacked them, and I still think of the wrong I did. My misbehavior was so terrible that it has left my kingdom without an heir and destroyed the sweetest companion that a man could hope would bear his children.

PAULINA

It is too true, my lord. Even if you wedded every woman in the world one by one, or took the best quality from each and made the perfect woman, the woman you killed couldn't be matched.

LEONTES

I think so, too. Killed! The woman I killed! I did, but you wound me deeply to say it so bluntly. You say it as bitterly as I think it. Now, please, don't say it often.

CLEOMENES

Never say that, good lady. There are a thousand other things you could have said that would have been of greater benefit and would have made you seem kinder.

PAULINA

You are one of those
Would have him wed again.

DION

30 If you would not so,
 You pity not the state, nor the remembrance
 Of his most sovereign name; consider little
 What dangers, by his highness' fail of issue,
 May drop upon his kingdom and devour
35 Incertain lookers on. What were more holy
 Than to rejoice the former queen is well?
 What holier than, for royalty's repair,
 For present comfort and for future good,
 To bless the bed of majesty again
40 With a sweet fellow to't?

PAULINA

There is none worthy,
Respecting her that's gone. Besides, the gods
Will have fulfill'd their secret purposes;
For has not the divine Apollo said,
45 Is't not the tenor of his oracle,
 That King Leontes shall not have an heir
 Till his lost child be found? which that it shall,
 Is all as monstrous to our human reason
 As my Antigonus to break his grave

PAULINA

You are one of the people who want him to marry again.

DION

If you wouldn't have him marry again, you don't care anything for the state, or for the continuance of his royal name. Think about what dangers might befall his kingdom, and how anxious citizens might suffer, if he doesn't have a son. What is more virtuous than to rejoice that the former queen is in heaven? What would be holier than the king producing a child to restore the royal family and to make the realm safe and happy for the present and the future?

PAULINA

There is no one worthy to take the place of the queen who is gone. Besides, the gods are fulfilling their intentions. Didn't divine Apollo say, through the words of his oracle, that King Leontes should not have an heir until his lost child is found? And that seems as unlikely as the notion that my Antigonus, whom I am sure died along with my infant, will rise from his grave and return to me. Your advice is that my lord should go against the heavens and oppose their wills.

50 And come again to me; who, on my life,
Did perish with the infant. 'Tis your counsel
My lord should to the heavens be contrary,
Oppose against their wills.

To LEONTES

Care not for issue;
55 The crown will find an heir: great Alexander
Left his to the worthiest; so his successor
Was like to be the best.

LEONTES

Good Paulina,
Who hast the memory of Hermione,
60 I know, in honour, O, that ever I
Had squared me to thy counsel! then, even now,
I might have look'd upon my queen's full eyes,
Have taken treasure from her lips—

PAULINA

And left them
65 More rich for what they yielded.

LEONTES

Thou speak'st truth.
No more such wives; therefore, no wife: one worse,
And better used, would make her sainted spirit

To Leontes

Don't worry about a son. The crown will find an heir. Great Alexander left his kingdom to the worthiest of his followers, so that his successor would be the best leader possible.

LEONTES

Good Paulina, I know you honor the memory of Hermione. I wish that I had listened to you! Then I would now be able to look into my queen's eyes and kiss her treasured lips—

PAULINA

And been the richer for having done so.

LEONTES

You speak the truth. No wife such as that exists, so there will be no wife. For me to take a wife less perfect, and to treat her

Again possess her corpse, and on this stage,
70 Where we're offenders now, appear soul-vex'd,
And begin, 'Why to me?'

PAULINA

Had she such power,
She had just cause.

LEONTES

She had; and would incense me
75 To murder her I married.

PAULINA

I should so.
Were I the ghost that walk'd, I'd bid you mark
Her eye, and tell me for what dull part in't
You chose her; then I'd shriek, that even your ears
80 Should rift to hear me; and the words that follow'd
Should be 'Remember mine.'

LEONTES

Stars, stars,
And all eyes else dead coals! Fear thou no wife;
I'll have no wife, Paulina.

PAULINA

85 Will you swear
Never to marry but by my free leave?

better, would make Hermione's ghost arise again, and she'd appear here to me and say, "Why insult me like this?"

PAULINA

If she were able to, she'd be justified.

LEONTES

She would be, and she'd drive me to murder the woman I married in her place.

PAULINA

I should think so. If I were Hermione's ghost, I'd tell you to look at that new woman's eyes and tell me what about their dullness attracted you. Then I'd shriek, and your ears would hurt to hear me. And then I'd say, "Remember my eyes."

LEONTES

They were like stars, and next to them all other eyes look like dead coals! Don't fear, Paulina, I won't take another wife.

PAULINA

Will you swear to never marry unless I give you my permission?

LEONTES

Never, Paulina; so be blest my spirit!

PAULINA

Then, good my lords, bear witness to his oath.

CLEOMENES

You tempt him over-much.

PAULINA

90 Unless another,
As like Hermione as is her picture,
Affront his eye—

CLEOMENES

Good madam,—

PAULINA

I have done.
95 Yet, if my lord will marry,—if you will, sir,
No remedy, but you will,—give me the office
To choose you a queen: she shall not be so young
As was your former; but she shall be such
As, walk'd your first queen's ghost,
100 it should take joy
To see her in your arms.

LEONTES**LEONTES**

Never, Paulina, on my life!

PAULINA

Then, my good lords, witness his oath.

CLEOMENES

You test him too much.

PAULINA

Unless he sees another woman who looks as much like
Hermione as her picture—

CLEOMENES

Good madam—

PAULINA

I'm done. Yet, if my lord decides to marry despite everything,
let me choose your queen. She won't be as young as your
former wife, but she'll be someone who even your first queen
would rejoice to see in your arms.

LEONTES

My true Paulina,
We shall not marry till thou bid'st us.

PAULINA

That
105 Shall be when your first queen's again in breath;
Never till then.

Enter a Gentleman

GENTLEMAN

One that gives out himself Prince Florizel,
Son of Polixenes, with his princess, she
The fairest I have yet beheld, desires access
110 To your high presence.

LEONTES

What with him? he comes not
Like to his father's greatne his approach,
So out of circumstance and sudden, tells us
'Tis not a visitation framed, but forced
115 By need and accident. What train?

GENTLEMAN

But few,
And those but mean.

LEONTES

My faithful Paulina, I won't marry until you tell me to.

PAULINA

That will be when your first queen is alive again, not until then.

A Gentleman enters.

GENTLEMAN

A man who calls himself Prince Florizel, son of Polixenes, asks to see you. With him is his princess, who is the fairest lady I have ever seen.

LEONTES

What is this? He arrives without the ceremony someone of his station requires. That he appears so suddenly and unexpectedly tells me that it wasn't a planned visit, but one forced by circumstances. How many does he have with him?

GENTLEMAN

Only a few, and those of rather low rank.

LEONTES

His princess, say you, with him?

GENTLEMAN

Ay, the most peerless piece of earth, I think,

120 That e'er the sun shone bright on.

PAULINA

O Hermione,

As every present time doth boast itself

Above a better gone, so must thy grave

Give way to what's seen now! Sir, you yourself

125 Have said and writ so, but your writing now

Is colder than that theme, 'She had not been,

Nor was not to be equall'd;—thus your verse

Flow'd with her beauty once: 'tis shrewdly ebb'd,

To say you have seen a better.

GENTLEMAN

130 Pardon, madam:

The one I have almost forgot,—your pardon,—

The other, when she has obtain'd your eye,

Will have your tongue too. This is a creature,

Would she begin a sect, might quench the zeal

135 Of all professors else, make proselytes

Of who she but bid follow.

PAULINA

How! not women?

You say his princess is with him?

GENTLEMAN

Yes, and she is the most incomparable woman that the sun has ever shone upon.

PAULINA

Oh, Hermione, just as every era thinks it's better than the one past, so must you make way for a new woman. Sir, you yourself have said and written that she was never, and never would be, equaled in beauty, but now you change your mind. Your poetry was once filled with reports of her beauty, but it must have declined since you say that you have seen someone more beautiful.

GENTLEMAN

Pardon, madam. I'm sorry to say I've almost forgotten

Hermione. When you see this other woman, you'll be speechless, too. If she started her own religion, it would put an end to the zeal of any other and make followers of anyone she called.

PAULINA

What? Not women, though?

GENTLEMAN

Women will love her, that she is a woman
More worth than any man; men, that she is
140 The rarest of all women.

LEONTES

Go, Cleomenes;
Yourself, assisted with your honour'd friends,
Bring them to our embracement.

Exeunt CLEOMENES and others

Still, 'tis strange
145 He thus should steal upon us.

PAULINA

Had our prince,
Jewel of children, seen this hour, he had pair'd
Well with this lord: there was not full a month
Between their births.

LEONTES

150 Prithee, no more; cease; thou know'st
He dies to me again when talk'd of: sure,
When I shall see this gentleman, thy speeches
Will bring me to consider that which may
Unfurnish me of reason. They are come.

GENTLEMAN

Women will love her because she is a woman more worthy
than any man. Men will love her because she is the most
exceptional of women.

LEONTES

Go, Cleomenes. With the help of your friends, bring them back
here for my welcome.

CLEOMENES and others exit.

Still, it is strange that he comes to us so suddenly.

PAULINA

If your prince, the most prized of children, were alive to see
this, he would have gotten along well with this lord. They were
born less than a month apart.

LEONTES

Please, no more. Stop. You know it's like he dies again for me
when you talk about him. When I see this gentleman, your
words will make me think of that which makes me go mad.
They are here.

Re-enter CLEOMENES and others, with FLORIZEL and PERDITA

155 Your mother was most true to wedlock, prince;
For she did print your royal father off,
Conceiving you: were I but twenty-one,
Your father's image is so hit in you,
His very air, that I should call you brother,
160 As I did him, and speak of something wildly
By us perform'd before. Most dearly welcome!
And your fair princess,—goddess!—O, alas!
I lost a couple, that 'twixt heaven and earth
Might thus have stood begetting wonder as
165 You, gracious couple, do: and then I lost—
All mine own folly—the society,
Amity too, of your brave father, whom,
Though bearing misery, I desire my life
Once more to look on him.

FLORIZEL

170 By his command
Have I here touch'd Sicilia and from him
Give you all greetings that a king, at friend,
Can send his brother: and, but infirmity
Which waits upon worn times hath something seized
175 His wish'd ability, he had himself

CLEOMENES and others enter, accompanied by FLORIZEL and PERDITA.

Your mother was a faithful wife, prince, because in bearing you she has produced a copy of your royal father. You look and act so much like your father that if I were twenty-one, I'd call you brother just like I called him, and speak of some wild escapade we'd gotten into. You are very welcome here, and your fair princess, like a goddess! Oh, alas, I've lost two who might have stood there, too, in wonderment, as you do. And then through my own folly I lost the company and friendship of your brave father, whom I wish I could see once more in this lifetime, even if it caused me sadness.

FLORIZEL

I've come to Sicilia at his command, and I bring from him all the greetings that a king and a friend can send to his brother. If it weren't for the infirmity of age that somewhat hinders him, he would travel here himself to greet you. He told me to tell you that he loves you, more than all the other kings alive.

The lands and waters 'twixt your throne and his
Measured to look upon you; whom he loves—
He bade me say so—more than all the sceptres
And those that bear them living.

LEONTES

180 O my brother,
Good gentleman! the wrongs I have done thee stir
Afresh within me, and these thy offices,
So rarely kind, are as interpreters
Of my behind-hand slackness. Welcome hither,
185 As is the spring to the earth. And hath he too
Exposed this paragon to the fearful usage,
At least ungentle, of the dreadful Neptune,
To greet a man not worth her pains, much less
The adventure of her person?

FLORIZEL

190 Good my lord,
She came from Libya.

LEONTES

Where the warlike Smalus,
That noble honour'd lord, is fear'd and loved?

FLORIZEL

Most royal sir, from thence; from him, whose daughter
195 His tears proclaim'd his, parting with her: thence,

LEONTES

Oh, my brother, good gentleman! I feel the wrongs I've done to
him all over again. And your exceptional kindness shows me
how slow I've been in greeting you. You are as welcome here
as the spring is to the earth. And has he sent this most lovely
woman here, too, across the dangerous and rough sea, to
greet an unworthy man?

FLORIZEL

My lord, she came from Libya.

LEONTES

Where the fierce Smalus, that honorable lord, is both feared
and loved?

FLORIZEL

A prosperous south-wind friendly, we have cross'd,
To execute the charge my father gave me
For visiting your highne my best train
I have from your Sicilian shores dismiss'd;
200 Who for Bohemia bend, to signify
Not only my success in Libya, sir,
But my arrival and my wife's in safety
Here where we are.

LEONTES

The blessed gods
205 Purge all infection from our air whilst you
Do climate here! You have a holy father,
A graceful gentleman; against whose person,
So sacred as it is, I have done sin:
For which the heavens, taking angry note,
210 Have left me issueless; and your father's blest,
As he from heaven merits it, with you
Worthy his goodness. What might I have been,
Might I a son and daughter now have look'd on,
Such goodly things as you!

Enter a Lord

LORD

215 Most noble sir,
That which I shall report will bear no credit,

Most royal sir, from there, and from her father, who cried at her departure. From there, with a good south wind, we have crossed the sea to carry out my father's request to visit you. I have sent the best men of my entourage back to Bohemia, to let my father know both that my trip to Libya was successful and that my wife and I arrived here safely.

LEONTES

May the gods keep the air fresh and healthy while you are here! You have a great and graceful father, against whom I have committed a sin. In return, the angry heavens have left me childless, while your father is blessed by heaven with you, as he deserves. What might my life have been like if I had a son and daughter as lovely as you two to look at!

A Lord enters.

LORD

Most noble sir, if I didn't have such firm proof you wouldn't believe what I'm about to tell you. Sir, Polixenes himself greets

Were not the proof so nigh. Please you, great sir,
Bohemia greets you from himself by me;
Desires you to attach his son, who has—
220 His dignity and duty both cast off—
Fled from his father, from his hopes, and with
A shepherd's daughter.

LEONTES

Where's Bohemia? speak.

LORD

Here in your city; I now came from him:
225 I speak amazedly; and it becomes
My marvel and my message. To your court
Whiles he was hastening, in the chase, it seems,
Of this fair couple, meets he on the way
The father of this seeming lady and
230 Her brother, having both their country quitted
With this young prince.

FLORIZEL

Camillo has betray'd me;
Whose honour and whose honesty till now
Endured all weathers.

LORD

235 Lay't so to his charge:
He's with the king your father.

you through me. He asks you to hold his son, who has abandoned his royal status and responsibilities, and who has fled from his father and his hope of the throne with a shepherd's daughter.

LEONTES

Where is Polixenes? Tell me.

LORD

Here in your city. I just came from him. I'm astonished, as suits my message. It seems that while he was hurrying here to your court in pursuit of this fair couple, he met the father and brother of the lady, who had both left their country with the prince.

FLORIZEL

Camillo has betrayed me, though his honor and honesty had been steadfast until now.

LORD

You may charge him with that yourself. He's with the king, your father.

LEONTES

Who? Camillo?

LORD

Camillo, sir; I spake with him; who now
Has these poor men in question. Never saw I
240 Wretches so quake: they kneel, they kiss the earth;
Forswear themselves as often as they speak:
Bohemia stops his ears, and threatens them
With divers deaths in death.

PERDITA

O my poor father!
245 The heaven sets spies upon us, will not have
Our contract celebrated.

LEONTES

You are married?

FLORIZEL

We are not, sir, nor are we like to be;
The stars, I see, will kiss the valleys first:
250 The odds for high and low's alike.

LEONTES

My lord,
Is this the daughter of a king?

LEONTES

Who? Camillo?

LORD

Camillo, sir. I spoke with him, and he now has the poor men in question. I've never seen anyone tremble as they do. They kneel, and kiss the earth, and take back what they've said every time they speak. Polixenes refuses to listen and threatens them with various tortures.

PERDITA

Oh, my poor father! The heavens set spies on us and refuse to let us celebrate our vows.

LEONTES

You are married?

FLORIZEL

We aren't, sir, and it seems impossible that we will be. I see that the stars will fall to the earth first. Chance works equally for the high- and the lowborn.

LEONTES

My lord, is this the daughter of a king?

FLORIZEL

She is,
When once she is my wife.

LEONTES

255 That 'once' I see by your good father's speed
Will come on very slowly. I am sorry,
Most sorry, you have broken from his liking
Where you were tied in duty, and as sorry
Your choice is not so rich in worth as beauty,
260 That you might well enjoy her.

FLORIZEL

Dear, look up:
Though Fortune, visible an enemy,
Should chase us with my father, power no jot
Hath she to change our loves. Beseech you, sir,
265 Remember since you owed no more to time
Than I do now: with thought of such affections,
Step forth mine advocate; at your request
My father will grant precious things as trifles.

LEONTES

Would he do so, I'd beg your precious mistress,
270 Which he counts but a trifle.

PAULINA

Sir, my liege,

FLORIZEL

She will be, once she is my wife.

LEONTES

I think that "once" will not be soon, given your father's speed in coming here. I am very sorry that you have gone against his wishes and your duty, and as sorry that your lady isn't as rich in rank as she is in beauty, so that you could marry her.

FLORIZEL

Dear, cheer up. Even if Fate, which is apparently our enemy, has chased us with my father, she has no power to change our love for each other. Please, sir, remember when you were my age. Thinking of such love, come forward in my defense. If you request it, my father will grant precious things as though they were nothing.

LEONTES

I'd beg your precious mistress's pardon if he counted her as nothing.

PAULINA

Your eye hath too much youth in't: not a month
'Fore your queen died, she was more worth such gazes
Than what you look on now.

LEONTES

275 I thought of her,
Even in these looks I made.

To FLORIZEL

But your petition
Is yet unanswered. I will to your father:
Your honour not o'erthrown by your desires,
280 I am friend to them and you: upon which errand
I now go toward him; therefore follow me
And mark what way I make: come, good my lord.

Exeunt

Before LEONTES' palace.

Enter AUTOLYCUS and a Gentleman

AUTOLYCUS

Beseech you, sir, were you present at this relation?

FIRST GENTLEMAN

My lord, you are too dazzled by youth. Your queen deserved those admiring glances more than this woman only a month before she died.

LEONTES

I thought of her, even as I looked upon this woman.

To Florizel

But I haven't answered your request. I will tell your father that you haven't let your desire to marry this girl overwhelm your honor. I support both you and your wish. I'll go to him now on this errand. Follow me, and watch where I go. Come, my lord.

They exit.

Act 5 Scene 2

In front of LEONTES' palace.

AUTOLYCUS and a Gentleman enter.

AUTOLYCUS

Please, sir, were you there when it was revealed?

FIRST GENTLEMAN

I was by at the opening of the fardel, heard the old shepherd deliver the manner how he found it: whereupon, after a little amazedness, we were all 5 commanded out of the chamber; only this methought I heard the shepherd say, he found the child.

AUTOLYCUS

I would most gladly know the issue of it.

FIRST GENTLEMAN

I make a broken delivery of the business; but the changes I perceived in the king and Camillo were 10 very notes of admiration: they seemed almost, with staring on one another, to tear the cases of their eyes; there was speech in their dumbness, language in their very gesture; they looked as they had heard of a world ransomed, or one destroyed: a notable 15 passion of wonder appeared in them; but the wisest beholder, that knew no more but seeing, could not say if the importance were joy or sorrow; but in the extremity of the one, it must needs be.

Enter another Gentleman

Here comes a gentleman that haply knows more.
20 The news, Rogero?

SECOND GENTLEMAN

I was there when the bundle was opened, and heard the old shepherd tell how he found it. Then, after some shock, we were all told to leave the room. But as I went, I thought I heard the shepherd say he found the child.

AUTOLYCUS

I would love to know the result of it.

FIRST GENTLEMAN

I could only hear bits and pieces of the conversation. But I could hear the king and Camillo speaking in tones of admiration. They looked at each other so intently and with such astonishment that it seemed as if their eyes might pop out. Even their inability to speak communicated something, and so did their gestures. They looked as if the world had been taken hostage, or destroyed. They were obviously amazed. But even the most astute observer would be unable to say if it was joy or sorrow they felt, though obviously a great deal of one or the other.

A second Gentleman enters.

Here comes a gentleman who perhaps knows more. Any news, Rogero?

SECOND GENTLEMAN

Nothing but bonfires: the oracle is fulfilled; the king's daughter is found: such a deal of wonder is broken out within this hour that ballad-makers cannot be able to express it.

Enter a third Gentleman

25 Here comes the Lady Paulina's steward: he can deliver you more. How goes it now, sir? this news which is called true is so like an old tale, that the verity of it is in strong suspicion: has the king found his heir?

THIRD GENTLEMAN

30 Most true, if ever truth were pregnant by circumstance: that which you hear you'll swear you see, there is such unity in the proofs. The mantle of Queen Hermione's, her jewel about the neck of it, the letters of Antigonus found with it which they
35 know to be his character, the majesty of the creature in resemblance of the mother, the affection of nobleness which nature shows above her breeding, and many other evidences proclaim her with all certainty to be the king's daughter. Did you see
40 the meeting of the two kings?

SECOND GENTLEMAN

Only of celebration. The oracle is fulfilled. The king's daughter is found. So many amazing things have happened this hour that [ballad-makers won't be able to express them](#).

A third Gentleman enters.

Here comes Lady Paulina's servant. He can tell you more. What's happening now? This true story seems so much like a fable that it's hard to believe. Has the king found his heir?

THIRD GENTLEMAN

It's very true, if truth was ever proven by evidence. All the stories match up and are consistent. It all shows that Perdita is certainly the king's daughter—the cloak of Queen Hermione, the jewel that was found around her neck, letters in Antigonus's handwriting found with her, how much she looks like her mother, her noble bearing, which shows her to be more than a shepherd's daughter, and many other things. Did you see the meeting of the two kings?

SECOND GENTLEMAN

No.

THIRD GENTLEMAN

Then have you lost a sight, which was to be seen,
cannot be spoken of. There might you have beheld one
joy crown another, so and in such manner that it
45 seemed sorrow wept to take leave of them, for their
joy waded in tears. There was casting up of eyes,
holding up of hands, with countenances of such
distraction that they were to be known by garment,
not by favour. Our king, being ready to leap out of
50 himself for joy of his found daughter, as if that
joy were now become a loss, cries 'O, thy mother,
thy mother!' then asks Bohemia forgiveness; then
embraces his son-in-law; then again worries he his
daughter with clipping her; now he thanks the old
55 shepherd, which stands by like a weather-bitten
conduit of many kings' reigns. I never heard of such
another encounter, which lames report to follow it
and undoes description to do it.

SECOND GENTLEMAN

What, pray you, became of Antigonus, that carried
60 hence the child?

THIRD GENTLEMAN

Like an old tale still, which will have matter to

No.

THIRD GENTLEMAN

Then you've missed something indescribable. You would have
seen one joy upon another. It was so emotional that they both
wept. They raised their eyes to heaven, clasped hands, and
their faces were so contorted with emotion that you could only
recognize them by their clothing. Our king, overcome with joy
at having found his daughter, cried out, "Oh, your mother, your
mother," as if that joy had become a loss. Then he asked
Polixenes for forgiveness, then embraced his son-in-law, and
then harassed his daughter with embraces. Then he thanks the
old shepherd, who stands there weeping like a stone statue.
I've never heard of such an event. It's impossible to tell what
happen, or to describe it.

SECOND GENTLEMAN

What became of Antigonus, who carried away the child?

THIRD GENTLEMAN

rehearse, though credit be asleep and not an ear open. He was torn to pieces with a bear: this avouches the shepherd's son; who has not only his innocence, which seems much, to justify him, but a handkerchief and rings of his that Paulina knows.

FIRST GENTLEMAN

What became of his bark and his followers?

THIRD GENTLEMAN

Wrecked the same instant of their master's death and in the view of the shepherd: so that all the instruments which aided to expose the child were even then lost when it was found. But O, the noble combat that 'twixt joy and sorrow was fought in Paulina! She had one eye declined for the loss of her husband, another elevated that the oracle was fulfilled: she lifted the princess from the earth, and so locks her in embracing, as if she would pin her to her heart that she might no more be in danger of losing.

FIRST GENTLEMAN

The dignity of this act was worth the audience of kings and princes; for by such was it acted.

THIRD GENTLEMAN

That itself is like an old story, which will take effort to recount and is hard to believe. He was torn to pieces by a bear. The shepherd's son swears so, and not only does he seem innocent enough to be believed, but he also has a handkerchief and rings that Paulina recognized as belonging to Antigonus.

FIRST GENTLEMAN

What happened to his ship and his companions?

THIRD GENTLEMAN

They were wrecked at the same time their master was killed. The shepherd saw it happen. So all those who helped exile the child were lost. Paulina was caught between joy and sorrow! She was saddened at the loss of her husband but elated that the oracle was fulfilled. She lifted the princess in a hug, as if she could pin her to her heart so as never to lose her again.

FIRST GENTLEMAN

This is a scene worthy of an audience of kings and princes, who were also the actors in it.

One of the prettiest touches of all and that which angled for mine eyes, caught the water though not the fish, was when, at the relation of the queen's death, with the manner how she came to't bravely
85 confessed and lamented by the king, how attentiveness wounded his daughter; till, from one sign of dolour to another, she did, with an 'Alas,' I would fain say, bleed tears, for I am sure my heart wept blood. Who was most marble there changed
90 colour; some swooned, all sorrowed: if all the world could have seen 't, the woe had been universal.

FIRST GENTLEMAN

Are they returned to the court?

THIRD GENTLEMAN

No: the princess hearing of her mother's statue, which is in the keeping of Paulina,—a piece many
95 years in doing and now newly performed by that rare Italian master, Julio Romano, who, had he himself eternity and could put breath into his work, would beguile Nature of her custom, so perfectly he is her ape: he so near to Hermione hath done Hermione that
100 they say one would speak to her and stand in hope of answer: thither with all greediness of affection are they gone, and there they intend to sup.

THIRD GENTLEMAN

One of the most moving things of all, which brought me to tears, was when the king bravely and sadly told his daughter how the queen died. How intently Perdita listened! She went from sorrow to sorrow, and finally said, "Alas," and seemed to bleed tears. I would say my heart nearly broke. Even the most hardened onlooker was affected. Some fainted, and all mourned. If the world could have seen it, everyone would have felt sorrow.

FIRST GENTLEMAN

Have they returned to the court?

THIRD GENTLEMAN

No. The princess heard that Paulina keeps a statue of her mother that was made over many years and just recently finished. It was done by that Italian master, Julio Romano, who makes his subjects so close to life that, if he could breathe life into his statues, he would replace Nature. He has replicated Hermione so closely that they say that you might speak to her and expect an answer. They've gone to see it, and they intend to dine there.

SECOND GENTLEMAN

I thought she had some great matter there in hand;
for she hath privately twice or thrice a day, ever
105 since the death of Hermione, visited that removed
house. Shall we thither and with our company piece
the rejoicing?

FIRST GENTLEMAN

Who would be thence that has the benefit of access?
every wink of an eye some new grace will be born:
110 our absence makes us unthrifty to our knowledge.
Let's along.

Exeunt Gentlemen

AUTOLYCUS

Now, had I not the dash of my former life in me,
would preferment drop on my head. I brought the old
man and his son aboard the prince: told him I heard
115 them talk of a fardel and I know not what: but he
at that time, overfond of the shepherd's daughter,
so he then took her to be, who began to be much
sea-sick, and himself little better, extremity of
weather continuing, this mystery remained
120 undiscovered. But 'tis all one to me; for had I
been the finder out of this secret, it would not
have relished among my other discredits.

SECOND GENTLEMAN

I thought Paulina had some important business there. Ever
since Hermione died, she has visited that remote place
privately two or three times a day. Shall we go there and join
the celebration?

FIRST GENTLEMAN

Who wouldn't go who has access? Every moment you look will
show a new wonder. Our absence will make us poorer in
knowledge. Let's go.

The Gentlemen exit.

AUTOLYCUS

Now, if I didn't have a trace of my former life in me, the king
would favor me. I brought the old man and his son aboard with
the prince, and told him I heard them talk about a bundle and
so on. But he was distracted by his fondness for the shepherd's
daughter, who he still thought her to be at the time, and with
the bad weather they both began to suffer from sea-sickness.
The mystery remained undiscovered. But it's all the same to
me. If I had revealed this secret, it wouldn't have gone well
with my other misdeeds.

Enter SHEPHERD and CLOWN

Here come those I have done good to against my will,
and already appearing in the blossoms of their fortune.

SHEPHERD

125 Come, boy; I am past more children, but thy sons and
daughters will be all gentlemen born.

CLOWN

You are well met, sir. You denied to fight with me
this other day, because I was no gentleman born.
See you these clothes? say you see them not and
130 think me still no gentleman born: you were best say
these robes are not gentlemen born: give me the
lie, do, and try whether I am not now a gentleman born.

AUTOLYCUS

I know you are now, sir, a gentleman born.

CLOWN

Ay, and have been so any time these four hours.

SHEPHERD

135 And so have I, boy.

CLOWN

So you have: but I was a gentleman born before my

The SHEPHERD and YOKEL enter, dressed as gentlemen.

Here come those men I have helped against my will, and they
already are enjoying their good fortune.

SHEPHERD

Come, my boy. I won't have any more children, but your sons
and daughters will be the children of a gentleman.

YOKEL

(to Autolycus) Good to see you, sir. You refused to fight me the
other day because I wasn't a gentleman's son. Do you see
these clothes? Tell me you don't see them and still think I'm
not a gentleman's son. You'd be better off saying these clothes
aren't from a gentleman. Lie to me, and see whether I'm not a
gentleman's son.

AUTOLYCUS

Now I know you are a gentleman, sir.

YOKEL

Yes, and have been so for these past four hours.

SHEPHERD

And I've been, too, boy.

YOKEL

father; for the king's son took me by the hand, and called me brother; and then the two kings called my father brother; and then the prince my brother and the princess my sister called my father father; and so we wept, and there was the first gentleman-like tears that ever we shed.

SHEPHERD

We may live, son, to shed many more.

CLOWN

Ay; or else 'twere hard luck, being in so
145 preposterous estate as we are.

AUTOLYCUS

I humbly beseech you, sir, to pardon me all the faults I have committed to your worship and to give me your good report to the prince my master.

SHEPHERD

Prithee, son, do; for we must be gentle, now we are
150 gentlemen.

CLOWN

Thou wilt amend thy life?

AUTOLYCUS

Ay, an it like your good worship.

You have. But I became a gentleman before my father, because the king's son took me by the hand and called me "brother." Then the two kings called my father "brother." And then my brother the prince, and my sister the princess called my father "father." And so we all wept, and those were the first tears we shed as gentlemen.

SHEPHERD

May we live to shed many more, son.

YOKEL

Yes, or it would be tough luck, being in such [preposterous state](#) as we are.

AUTOLYCUS

I humbly beg you, sir, to forgive me for all the ways I have offended you, and to speak well of me to the prince, my master.

SHEPHERD

Yes, son, do so. We have to be gentle, now that we are gentlemen.

YOKEL

You'll reform yourself?

AUTOLYCUS

Yes, as it pleases you.

CLOWN

Give me thy hand: I will swear to the prince thou art as honest a true fellow as any is in Bohemia.

SHEPHERD

155 You may say it, but not swear it.

CLOWN

Not swear it, now I am a gentleman? Let boors and franklins say it, I'll swear it.

SHEPHERD

How if it be false, son?

CLOWN

If it be ne'er so false, a true gentleman may swear
160 it in the behalf of his friend: and I'll swear to
the prince thou art a tall fellow of thy hands and
that thou wilt not be drunk; but I know thou art no
tall fellow of thy hands and that thou wilt be
drunk: but I'll swear it, and I would thou wouldest
165 be a tall fellow of thy hands.

AUTOLYCUS

I will prove so, sir, to my power.

CLOWN

Ay, by any means prove a tall fellow: if I do not

YOKEL

Give me your hand. I will swear to the prince that you are as honest as any man in Bohemia.

SHEPHERD

You may say it, but don't swear it.

YOKEL

Don't swear it, now that I am a gentleman? Let peasants and farmers simply say it. I'll swear it.

SHEPHERD

What if it turns out to be untrue, son?

YOKEL

Even if it's untrue, a true gentleman will swear it on behalf of his friend. (to Autolycus) And I'll swear to the prince that you are a brave man of action and that you won't be drunk. I know you aren't a brave man of action and that you will be drunk. But I'll swear it, and I hope you'll be a brave man of action.

AUTOLYCUS

I'll do my best to prove so, sir.

YOKEL

wonder how thou darest venture to be drunk, not being a tall fellow, trust me not. Hark! the kings
170 and the princes, our kindred, are going to see the queen's picture. Come, follow us: we'll be thy good masters.

Exeunt

A chapel in PAULINA'S house.

*Enter LEONTES, POLIXENES, FLORIZEL, PERDITA, CAMILLO,
PAULINA, Lords, and Attendants*

LEONTES

O grave and good Paulina, the great comfort
That I have had of thee!

PAULINA

What, sovereign sir,
I did not well I meant well. All my services
5 You have paid home: but that you have vouchsafed,
With your crown'd brother and these your contracted
Heirs of your kingdoms, my poor house to visit,
It is a surplus of your grace, which never
My life may last to answer.

LEONTES

Yes, prove yourself a brave fellow. If I'm not amazed how you dare to be drunk, not being a brave man myself, don't trust me.
(noise off-stage) Look! The kings and the princess, our family, are going to see the queen's statue. Come, follow us. We'll be your kind masters.

They exit.

Act 5 Scene 3

A chapel in PAULINA'S house.

*LEONTES, POLIXENES, FLORIZEL, PERDITA, CAMILLO, and
PAULINA enter, along with lords and attendants.*

LEONTES

Oh, serious and good Paulina, you have given me great comfort.

PAULINA

Sir, even if I didn't always succeed in doing well, I always meant well. You've repaid all my services. The fact that you've vowed to visit my poor house with your royal brother and the heirs of each of your kingdoms shows your immense grace, which I'll never be able to repay.

LEONTES

10 O Paulina,
We honour you with trouble: but we came
To see the statue of our queen: your gallery
Have we pass'd through, not without much content
In many singularities; but we saw not
15 That which my daughter came to look upon,
The statue of her mother.

PAULINA

As she lived peerless,
So her dead likeness, I do well believe,
Excels whatever yet you look'd upon
20 Or hand of man hath done; therefore I keep it
Lonely, apart. But here it is: prepare
To see the life as lively mock'd as ever
Still sleep mock'd death: behold, and say 'tis well.

PAULINA draws a curtain, and discovers HERMIONE standing like a statue

I like your silence, it the more shows off
25 Your wonder: but yet speak; first, you, my liege,
Comes it not something near?

LEONTES

Her natural posture!
Chide me, dear stone, that I may say indeed

Oh, Paulina, we honor you by disturbing you. But we came to see the statue of my queen. We've passed through your gallery, which has many amazing items, but we didn't see what my daughter came to see: the statue of her mother.

PAULINA

Just as she was without peer in life, I believe that her dead statue is more beautiful than anything you've seen or that man has created. So I keep it apart from the others. But here it is. Prepare to see life mimicked as well as sleep mimics death. Look, and say it is beautiful.

Paulina draws a curtain to reveal Hermione, standing like a statue.

I like your silence. It shows how awed you are. But you, my lord, answer first—doesn't it look like her?

LEONTES

Just as she stood! Reprimand me, dear stone, that I say that you are indeed Hermione. Or rather, don't reprimand me, since

Thou art Hermione; or rather, thou art she
30 In thy not chiding, for she was as tender
As infancy and grace. But yet, Paulina,
Hermione was not so much wrinkled, nothing
So aged as this seems.

POLIXENES

O, not by much.

PAULINA

35 So much the more our carver's excellence;
Which lets go by some sixteen years and makes her
As she lived now.

LEONTES

As now she might have done,
So much to my good comfort, as it is
40 Now piercing to my soul. O, thus she stood,
Even with such life of majesty, warm life,
As now it coldly stands, when first I woo'd her!
I am ashamed: does not the stone rebuke me
For being more stone than it? O royal piece,
45 There's magic in thy majesty, which has
My evils conjured to remembrance and
From thy admiring daughter took the spirits,
Standing like stone with thee.

you are so like her and she had a tender nature. But still, Paulina, Hermione wasn't this wrinkled and not as old as this statue appears.

POLIXENES

Oh, not at all.

PAULINA

That shows how excellent the sculptor is. He thinks about what she would look like now, sixteen years having passed, and makes her look as though she lived now.

LEONTES

This statue comforts me now, as she might have done, as much as it pains me to look at it. Oh, when I first courted her she stood just this way, with as much majesty and warmth as this stone has coldness. I am ashamed. Doesn't the stone chastise me for being colder than it is? Oh, royal piece of art, there's magic in your regal appearance, which has brought all my foul deeds to mind and has made your admiring daughter stand as still as stone like you.

PERDITA

And give me leave,

50 And do not say 'tis superstition, that
I kneel and then implore her blessing. Lady,
Dear queen, that ended when I but began,
Give me that hand of yours to kiss.

PAULINA

O, patience!

55 The statue is but newly fix'd, the colour's
Not dry.

CAMILLO

My lord, your sorrow was too sore laid on,
Which sixteen winters cannot blow away,
So many summers dry; scarce any joy
60 Did ever so long live; no sorrow
But kill'd itself much sooner.

POLIXENES

Dear my brother,
Let him that was the cause of this have power
To take off so much grief from you as he
65 Will piece up in himself.

PAULINA

Indeed, my lord,
If I had thought the sight of my poor image
Would thus have wrought you,—for the stone is mine—

PERDITA

Let me kneel and implore her blessing, and don't say it is
superstition. Lady, dear queen, who died just as I was
beginning to live, give me your hand to kiss.

PAULINA

Oh, wait! The statue is still new, and the paint isn't dry.

CAMILLO

My lord, your sorrow is too deep. Sixteen winters haven't blown
it away, and many summers haven't dried it. No joy lives that
long, and neither has any sorrow.

POLIXENES

My dear brother, since I was a cause of this situation, let me
take some grief from you to make a part of myself.

PAULINA

Indeed, my lord, if I had thought seeing this poor statue would
have made you so distraught, I wouldn't have shown it to you.

I'd not have show'd it.

LEONTES

70 Do not draw the curtain.

PAULINA

No longer shall you gaze on't, lest your fancy
May think anon it moves.

LEONTES

Let be, let be.
Would I were dead, but that, methinks, already—
75 What was he that did make it? See, my lord,
Would you not deem it breathed? and that those veins
Did verily bear blood?

POLIXENES

Masterly done:
The very life seems warm upon her lip.

LEONTES

80 The fixture of her eye has motion in't,
As we are mock'd with art.

PAULINA

I'll draw the curtain:
My lord's almost so far transported that
He'll think anon it lives.

(She moves to close the curtain.)

LEONTES

Don't draw the curtain.

PAULINA

Don't look at it any longer, or you'll imagine soon that it moves.

LEONTES

Let it be. If only I were dead, but I think already— Who made it?
Look, my lord, wouldn't you say it took a breath? And that
those veins were filled with blood?

POLIXENES

It's masterfully done. Her mouth seems warmed with breath.

LEONTES

Her eyes seem to move, as though we are mocked by art.

PAULINA

I'll draw the curtain. My lord is so overwhelmed that soon he'll
think it lives.

LEONTES

85 O sweet Paulina,
Make me to think so twenty years together!
No settled senses of the world can match
The pleasure of that madness. Let 't alone.

PAULINA

I am sorry, sir, I have thus far stirr'd you: but
90 I could afflict you farther.

LEONTES

Do, Paulina;
For this affliction has a taste as sweet
As any cordial comfort. Still, methinks,
There is an air comes from her: what fine chisel
95 Could ever yet cut breath? Let no man mock me,
For I will kiss her.

PAULINA

Good my lord, forbear:
The ruddiness upon her lip is wet;
You'll mar it if you kiss it, stain your own
100 With oily painting. Shall I draw the curtain?

LEONTES

No, not these twenty years.

PERDITA**LEONTES**

Oh, sweet Paulina, make me think so for twenty more years!
No sanity would match the pleasure of that madness. Leave it alone.

PAULINA

I'm sorry, sir, that I've made you so agitated, but to leave it
would make it worse.

LEONTES

Do leave it, Paulina. This agitation is as sweet as any revitalizing
comfort. Still, I think air is coming from her. What amazing artist
could cut breath from stone? Don't let anyone make fun of me,
but I will kiss her.

PAULINA

Don't do it, my lord. The red of her lips is wet. You'll ruin it if you
kiss it, and you'll get your own lips covered in oil paint. Shall I
draw the curtain?

LEONTES

No, not for twenty years.

PERDITA

So long could I
Stand by, a looker on.

PAULINA

Either forbear,

105 Quit presently the chapel, or resolve you
For more amazement. If you can behold it,
I'll make the statue move indeed, descend
And take you by the hand; but then you'll think—
Which I protest against—I am assisted

110 By wicked powers.

LEONTES

What you can make her do,
I am content to look on: what to speak,
I am content to hear; for 'tis as easy
To make her speak as move.

PAULINA

115 It is required
You do awake your faith. Then all stand still;
On: those that think it is unlawful business
I am about, let them depart.

LEONTES

Proceed:

120 No foot shall stir.

I could stand here that long, looking at her.

PAULINA

Either resist the temptation and leave the chapel, or prepare yourselves for more amazement. If you can take it, I'll make the statue move, step down from her pedestal, and take you by the hand. But then you'll think I'm a witch, though I swear I am not.

LEONTES

Whatever you can make her do, I'm happy to watch. Whatever you can make her say, I'm happy to hear, because it must be as easy to make her speak as it is to make her move.

PAULINA

It's necessary that you have faith. So everyone hold still, and anyone who thinks this is bad business should leave now.

LEONTES

Go ahead. No one will move.

PAULINA

Music, awake her; strike!

Music

'Tis time; descend; be stone no more; approach;
Strike all that look upon with marvel. Come,
I'll fill your grave up: stir, nay, come away,
125 Bequeath to death your numbness, for from him
Dear life redeems you. You perceive she stirs:

HERMIONE comes down

Start not; her actions shall be holy as
You hear my spell is lawful: do not shun her
Until you see her die again; for then
130 You kill her double. Nay, present your hand:
When she was young you woo'd her; now in age
Is she become the suitor?

LEONTES

O, she's warm!
If this be magic, let it be an art
135 Lawful as eating.

POLIXENES

She embraces him.

PAULINA

Music, wake her!

Music plays.

It's time. Come down, and no longer be stone. Come forward.
Make everyone who looks at you be amazed. Come, I'll fill up
your grave. Move, no, move away, let Death have your
numbness since life is taking you from [him](#). You see she
moves.

Hermione comes down.

Don't jump. Her actions are pure, and this spell is no evil
enchantment. Don't shun her, because if you do, you'll kill her
all over again. No, put your hand forward. You courted her
when she was young. Now in old age does she have to court
you?

LEONTES

Oh, she's warm! If this is magic, it should be as ordinary as
eating.

POLIXENES

She embraces him.

CAMILLO

She hangs about his neck:

If she pertain to life let her speak too.

POLIXENES

Ay, and make't manifest where she has lived,

140 Or how stolen from the dead.

PAULINA

That she is living,

Were it but told you, should be hooted at

Like an old tale: but it appears she lives,

Though yet she speak not. Mark a little while.

145 Please you to interpose, fair madam: kneel

And pray your mother's blessing. Turn, good lady;

Our Perdita is found.

HERMIONE

You gods, look down

And from your sacred vials pour your graces

150 Upon my daughter's head! Tell me, mine own.

Where hast thou been preserved? where lived? how found

Thy father's court? for thou shalt hear that I,

Knowing by Paulina that the oracle

Gave hope thou wast in being, have preserved

155 Myself to see the issue.

PAULINA**CAMILLO**

She hugs him. If she is really alive let her speak, too.

POLIXENES

Yes, and tell us where she has lived, or how she's come back

to life.

PAULINA

If you were told she was alive, you would consider it a fable.

But it seems she is alive, even though she doesn't speak. Look for a while. (*to Perdita*) Please, intervene, fair madam. Kneel down and ask for your mother's blessing. Look, good lady—our Perdita is found.

HERMIONE

You gods, look down and pour your blessings upon my daughter's head! Tell me, my child, where have you been kept safe? Where have you lived? How did you find yourself in your father's court? Paulina told me the oracle gave hope that you were still alive, so I stayed alive to see you someday.

PAULINA

There's time enough for that;

Lest they desire upon this push to trouble

Your joys with like relation. Go together,

You precious winners all; your exultation

160 Partake to every one. I, an old turtle,

Will wing me to some wither'd bough and there

My mate, that's never to be found again,

Lament till I am lost.

LEONTES

O, peace, Paulina!

165 Thou shouldst a husband take by my consent,

As I by thine a wife: this is a match,

And made between's by vows. Thou hast found mine;

But how, is to be question'd; for I saw her,

As I thought, dead, and have in vain said many

170 A prayer upon her grave. I'll not seek far—

For him, I partly know his mind—to find thee

An honourable husband. Come, Camillo,

And take her by the hand, whose worth and honesty

Is richly noted and here justified

175 By us, a pair of kings. Let's from this place.

What! look upon my brother: both your pardons,

That e'er I put between your holy looks

My ill suspicion. This is your son-in-law,

And son unto the king, who, heavens directing,

There's enough time for that later, and they might want you to answer the same questions. Go together, you happy people, and all rejoice. Like an old turtledove, I'll take myself off to a solitary bough and mourn my husband, who will never be found again.

LEONTES

Oh, peace, Paulina! You should take a husband that I approve of, as I take a wife that you approve of. This is a contract, vowed between us. You have found mine, though I don't know how, since I saw her and believed her to be dead, and I've futilely said several prayers on her grave. I won't have to look far to find you an honorable husband, since I know his mind already. Come, Camillo, take her by the hand. Her worth and honesty is well known and affirmed by both Polixenes and me. Let's leave this place. (*to Hermione*) Look at my brother! I beg both your pardons for having suspected sin in your innocent glances. This is your son-in-law, the son of Polixenes, who is engaged to your daughter. Good Paulina, lead us away from here, and we'll each answer for what we've all done in this wide expanse of time since we first separated. Quickly, lead us away.

180 Is troth-plight to your daughter. Good Paulina,
Lead us from hence, where we may leisurely
Each one demand an answer to his part
Perform'd in this wide gap of time since first
We were dissever'd: hastily lead away.

Exeunt.

They exit.