

THE WINTER'S TALE

A line-by-line translation

Act 1, Scene 1

Shakespeare

*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

10 Beseech you—

ARCHIDAMUS

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, may, though
15 they cannot praise us, as little accuse 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 comfort of your young prince Mamillius: it is a gentleman of the greatest promise that ever came
35 into my note.

Shakesclore Translation

*CAMILLO and ARCHIDAMUS enter.***ARCHIDAMUS**

Camillo, if, in your duties as a servant to the king, you ever happen to visit Bohemia (as I'm visiting Sicily now), you'll see how different our two countries are.

CAMILLO

I think the King of Sicily is planning to visit the King of Bohemia this coming summer (as he should).

ARCHIDAMUS

The parties we throw might not be much to be proud of, but we make up for it with heart! Seriously—

CAMILLO

Oh, come on—

ARCHIDAMUS

No, really, I'm being honest—we can't compete with such over-the-top, such amazing—I don't even know what to say. We'll have to spike your drinks so that you get really groggy and won't be able to compliment or criticize our party.


CAMILLO

You don't have to pay us back for anything; everything we give is a gift.

ARCHIDAMUS


I'm only saying what I know to be true. I'm being completely honest with you.

CAMILLO

It would be impossible for the King of Sicily to be too kind to the King of Bohemia. They went to school together when they were kids and became really close, though, naturally, they've grown apart  since. Once they reached adulthood and were crowned as kings, they had to attend to business in their respective countries. Though they haven't been able to meet in person, they've exchanged gifts and letters and have sent servants on their behalf. They haven't really been together, of course, but it's as if they were shaking hands or hugging from opposite sides of the globe. God bless their friendship!

ARCHIDAMUS

I don't think anything in the world could change it. You're so lucky to have your young prince, Mamillius. He's the most promising kid I've ever met.

 Shakespeare compares Leontes and Polixenes to plants in an extended metaphor – like a tree, their love is deeply “rooted” despite each of them growing, like separate branches, further from each other with time.

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 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 on crutches till he had one.

Exeunt

CAMILLO

I couldn't agree with you more; I have high expectations for him. He's a great kid—like chicken soup for the soul, he keeps us old folks young. The Sicilians who were old and in wheelchairs before he was even born are hoping they live to see him grow up.

ARCHIDAMUS

Otherwise, would they be happy to die?


CAMILLO

Yes, if they had nothing else to live for.

ARCHIDAMUS

If the king didn't have a son, they would want to hang onto life in their wheelchairs until he did!

They both leave.

 Camillo says that the subjects are too old to walk anymore. He jokes that they should have died long ago, but their love for the prince keeps them alive.

Act 1, Scene 2

Shakespeare

Enter LEONTES, HERMIONE, MAMILLIUS, POLIXENES, 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;
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

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
No sneaking 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.

POLIXENES

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.

Shakesclore Translation

LEONTES, HERMIONE, MAMILLIUS, POLIXENES, CAMILLO, and their servants enter.

POLIXENES

It's been nine months since I left my throne in Bohemia without a care in the world. I'd be happy to stay another nine months, brother, except that I would owe you forever. All I can repay you with are my thanks! That being said, I'll have to multiply my single "thank you" into many thousands more.

LEONTES

Oh, stop thanking me. You can "pay" me when you leave.

POLIXENES

I'm leaving tomorrow, sir. I'm worried about what might have happened in Bohemia while I've been gone—unfavorable winds may be blowing, if you know what I mean. Besides, I've over-stayed my welcome here and I've worn you out.

LEONTES

I'm tougher than you give me credit for!

POLIXENES

I can't stay any longer.

LEONTES

Just one more week?

POLIXENES

Really, tomorrow.

LEONTES

We'll say goodbye in a week, and after that I won't argue any more.

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.

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

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 t'unsphere the
60 stars with oaths,
Should yet say 'Sir, no going.' Verily,
You shall not go. A lady's 'Verily' is
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
75 Of my lord's tricks and yours when you were boys:
You were pretty lordings then?

POLIXENES

Please, stop pushing me. There is no one in the whole world better at convincing me to do things than you. And now, if you really needed me, you would have almost won me over—except that I'd still have to say "no." Duty calls and I have to go home. If you keep me here, you'll only be hurting me in the long run; if I stay, I'll only be a burden to your hospitality. So if I leave, it's a win-win! Goodbye, brother.

LEONTES

Hermione, are you tongue-tied? Say something!

HERMIONE

Sir, I'd planned to stay quiet until you'd pushed him to the point of swearing not to stay. You're too hard on him. Tell him everything in Bohemia's fine—we heard good news yesterday. If you tell him that, he's lost his best reason for leaving.

LEONTES

Well said, Hermione.

HERMIONE

Of course, that he misses his son is a good excuse. If he says that, we'll let him go. And if he swears that, we'll not only let him go, we'll chase him out the door with frying pans! Despite that, I'll still beg your royal self to stay another week. When my husband goes to Bohemia I'll give him permission to stay there a month past the agreed-upon departure date—and, Leontes, you know I love you not one bit less than any woman loves her husband.

[To POLIXENES] Will you stay?

POLIXENES

No, ma'am.

HERMIONE

Oh, please, won't you?

POLIXENES

Truly, I can't.

HERMIONE


"Truly!" You can keep putting me off with promises, but even if you swore by all the stars in the sky, I'd still say, "Sir, you're staying." Truly, you can't leave—a woman's "truly" is as strong as a man's. Are you still intent on leaving? You'll force me to keep you as a prisoner rather than as a guest. Instead of thanking me, you'll have to pay your fees when you leave. What do you say to that? Will you be my prisoner, or my guest? Judging by your oh-so-serious "truly," you'll have to be one of them.


POLIXENES

I'll be your guest, then. For me to be your prisoner would imply that I'd committed some crime against you. It'd be harder for me to do that than it would be for you to punish me.

HERMIONE

Then I'm not your jailer; I'm your kind hostess. Come on, I'll ask you all about your and my husband's shenanigans back when you were kids. You were cute little kings-to-be back then, weren't you?

 Hermione's word "distaff" in the original text refers to the wheels women used to spin wool into yarn or thread. That she imagines Leontes and herself chasing Polixenes out with distaffs makes Leontes into an unusually female, domestic figure.

 In the Renaissance, prisoners had to pay their own room and board in prison. It was possible to go further into debt after committing a crime because of the costs associated with serving one's sentence.

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.

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

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!

POLIXENES

We were two kids who lived like there was no tomorrow,
and thought we'd be boys forever.

HERMIONE

And wasn't my husband the bigger troublemaker out of you
two?

POLIXENES

We were like two lambs that frolicked in the sunshine and
bleated to each other; we were completely innocent and
knew nothing about evil. We couldn't even comprehend
evil. If we'd stayed like that, and we'd never had to grow up,
we could have gone to heaven and honestly told God that
we'd never sinned ³.

³ Christians believe that, at the "Last Judgment," God will ask people to answer for their actions on Earth. The good will go to heaven, while the evil will go to hell. Christians also believe that, since the "Fall" of Adam and Eve, all humans are sinful from birth. So, Polixenes exaggerates his and Leontes's childhood innocence.

HERMIONE

Should we take that to mean that you've slipped up ⁴
since then?

⁴ Here, Hermione puns on Adam and Eve's "Fall" ("trip"). Because Polixenes talks about innocence in the past tense, he must have sinned at some point.

POLIXENES

Oh, you virtuous woman! We have definitely come across
temptation since then. But back in those days, my wife was
still a young girl, and you hadn't yet caught my young
playmate's eye.

HERMIONE

And wasn't that lucky! Please, don't finish your story. Next
you're going to say that your queen and I are devils.
Actually, keep going—we'll admit to being the cause of your
sin ⁵ as long as you admit you sinned with us for the first
time and swear you haven't sinned with anyone else since.

⁵ Hermione and Polixenes equate sex and desire with "sin." She teases him by asking him to swear that he and Leontes have never slept with any women but their wives.

LEONTES

Have you convinced him yet?

HERMIONE

He'll stay, sweetheart.

LEONTES

He wouldn't when I asked! Hermione, you've never spoken
better.

HERMIONE

Never?

LEONTES

Never, except once.

HERMIONE

What? Have I said the right thing twice? When was the first
time? Please tell me. Butter me up with praise 'til I'm as fat
as a pig for the slaughter ⁶. If you don't compliment a
good deed, you'll stop that person from doing a thousand
more good things that person might have done. Your
compliments are my reward. For a single kiss, you can ride
me for a mile before you'd have to kick me with your spurs.
Back to the point: if my most recent accomplishment was
convincing him to stay, what was the first one? This
accomplishment must have a sister, unless I misunderstood

⁶ Hermione compares herself to livestock: to an animal fattened up for eating, and to a horse rewarded with sugar to keep running.

⁷ A plausible interpretation for this obscure line is that Hermione is

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.
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!

150 Why, that's my bawcock. What, hast
smutch'd thy nose?
They say it is a copy out of mine. Come, captain,
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,
175

you. If only her name were "Grace [7](#)!" There was another
time I said something good? What was it? Please tell me; I'm
dying to know.

LEONTES

Obviously that was when, after three long, bitter months, I
convinced you to give me your hand in marriage. At that
moment, you said, "I am yours forever."

HERMIONE

That was definitely "grace [8](#)," wasn't it? Well, look at that,
I've said the right thing two whole times. The first time, I
earned a royal husband forever; the second time, I earned a
friend for a while.

LEONTES

[To himself] Too far, too far! Friendships that get too close
always end with the "friends" having sex. I'm having a heart
attack. My heart is racing, but not with
excitement—definitely not. They might as well be relaxed
and open with each other here at the party, and blame it on
the plentiful food and drink. But holding hands and linking
fingers, and smiling stupidly at each other and sighing as if
they were having an orgasm—that kind of "party" hurts my
heart and my head [9](#).

[To MAMILLIUS] Mamillius, are you my son?

MAMILLIUS

Yes, sir.

LEONTES

Goodness gracious! There's my little chickadee. Is that
some dirt on your nose? They say it looks just like mine.
Come on, buddy, we should be part of the same herd. Did
you know that a bull, a cow, and a calf are called a herd [10](#)?

[Looking toward POLIXENES and HERMIONE] Still holding
his hand!

[To MAMILLIUS] Well, my silly little calf. Are you my calf?

MAMILLIUS

Yes, of course, sir.

LEONTES

You'll need a beard and some horns [11](#) if you want to be
just like me! They say we're two peas in a pod—well,
women say so, and they'd say anything. Women are as fake
as dyed-blond hair, as stable as wind, as solid as water, as
fair as loaded dice—and yet, it's true that this boy looks like
me. Come here, buddy, look at me with your dreamy eyes!
You precious thing! My dear! My son! Could your
mother—can it be? I'm going crazy [12](#)! Madness is making
me think this, making me believe impossible things,
making nightmares a reality. How can this be? Madness and
unreality together make nothing, so it makes sense that it
would hook up with something, and it does, beyond
compare, and I'm there already—so much so that my brain
is sick and horns are sprouting out of my head!

becoming hysterical. She exaggerates
that she's only said the right thing
twice in her whole marriage, and
personifies her two good speeches as
"sisters," one of whom is named
"Grace"—connoting Hermione's mercy
and virtue; values which Leontes
lacks.

[8](#) Hermione makes her "grace" joke
sincere, implying her love for Leontes
is undeserved.

[9](#) In Shakespeare's day, men whose
wives cheated on them were called
"cuckolds," and depicted with "horns"
growing out of their foreheads.
Leontes refers to the metaphorical
horns he believes he's growing,
evidence of his wife's affair with his
best friend.

[10](#) Leontes picks up Hermione's
animal metaphor, imagining his family
as cows. He uses the metaphor to
express his growing fear that his son is
not his own, but fathered by another
man.

[11](#) Again, Leontes refers to his
imagined cuckold's horns.

[12](#) The nonsensical quality to
Leontes's speech in the original text
reflects how he's losing his mind.

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!

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,
190 In my green velvet coat, my dagger muzzled,
Lest it should bite its master, and so prove,
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 thicken 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:
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!

POLIXENES

Is Leontes all right?

HERMIONE

He seems a little upset.

POLIXENES

[To LEONTES] Hey, are you all right? How are you, brother?

HERMIONE

Your forehead ¹³ looks wrinkled with thought. Are you
upset, my love?

LEONTES

No, really, I'm fine.

[To himself] See how our bodies give us away, giving other
people a chance to laugh at us! Just now, looking at my
son's face, I went back in time twenty-three years and saw
myself back before I wore pants ¹⁴, in my green velvet coat,
with a blunt practice sword ¹⁵ (it was blunt so that I didn't
cut myself, since that kind of toy is dangerous when you're
a kid). Back then I was so much like this kid.

[To MAMILLIUS] Buddy, would you let yourself be robbed?

MAMILLIUS

No, sir, I'll fight.

LEONTES

You will? Well, lucky me!

[To POLIXENES] Brother, do you love your son as much as I
seem to love mine?

POLIXENES

When I'm at home I spend all my time playing, laughing,
and working with him. He's my friend and my enemy, my
shadow, my soldier, my little king-in-training. He makes the
days fly by and his crazy antics keep me from taking myself
too seriously.

LEONTES

It's the same with me and my son. Well, Mamillius and I will
walk along and leave you two to more serious business.
Hermione, you can show your love for me by giving
Polixenes a warm welcome. Let him have what is expensive
in Sicily for a small price. Next to you and our son, he's the
person I care about the most.

HERMIONE

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

LEONTES

Do whatever you want. I'll find you as long as you're
underneath the sky.

[To himself] I'm reeling them in now, even if you can't see
my fishing line. Oh, come on! Look how she holds up her
mouth, her lips to him! As confidently as if he were her own

¹³ The irony of the obvious pun on the cuckold's hard "brows" is lost on Polixenes and Hermione, who have no idea of the story Leontes's deranged mind has fabricated.

¹⁴ In Shakespeare's time, both boys and girls wore gowns from birth to early childhood. Boys began to wear pants (breeches) around age 6. Like Polixenes, Leontes reminisces about his pre-gendered, pre-pubescent life.

¹⁵ This "sword," like most in Shakespeare, is a phallic reference. Sharp swords and budding sexuality threatened Leontes as a child.

And arms her with the boldness of a wife
To her allowing husband!
225 *[Exeunt POLIXENES, HERMIONE, and Attendants]*
Gone already!
Inch-thick, knee-deep, o'er head and
ears a fork'd one!
230 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
Will be my knell. Go, play, boy, play.
There have been,
235 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,
That little thinks she has been sluiced in's absence
And his pond fish'd by his next neighbour, by
240 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
That have revolted wives, the tenth of mankind
Would hang themselves. Physic for't there is none;
245 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,
No barricado for a belly; know't;
It will let in and out the enemy
250 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

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

CAMILLO

Ay, my good lord.

LEONTES

255 Go play, Mamillius; thou'rt an honest man.
[Exit MAMILLIUS]
Camillo, this great sir will yet stay longer.

CAMILLO

260 You had much ado to make his anchor hold:
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

265 Didst perceive it?
[Aside] They're here with me already, whispering,
rounding
'Sicilia is a so-forth: 'tis far gone,
270 When I shall gust it last. How came't, Camillo,
That he did stay?

CAMILLO

At the good queen's entreaty.

LEONTES

At the queen's be't: 'good' should be pertinent
But, so it is, it is not. Was this taken
275 By any understanding pate but thine?
For thy conceit is soaking, will draw in
More than the common blocks: not noted, is't,

husband! *[POLIXENES, HERMIONE, and their servants leave]* There they go! I'm in thick and deep, over my head,
and horns are sprouting above my ears!

[To MAMILLIUS] Go play, boy—play! Your mother's playing,
and I play such a horrible part that its reviews will put me in
my grave; booing and hissing will be the last thing I hear.

[To the audience] Unless I'm mistaken, plenty of men have
been cheated on by their wives before now. There may even
be a man here, as I'm speaking, holding his wife by the arm
not knowing she slept with someone else while he was
gone. Little does he know that his neighbor (you know the
one, Mr. Smiley) stuck his fishing rod in that pond while he
was out of town. It's actually comforting to know that I'm
not alone in having something taken from me against my
will. If all men who've been cheated on gave up on
themselves, ten percent of the male population would hang
themselves. There's no solution to it. We live on a raunchy
planet and the raunchiness can strike at any time (and
powerfully, believe you me) from the east, west, north, or
south. It'll let the enemy in and out with bag and baggage.
Thousands of us suffer from this and have no idea.

[To MAMILLIUS] What's up, son?

MAMILLIUS

They say I'm like you.

LEONTES

Well, that's comforting.

[Enter CAMILLO] Hey, Camillo, is that you?

CAMILLO

Yes, sir.

LEONTES

Mamillius, go play. That's a good boy. *[MAMILLIUS leaves]*

Camillo, this all-important man has decided to stay longer.

CAMILLO

You worked hard to make him stay. As hard as you tried, he
insisted he had to get home.

LEONTES

Did you notice that?

CAMILLO

He wouldn't stay when you asked. It's like the more you
pushed, the more he was convinced his business was more
important.

LEONTES

Did you pick up on that?

[To himself] They're all gossiping about me already,
whispering, "Leontes is such-and-such." It'll be too late by
the time I hear about it. Camillo, why did he finally decide
to stay?

CAMILLO

Because the good queen asked.

LEONTES

The queen, huh? Whether or not she's "good" is up for
debate. Did anyone else notice this besides you? I mean,
you're pretty intelligent, but idiots wouldn't pick up on that,
right? It would have escaped the average person—they'd be
totally blind to the matter. What do you say to that?

But of the finer natures? by some severals
Of head-piece extraordinary? lower messes
280 Perchance are to this business purblind? say.

CAMILLO

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

LEONTES

Ha!

CAMILLO

Stays here longer.

LEONTES

285 Ay, but why?

CAMILLO

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

LEONTES

Satisfy!

The entreaties of your mistress! satisfy!
290 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
Hast cleansed my bosom, I from thee departed
Thy penitent reform'd: but we have been
295 Deceived in thy integrity, deceived
In that which seems so.

CAMILLO

Be it forbid, my lord!

LEONTES

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

CAMILLO

My gracious lord,
I may be negligent, foolish and fearful;
In every one of these no man is free,
But that his negligence, his folly, fear,
310 Among the infinite doings of the world,
Sometime puts forth. In your affairs, my lord,
If ever I were wilful-negligent,
It was my folly; if industriously
I play'd the fool, it was my negligence,
315 Not weighing well the end; if ever fearful
To do a thing, where I the issue doubted,
Where of the execution did cry out
Against the non-performance, 'twas a fear
Which oft infects the wisest: these, my lord,
320 Are such allow'd infirmities that honesty
Is never free of. But, beseech your grace,
Be plainer with me; let me know my trespass
By its own visage: if I then deny it,
'Tis none of mine.

LEONTES

325 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,—
For to a vision so apparent rumour
Cannot be mute,—or thought,—for cogitation
330 Resides not in that man that does not think,—
My wife is slippery? If thou wilt confess,

CAMILLO

The matter, sir! I think most people can understand the fact
that Polixenes is staying here longer.

LEONTES

Ha!

CAMILLO

He's staying here longer.

LEONTES

Yes, but *why*?

CAMILLO

To satisfy you and because of your lovely wife's invitation.

LEONTES

"Satisfy!" "Satisfy" my wife's invitation! That says it all. I've
trusted you, Camillo, with my darkest secrets. I've
confessed my soul to you as if you were a priest, and you've
cleared my conscience and helped me to be a better man.
But now I see I was wrong about you. I thought you were a
good man, but you're not!

CAMILLO

That can't be, sir!

LEONTES

To be clear: you're a liar. You're a coward who shrinks away
from honesty ¹⁶ and who's afraid to do the right thing.
You're either a servant who won my trust only so you could
betray me, or an idiot who sees what's going on and, for his
own gain, pretends it's all a joke.

CAMILLO

Sir, I may be careless, stupid, and afraid, but nobody's
perfect. Carelessness, stupidity, and fear are just part of
being in the world; you can't avoid them. As long as I've
worked for you, sir, any time I messed up, it was because I
was stupid. If I acted stupidly, it's because I made a mistake
and didn't think it through. If I were ever so afraid to do
something, so afraid I couldn't control the consequences
that I wasn't able to carry it out, well, that's a fear even the
smartest people have to deal with. But, sir, I'm begging you
to be straight with me. Tell me to my face how I messed up.
If I deny it, then you'd better believe I didn't do it.

LEONTES

Camillo, haven't you seen (but you must have, unless your
glasses are as thick as a cuckold's horn ¹⁷) or heard (since
something so obvious must have started rumors) or
thought (for only someone incapable of thinking wouldn't
have thought of this) that my wife is unfaithful? Unless
you're planning to say "no" or you're willing to claim that
you're blind, deaf, and dumb, admit that my wife's a slut

¹⁶ In the original text, "hoxes" refers to a process of disabling an animal by cutting its hamstring. Leontes's extended metaphor accuses Camillo of destroying his honor, making righteousness impossible.

¹⁷ By comparing Camillo's glasses to Leontes's imagined cuckold's horns, Leontes suggests that Camillo would have to be blind to not see what's happening.

Or else be impudently negative,
To have nor eyes nor ears nor thought, then say
My wife's a hobby-horse, deserves a name
335 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
My sovereign mistress clouded so, without
My present vengeance taken: 'shrew my heart,
340 You never spoke what did become you less
Than this; which to reiterate were sin
As deep as that, though true.

LEONTES

Is whispering nothing?
Is leaning cheek to cheek? is meeting noses?
345 Kissing with inside lip? stopping the career
Of laughing with a sigh? —a note infallible
Of breaking honesty—horsing foot on foot?
Skulking in corners? wishing clocks more swift?
Hours, minutes? noon, midnight? and all eyes
350 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;
The covering sky is nothing; Bohemia nothing;
My wife is nothing; nor nothing have these nothings,
355 If this be nothing.

CAMILLO

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

LEONTES

Say it be, 'tis true.

CAMILLO

360 No, no, my lord.

LEONTES

It is; you lie, you lie:
I say thou liest, Camillo, and I hate thee,
Pronounce thee a gross lout, a mindless slave,
Or else a hovering temporizer, that
365 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
The running of one glass.

CAMILLO

Who does infect her?

LEONTES

370 Why, he that wears her like a medal, hanging
About his neck, Bohemia: who, if I
Had servants true about me, that bare eyes
To see alike mine honour as their profits,
Their own particular thrifts, they would do that
375 Which should undo more doing: ay, and thou,
His cupbearer,—whom I from meaner form
Have benched and reared to worship, who mayst see
Plainly as heaven sees earth and earth sees heaven,
How I am galled,— mightst bespice a cup,
380 To give mine enemy a lasting wink;
Which draught to me were cordial.

CAMILLO

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

who deserves every name you'd call a corner prostitute.
Just say it and swear by it.

CAMILLO

I'd hate to even be a bystander overhearing someone talk
about Hermione that way—I'd have to fight them. For
goodness' sake, you've never said anything that made you
look as badly as you do now. Just to repeat what you said
would be a crime, even if it were true.

LEONTES

Is whispering nothing? Leaning against each other, touching
cheeks? Rubbing noses? French-kissing? Laughing until you
can't breathe? Here's one you can't ignore—playing footsie?
Hiding in corners? Counting down the minutes and hours
until midnight, when, while all eyes but theirs are closed in
sleep, they might be wicked ¹⁸ in secret? Is all that
nothing? Well, then, the world and everything in it is
nothing, the universe is nothing, Bohemia is nothing, my
wife is nothing, and everything I'm saying is nothing, if this
is "nothing."

CAMILLO

Sir, please stop believing this sick lie, and soon; it's really
dangerous.

LEONTES

Say that it's true.

CAMILLO

No, no, sir.

LEONTES

It is! You lie! You lie! I say you lie, Camillo, and I hate you.
You're a disgusting lowlife, a mindless slave, or maybe just
a two-faced liar who can pay lip-service to good while really
doing evil. If my wife's liver ¹⁹ were as diseased as her
whole life is, she'd drop dead in an instant.

CAMILLO

Who infected her?

LEONTES

Um, the guy who's carrying her around like a
trophy—Polixenes! And if I had loyal servants working for
me, that kept an eye out for my reputation instead of just
for their own profit and gain, they would do what needs to
be done to end all this. Yeah, you heard me. You, his
cupbearer ²⁰ (don't forget, by the way, that I helped you
get out of poverty and make a life for yourself, though
you're clearly ungrateful), you who see clearly how
wronged I am, should poison him. Put him to sleep for
good—that would be the best medicine for me.

CAMILLO

Sir, I'm capable of doing that, and I wouldn't use any fast-
acting poison. I'd use something slow, that'd drift him off
the sleep so that he wouldn't feel a thing. But I can't believe
Hermione would do this; she's always been so good. I've
been loyal to you—

¹⁸ By "wicked," Leontes means committing the sin of adultery—having sex with a partner outside of marriage.

¹⁹ In Renaissance England, the liver was believed to be the seat of the passions—including lust.

²⁰ A cupbearer was a servant who tasted his master's food and drink before the master ate, to test for poison.

I have loved thee,—

LEONTES

390 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,
Which to preserve is sleep, which being spotted
395 Is goads, thorns, nettles, tails of wasps,
Give scandal to the blood o' the prince my son,
Who I do think is mine and love as mine,
Without ripe moving to't? Would I do this?
Could man so blench?

CAMILLO

I must believe you, sir:
400 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,
Even for your son's sake; and thereby for sealing
The injury of tongues in courts and kingdoms
405 Known and allied to yours.

LEONTES

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

CAMILLO

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

LEONTES

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

CAMILLO

I'll do't, my lord.

LEONTES

I will seem friendly, as thou hast advised me.
420

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
Is the obedience to a master, one
425 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
And flourish'd after, I'd not do't; but since
430 Nor brass nor stone nor parchment bears not one,
Let villainy itself forswear't. I must
Forsake the court: to do't, or no, is certain
To me a break-neck. Happy star, reign now!
Here comes Bohemia.

Re-enter POLIXENES

POLIXENES

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

LEONTES

Just stop there, and go to hell! Do you think I'm so crazy
and confused that I would make this up? Do you think I
would destroy my own reputation and my marriage, just to
welcome all the pain and difficulty that will come of that?
Do you really think I would just bastardize my son (who I
think is mine and who I love as my own) without a good
reason? Would I do that? Would any man have the guts to
do that?

CAMILLO

Sir, I have to believe you. I do. I'll take Bohemia out as long
as, once he's gone, you'll take the queen back immediately
for your son's sake and to stop any potential gossip from
spreading to our allies' courts and countries at large.

LEONTES

You're telling me to do exactly what I had already decided
to do myself. I won't ruin Hermione's reputation, not at all.

CAMILLO

Well, sir, then you should put on a happy face and go back
to have dinner with Polixenes and Hermione. I'm his
cupbearer. If he drinks an un-poisoned beverage, then I'm
out of a job.

LEONTES

That's it. Do it and I'll love you forever. If you don't do it,
you're signing your own death warrant.

CAMILLO

I'll do it, sir.

LEONTES

And I'll put on a happy face, like you told me.

LEONTES leaves.

CAMILLO

Poor Hermione! But what am I supposed to do? If I do my
job of serving Leontes, then I have to poison Polixenes
(who's innocent). Leontes is messed up in the head and
wants everyone else to be miserable, too. If I do this, he'll
promote me. But, wait—even if I could look through the
history books and find thousands of men who'd killed kings
and done well afterward, I still wouldn't do it. And, in fact,
since not a single record would tell you such a story, it's
obvious how wrong this is in every way. I have to get out of
here. Whether I do it or not, I'll be hanged. Man, I could use
some luck right about now! Here comes Polixenes.

POLIXENES comes back in.

POLIXENES

This is weird, I think I'm starting to be less popular here.
Why isn't he saying anything? Hello, Camillo.

CAMILLO

Hail, most royal sir!

POLIXENES

What is the news i' the court?

CAMILLO

440 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
With customary compliment; when he,
445 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

I dare not know, my lord.

POLIXENES

450 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,
Your changed complexions are to me a mirror
455 Which shows me mine changed too; for I must be
A party in this alteration, finding
Myself thus alter'd with 't.

CAMILLO

460 There is a sickness
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:
I have look'd on thousands, who have sped the better
465 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,
In whose success we are gentle,— I beseech you,
470 If you know aught which does behove my knowledge
Thereof to be inform'd, imprison't not
In ignorant concealment.

CAMILLO

I may not answer.

POLIXENES

475 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
What incidency thou dost guess of harm
480 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;
Since I am charged in honour and by him
485 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!

CAMILLO

Greetings, sir!

POLIXENES

What's new at court?

CAMILLO

Nothing special, sir.

POLIXENES

The king has the face of someone who's just lost a much-loved territory in wartime. Just now I saw him and greeted him as always. He looked down at the floor, muttered to himself, and ran away, leaving me wondering what's going on that would so totally change his behavior.

CAMILLO

I'm afraid to know, sir.

POLIXENES

Afraid? Do you know, but are afraid of what you know? Share your knowledge; it's in there somewhere, you must know. You can't just stand there and say, "I'm afraid to know." Camillo, your face is as white as I imagine mine is right now. I'm realizing this must have something to do with me. Something has changed forever for me, hasn't it?

CAMILLO

There's a sickness affecting some of us, but I don't know what to call the disease. And, even though you're well, you're the one who's contagious.

POLIXENES

What? I'm contagious? Don't talk about me like I'm a basilisk ²⁴; I've looked at thousands of people, and they've been fine. I've never killed anyone just by sight. Camillo, I know you're a good guy, and experienced in your job, which is as much a credit to you as a fancy last name is to royalty. I'm begging you, if you know anything that I should know, please don't keep it from me.

²⁴ A basilisk is a mythological creature that could kill with a look.

CAMILLO

I can't say.

POLIXENES

I'm contagious, even though I'm not sick? You have to explain. Listen, Camillo, I demand, if you're honorable and you believe me to be, too, that you tell me what horrible things are coming my way. Tell me how far off they are (or how close at hand). Tell me how to avoid it or, if I can't, how to deal with it.

CAMILLO

Sir, I'll tell you, since you're bringing honor into this. Listen closely and do exactly what I say as soon as I say it, otherwise you and I are both done for!

POLIXENES

On, good Camillo.

CAMILLO

490 I am appointed him to murder you.

POLIXENES

By whom, Camillo?

CAMILLO

By the king.

POLIXENES

For what?

CAMILLO

495 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
To an infected jelly and my name
500 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,
Nay, hated too, worse than the great'st infection
505 That e'er was heard or read!

CAMILLO

Swear his thought over
By each particular star in heaven and
By all their influences, you may as well
Forbid the sea for to obey the moon
510 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

How should this grow?

CAMILLO

515 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
Shall bear along impawn'd, away to-night!
520 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
By this discovery lost. Be not uncertain;
525 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
His execution sworn.

POLIXENES

530 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
My people did expect my hence departure
535 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
He is dishonour'd by a man which ever
540 Profess'd to him, why, his revenges must

POLIXENES

Go on, Camillo.

CAMILLO

He ordered me to murder you.

POLIXENES

Who ordered you, Camillo?

CAMILLO

The king.

POLIXENES

Why?

CAMILLO

He thinks—actually, he swears as confidently as if he saw you do it or told you to do it himself—that you're having a secret affair with Hermione.

POLIXENES

Well, then I might as well be dying of cancer and be named Judas Iscariot ²². My reputation is ruined. From now on, I'll stink of this. I'll walk into a room and everyone will complain about the stench. I'll be shunned and hated more than the worst epidemic in the history of the world.

²² In the New Testament, Jesus's follower Judas betrays him to the Romans. To call someone "Judas" is to compare him or her to the most hated, despicable man imaginable.

CAMILLO

You could swear by every star in the sky and you could force the tides to stop ebbing and flowing before you could convince him that what he now believes isn't true. He's built it up in his mind so much now that he'll defend it with his life.

POLIXENES

How did this happen?

CAMILLO

I don't know, but it's probably safer to get out of the way than it is to stand around and debate about how it got started. If you trust me, pack your things and leave tonight. I'll whisper the plan to your servants and we'll leave the city in groups of two or three, all by different gates. From this point on, I offer my services to you, considering I'll be dead if I'm found here after you're gone. I swear on my parents' lives that everything I've told you is true. If you want to test it on Leontes, you better believe I won't stick around—you'll be as condemned to die as a criminal sitting on death row.

POLIXENES

I believe you; the look on his face said it all. Give me your hand: if you lead me out of here, you can continue to work for me as my servant. My ships are ready and my people are, too, because they had expected to leave two days ago. Leontes is jealous of a very special woman and, because she's so special, his jealousy is intense; because he's a powerful king, his jealousy will be violent, too, and because he thinks he's been betrayed by his best friend, his revenge will be horrific. I'm paralyzed with fear. Let's hope we have a safe journey out and that the queen doesn't become a victim, too, of his delusions. Come on, Camillo. I'll love you

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
 Of his ill-ta'en suspicion! Come, Camillo;
 545 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
 To take the urgent hour. Come, sir, away.
 550

Exeunt

as much as I love my own father if you can get me out of
 here alive. Let's go.

CAMILLO

I have the power to tell the gatekeepers to unlock the gates
 whenever I want, so just let me know when you think we
 should leave. Come on, sir, let's go.

They both leave.

Act 2, Scene 1

Shakespeare

*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
 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

20 Nay, that's a mock: I have seen a lady's nose
 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

Shakescleare Translation

*HERMIONE, MAMILLIUS, and female servants enter.***HERMIONE**

Take Mamillius with you. He's wearing me out; I can't deal
 with him anymore.

FIRST LADY

Come here, little man. Will you play with me?

MAMILLIUS

No, I don't want you.

FIRST LADY

Why not, little man?

MAMILLIUS

You'll kiss me too hard and talk to me like I'm still a baby.

[To SECOND LADY] I love you better.

SECOND LADY

And why's that, sir?

MAMILLIUS

Not because your eyebrows are dark, although they say
 dark eyebrows look good on *some* women. It's better if you
 pluck them in a semi-circle, or draw a half-moon shape with
 a pen.

SECOND LADY

Who taught you this?

MAMILLIUS

I learned it from women's faces. I have a question: what
 color are your eyebrows?

FIRST LADY

Blue, sir.

MAMILLIUS

No, you're joking. I've seen a lady's nose that was blue, but
 never her eyebrows.

FIRST LADY

Listen, your mother is coming over. Pretty soon we'll have a
 new prince to take care of, and then you'll wish we'd play
 with you more.

If we would have you.

SECOND LADY

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

HERMIONE

30 What wisdom stirs amongst you? Come, sir, now
I am for you again: pray you, sit by us,
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.

HERMIONE

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

Enter LEONTES, with ANTIGONUS, lords and others

LEONTES

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

FIRST LORD

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

50 How blest am I
In my just censure, in my true opinion!
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
55 Is not infected: but if one present
The abhor'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.
60 Camillo was his help in this, his pander:
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
65 Remain a pinch'd thing; yea, a very trick
For them to play at will. How came the posterns

SECOND LADY

She's looking really pregnant all of a sudden. She'll go into
labor soon!

HERMIONE

What are you all talking about?

[To MAMILLIUS] Come here, Mamillius, I'm ready to deal
with you again. Come on, come sit by me and tell me a
story.


MAMILLIUS


A happy story, or a sad story?

HERMIONE

As happy as you want it to be.

MAMILLIUS

A sad story's  best for winter. I know one about ghosts
and goblins.

 Note that Mamillius is telling a
"winter's tale"--a fairytale or old
wives' tale with fantastical, magical
elements.

HERMIONE

Let's hear it, then. Come on, sit down, come on. And do
your best to scare me with your ghosts—you're very good at
that.

MAMILLIUS

"There was a man--

HERMIONE

No, come and sit down. Now go on.

MAMILLIUS

—who lived by a church." I'll whisper it so quietly that the
crickets out there won't be able to hear it.

HERMIONE

Come on, then, and whisper it in my ear.

LEONTES, ANTIGONUS, lords, and servants enter.


LEONTES


Did you find him? His servants? Was Camillo with him?

FIRST LORD

I saw them while I was hiding behind a cluster of pine trees.
I never saw men hurry away so quickly. I watched them go
all the way to their ships.

LEONTES

I am so blessed—I knew it; I was right. If only I knew less!
This blessing is a curse! If someone has a cup with a
poisonous spider  hiding in it, he can drink and not be
poisoned because his knowledge isn't infected. But if you
pull the spider out of the cup, show it to him, and explain
that he just drank poison, he'll start vomiting. I have drunk,
and seen the spider. Camillo was his accomplice; they're
planning to kill me and take over my throne. Everything I
suspected turned out to be true. That dirty liar—who
worked for me—was a double agent working for Polixenes.
He figured out what I knew, but I'm still in their clutches
and they're still playing me for a fool.

 The theme that the idea of
something is as dangerous as the
thing itself emerges clearly through
Leontes's deranged rambling. Even
though Hermione hasn't really
cheated on Leontes, the idea that's
taken hold of his brain is real and
dangerous.

[To FIRST LORD] How were they able to open the gates?

So easily open?

FIRST LORD

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

LEONTES

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

75 What is this? sport?

LEONTES

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.

HERMIONE

80 But I'd say he had not,
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
85 To say 'she is a goodly lady,' and
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
90 The shrug, the hum or ha, these petty brands
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
95 Ere you can say 'she's honest:' but be 't known,
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,
100 He were as much more villain: you, my lord,
Do but mistake.

LEONTES

You have mistook, my lady,
Polixenes for Leontes: O thou thing!
Which I'll not call a creature of thy place,
105 Lest barbarism, making me the precedent,
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:
110 More, she's a traitor and Camillo is
A federary 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
115 That vulgars give bold'st titles, ay, and privy
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
120

FIRST LORD

Camillo had the power to open them—he's done it many
times at your command.

LEONTES

Ah, I knew that.

[To HERMIONE] Give me the boy. I'm glad you didn't
breastfeed him. Even though he looks kind of like me, you
have too many of your genes in him already.

HERMIONE

Is this a joke?

LEONTES

[To the female servants] Take Mamillius away. He's not
allowed to be around her anymore. Take him away! She can
entertain herself with the guy that knocked her up.

[To HERMIONE] I know it was Polixenes that got you
pregnant.

HERMIONE

But I say it wasn't him, and I am sure you will believe me,
even if you were inclined to think otherwise.

LEONTES

All right, men, take a good look at her. I know what you're
thinking: "She's an attractive woman, but it's too bad that
she's a liar and a cheater." You can compliment her outer
beauty, sure—I mean, she deserves that! But then you have
to admit that liars use their good looks to manipulate
others into thinking they're good people! Your shrugs and
your "hms" show you're hesitant to say "she's honest,"
right? Everybody believe me; I'm the the real victim. She's
having an affair.

HERMIONE

If the worst villain in the world said that, he'd be twice as
evil just for saying so. But you—you've only made a mistake.

LEONTES

[To HERMIONE] You've made the mistake, sweetheart:
mistaking Polixenes for Leontes. You monster! I can't call
you a queen anymore, because if I did, the word "queen"
would cease to mean anything. You might as well call a
beggar a queen.

[To all] I've said it: she's having an affair, and I said with
whom. On top of that, she's a traitor and Camillo is in
cahoots with her. He knew all about the dirty deeds she and
Polixenes got up to. He knew she was a whore and he knew
all about their plan to escape.

HERMIONE

No; I swear on my life. There was nothing to know. You'll
regret this when you come to your senses—you'll regret the

You thus have publish'd me! Gentle my lord,
You scarce can right me throughly then to say
You did mistake.

LEONTES

No; if I mistake
In those foundations which I build upon,
125 The centre is not big enough to bear
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:
130 I must be patient till the heavens look
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
135 That honourable grief lodged here which burns
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

140 Shall I be heard?

HERMIONE

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

150 Go, do our bidding; hence!

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,
155 Yourself, your queen, your son.

FIRST LORD

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,
160 In this which you accuse her.

ANTIGONUS

If it prove
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;
165 For every inch of woman in the world,
Ay, every dram of woman's flesh is false, If she be.

things you've said about me! Sweetheart, you can almost
totally fix this now if you admit you made a mistake.

LEONTES

No. If the foundation of everything I believe turns out to be
fake, the whole thing will collapse.

[To the lords] Take her away to the prison! Anyone who tries
to defend her is guilty, too.

HERMIONE

There's some kind of evil in the air. I'll have to be patient
until this all clears up. Listen, everyone: unlike most
women, I'm not one to cry, and the fact that I'm not
shedding a tear might lead you not to pity me. But I promise
you that my heart is hurting more right now than tears
could show. I'm begging you, all of you, to think clearly, see
me clearly, and help the king to do the right thing!

LEONTES

Is anyone listening to me?

HERMIONE

Who's coming with me? Begging your pardon, Leontes, but I
need some women to come with me on account of the
pregnancy.

[To her servants] Don't cry; there's no reason to cry. You can
cry if and when you find out that I actually deserve to be in
prison. What's happening here is only a chance for me to
demonstrate grace.

[To LEONTES] Goodbye, sir. I never hoped to see you regret
something; now I'm sure I will.

[To her servants] Ladies, come on, you have permission.

LEONTES

Go, do what I say! Get out!

*Guards escort HERMIONE out and her female servants
follow.*

FIRST LORD

Please, sir, tell the queen to come back.

ANTIGONUS


You'd better be sure of what you're doing, sir, or what you
think is "justice" will devolve into violence that only causes
you, your queen, and your son to suffer.

FIRST LORD

Sir, I swear on my life that the queen is innocent; I'd even
die to defend it if you'd accept my sacrifice. I mean, she's
innocent of what you've accused her.

ANTIGONUS

If it turns out otherwise, I'll make my wife sleep in the
stable. I'll rig her to my carriage and won't trust her any
farther than I can throw her. I mean, if Hermione's a cheater,
then every atom of every woman in the world is, too.

 We return to Hermione's joke
from Act 1, Scene 2 about her good
deed named "Grace," but in a darker
setting. Hermione's display of
character despite Leontes's unjust
treatment is yet another embodiment
of her grace.

LEONTES

Hold your peaces.

FIRST LORD

Good my lord,—

ANTIGONUS

It is for you we speak, not for ourselves:

170 You are abused and by some putter-on
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;
175 If this prove true, they'll pay for't:
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
180 Should not produce fair issue.

LEONTES

Cease; no more.

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
185 The instruments that feel.

ANTIGONUS

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

190 What! lack I credit?

FIRST LORD

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

195 Why, what need we
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
200 Or seeming so in skill, cannot or will not
Relish a truth like us, inform yourselves
We need no more of your advice: the matter,
The loss, the gain, the ordering on't, is all
Properly ours.

ANTIGONUS

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

LEONTES

How could that be?

210 Either thou art most ignorant by age,
Or thou wert born a fool. Camillo's flight,
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
215 Made up to the deed, doth push on this proceeding:
Yet, for a greater confirmation,
For in an act of this importance 'twere

LEONTES

Everyone shut up.

FIRST LORD

Sir—

ANTIGONUS

We're speaking for your sake, not ours. You've clearly been manipulated by some crook, and we'll punish him for it. I wish I knew the guy; I would ruin his life. If Hermione's corrupt . . . I have three daughters ⁴. The oldest is eleven, the younger two are nine and five. If this turns out to be true, they'll pay for it. I swear I'll neuter all of them. They'll never hit puberty and they'll never give birth to their own bastard children. Keep in mind, they're supposed to inherit my money and everything equally. I'd rather castrate myself than see them unable to have their own families.

⁴ Antigonus tests Leontes, trying to shock him into realizing how ridiculous his accusations against Hermione are. If Hermione's a whore, according to Antigonus, then all women must be whores (a hyperbole meant to stress Hermione's virtue). If Leontes is so convinced that Hermione deserves to go to prison, Antigonus threatens to treat his wife like an animal and mutilate his daughters. This horrifying imagery is meant to counteract Leontes's horrifying rejection of his wife, as well as the way he's jeopardized his children.

LEONTES

Stop, no more. You're onto the scent about as much as a dead man's nose ⁵. But I do see how emotional you are, and I feel for you. I still have the capacity to feel.

⁵ Here, Leontes says that Antigonus doesn't understand.

ANTIGONUS

If that's true, then we shouldn't have to do away with truth altogether. Right now it's like truth has disappeared from the face of the earth.

LEONTES

What, you don't believe me?

FIRST LORD

I'd prefer not to believe you, sir, on this issue. I'd rather see Hermione defended, no matter how you might be blamed for starting things.

LEONTES

Well, what do I need you guys for? I can carry out the investigation myself. I don't ask your opinions because I want them; I ask because I'm a generous guy. If you're too idiotic and inept to realize the truth like I have, then I guess I don't need your advice anymore. The accusation, the execution, and the stakes are all mine.

ANTIGONUS

And I wish, sir, that you'd thought this out in your head and never said it aloud.

LEONTES

Why would you say that? Either you're the most ignorant old man I've ever met or you were born an idiot. The fact that Camillo ran away, on top of Hermione and Polixenes' disgusting hook-ups (even if we didn't see them, we have all the evidence except the visual proof), on top of everything else, makes putting Hermione on trial absolutely necessary. It would be wrong to go about something this serious haphazardly, so I've sent my servants Cleomenes and Dion (you know them; they're good guys) to Delphos, to Apollo's temple. They'll bring

⁶ An oracle is a human with the divine power to speak to the gods. In classical mythology, the god Apollo

220 Most piteous to be wild, I have dispatch'd in post
To sacred Delphos, to Apollo's temple,
Cleomenes and Dion, whom you know
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?

FIRST LORD

Well done, my lord.

LEONTES

225 Though I am satisfied and need no more
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
230 From our free person she should be confined,
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

235 *[Aside]*
To laughter, as I take it,
If the good truth were known.

Exeunt

back a prophecy from the oracle ⁶ that will settle
everything, for good or bad. How did I do?

FIRST LORD

Well done, sir.

LEONTES

Though I'm satisfied and don't need to know anything
more than I already know, the oracle will put other people's
minds at ease, especially those ignorant nonbelievers who
can't stomach the truth. I decided it was a good idea to
keep Hermione in prison so that she didn't try to escape
like Polixenes and Camillo. Come on, follow me. I'm going
to speak publicly, since news of this ordeal is bound to have
spread.

ANTIGONUS

[To himself] And everyone's laughing at him and at us, if
truth be told.

They all leave.

*spoke through a female priest who
lived in his temple in the city of
Delphi.*

Act 2, Scene 2

Shakespeare

Enter PAULINA, a Gentleman, and Attendants

PAULINA

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

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

10 *[Re-enter Gentleman, with the Gaoler]*
Now, good sir,
You know me, do you not?

GAOLER

For a worthy lady
15 And one whom much I honour.

PAULINA

Pray you then,
Conduct me to the queen.

GAOLER

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

PAULINA

20 Here's ado,
To lock up honesty and honour from
The access of gentle visitors!
Is't lawful, pray you,
To see her women? any of them? Emilia?

Shakesclare Translation

PAULINA, a gentleman, and servants enter.

PAULINA

Tell the jailer to come in here. Tell him who I am. *[The
gentleman leaves]*

[Muttering to herself] Oh, Hermione, you're good enough
for any court in Europe. What are you doing in a prison?
[The gentleman comes back in with the JAILER]

Now, sir, you know who I am, right?

GAOLER ¹ (Jailer)

I know your reputation, and I have a lot of respect for you.

¹ "Gaal" and "gaoler" are archaic
spellings of jail/jailer. These spellings
are still used today in Britain.

PAULINA

Well then, please take me to the queen.

GAOLER (jailer)

I can't, ma'am. I have orders to do exactly the opposite.

PAULINA

Well, isn't that something: locking up an innocent woman
and keeping her from friendly visitors. Am I allowed to see
any of her servants? Emilia?

GAOLER

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

PAULINA

I pray now, call her.
Withdraw yourselves.

30

Exeunt Gentleman and Attendants

GAOLER

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

PAULINA

Well, be't so, prithee.

35 *[Exit Gaoler]*

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

40 *[Re-enter Gaoler, with EMILIA]*

Dear gentlewoman,
How fares our gracious lady?

EMILIA

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

PAULINA

A boy?

EMILIA

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

PAULINA

I dare be sworn

These dangerous unsafe lures i' the king,
55 beshrew them!

He must be told on't, and he shall: the office
Becomes a woman best; I'll take't upon me:
If I prove honey-mouth'd let my tongue blister
And never to my red-look'd anger be

60 The trumpet any more. Pray you, Emilia,

Commend my best obedience to the queen:
If she dares trust me with her little babe,
I'll show't the king and undertake to be
Her advocate to the loud'st. We do not know

65 How he may soften at the sight o' the child:

The silence often of pure innocence
Persuades when speaking fails.

EMILIA

Most worthy madam,
Your honour and your goodness is so evident

70 That your free undertaking cannot miss
A thriving issue: there is no lady living
So meet for this great errand. Please your ladyship
To visit the next room, I'll presently
Acquaint the queen of your most noble offer;

75 Who but to-day hammer'd of this design,

But durst not tempt a minister of honour,
Lest she should be denied.

PAULINA

Tell her, Emilia.

I'll use that tongue I have: if wit flow from't

80 As boldness from my bosom, let 't not be doubted
I shall do good.
GAOLER (jailer)

If you'll get rid of your servants, ma'am, I can bring Emilia
out.

PAULINA

All right, then, call her.

[To her servants] You may all leave.

The gentlemen and servants leave.

GAOLER (jailer)

And, ma'am, I'll have to stay in the room to monitor your
conversation.

PAULINA

Well, so be it, then. *[The JAILER leaves]*

[To herself] This is a lot of hullabaloo to make an innocent
woman look guilty. *[The JAILER comes back in with EMILIA]*

[To EMILIA] How's Hermione doing?


EMILIA


As well as a queen with so many reasons to grieve can be
expected to do. Poor thing—because of the stress, she went
into labor early.

PAULINA

A boy?

EMILIA

A daughter. She's beautiful, healthy, and will probably live  . The queen takes a lot of comfort from the baby. She
keeps saying, "My poor prisoner, I am as innocent as you."

 *Infant mortality rates during the
Renaissance were extremely high.
Most children didn't survive their first
year of life.*

PAULINA

I swear—damn the king's crazy delusions! We have to tell
him about the baby. We will. It's a woman's job and I'll do it
myself. I won't have many nice things to say to him, I can
guarantee you. Emilia, please tell the queen that I'm
completely at her service. If she'll trust me with her tiny
newborn, I'll show it to the king and will advocate for her to
the best of my ability. It's hard to say how he'll react—he
may be touched when he sees her. Sometimes the silent
testimony of pure innocence can persuade when words fail.

EMILIA

Ma'am, you're so obviously good and virtuous that I can't
imagine you not succeeding. There's no better woman for
this job. I'll go into the next room and tell the queen your
plan. Though she only gave birth today, she's afraid to ask
them to take the baby out of this prison. If they deny her
request, who knows—they might kill the child.

PAULINA

Tell her, Emilia. I'll use my gift of speech. If I can be as
articulate as I am bold, then I'll do well.

EMILIA

Now be you blest for it!
I'll to the queen: please you,
come something nearer.

GAOLER

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

PAULINA

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

GAOLER

I do believe it.

PAULINA

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

Exeunt

EMILIA

And God bless you for that! I'll go to the queen. But please,
come closer.

Gaoler (JAILER)

Ma'am, if the queen agrees to send the baby, I don't think I
can allow it. I don't have a warrant.

PAULINA

There's nothing to worry about, sir. The baby was
imprisoned in the womb, but she's been freed by natural
law. *She's* not under any accusations from the king, and she
can't possibly be guilty of anything the queen did.

GAOLER (JAILER)

I'll buy that.

PAULINA

Don't worry. I swear I'll keep you out of trouble.

They all leave.

Act 2, Scene 3

Shakespeare

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
5 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,
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:
25 The thought of my revenges that way
Recoil upon me: in himself too mighty,
And in his parties, his alliance; let him be
Until a time may serve: for present vengeance,
Take it on her. Camillo and Polixenes

30

Shakescleare Translation

LEONTES, ANTIGONUS, gentlemen, and servants enter.

LEONTES

Night and day I get no rest. I'm handling this the way I am
because I'm weak, just weak. If only the problem weren't
her as a person—I can't isolate the problem or cut it out,
because it's *her*; she's unfaithful. Polixenes is beyond my
reach, out of sight and out of mind, irrelevant. But
Hermione is here and within my power. If she died, say, in a
fire, I might be able to sleep at night. Who's there?

FIRST SERVANT

Yes, sir?

LEONTES

How's Mamillius doing?

FIRST SERVANT

He slept well tonight. We're hoping he's gotten through his
illness.

LEONTES

It's hard to see him like this! He got sick when he realized
his mother is disgraced. He took it hard, as if her shame
were his own personal burden. He stopped smiling, eating,
and sleeping and then became bedridden. Leave me alone;
go see how he's doing. *[The SERVANT leaves]*

[To himself] Shame on you! Don't think about
Polixenes—you can't take revenge on him now without
putting yourself in danger. He's too powerful; he has too
many friends and allies. Leave him alone until the right
moment. Right now, just take your revenge on Hermione.
Camillo and Polixenes are laughing at me; my suffering is a
huge joke to them. They wouldn't be laughing if I could get

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

You must not enter.

PAULINA

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

ANTIGONUS

That's enough.

SECOND SERVANT

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

PAULINA

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

LEONTES

What noise there, ho?

PAULINA

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

LEONTES

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

ANTIGONUS

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

LEONTES

What, canst not rule her?

PAULINA

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

ANTIGONUS

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

to them—and she definitely won't, since she's within my
power.

PAULINA comes in holding the baby.

FIRST LORD

You can't come in here.

PAULINA

No, listen, men, follow my lead. Do you care more about
what this crazy, tyrant ¹ king thinks of you than you do
about the queen's life? She's incredibly gracious and
innocent, and he's just jealous.

ANTIGONUS

That's enough.

SECOND SERVANT

Ma'am, he hasn't slept tonight, and he demanded that no
one be allowed into his room.

PAULINA

Not so fast, sir; I came to help him get to sleep. It's people
like you, yes-men who encourage his delusional fantasies,
that are keeping him awake. I came to tell him something
so true that it'll work like medicine—my honesty will cure
the disease that keeps him from sleeping.

LEONTES

Hey, what's that noise?

PAULINA

It's not just noise, sir, it's an important discussion about
godparents ² for you.

LEONTES

What? Get this ridiculous woman out of here.

[To ANTIGONUS] Antigonus ³, I told you not to let her get
to me. I knew she would.

ANTIGONUS

Sir, I told her not to come near you, and explained that you
(and I) would both be angry with her if she did.

LEONTES

Oh, so you're not the boss of her?

PAULINA

He can tell me not to do something that's wrong, but right
now I'm doing the right thing. Unless he follows your
example and locks me up for doing good, he can't be the
boss of me.

ANTIGONUS

Ha, listen to that! She's like a galloping horse ⁴—once she
gets it into her head, I have to let her go.

¹ From this point on, "tyrant" (an
oppressive king) is an important word
in this play, which shows a dichotomy
between justice and tyranny. Leontes
believes he's executing justice, but
Paulina, Antigonus, and others argue
that he's a tyrant.

² In the Renaissance as now,
godparents were family friends
appointed to be a child's spiritual
guardians. In Shakespeare's day,
godparents (or "gossips," a
contraction of the word "god-
siblings") acted as religious mentors
throughout the child's life.

³ Antigonus is Paulina's husband.

⁴ Recall the metaphor used by
Leontes in Act 1, Scene 2, in which he
accuses Camillo of dishonesty by
referring to the process of laming
animals to prevent movement. Here,
Antigonus compares Paulina to a

horse who cannot be stopped from running ahead.

PAULINA

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

LEONTES

Good queen!

PAULINA

75 Good queen, my lord,
Good queen; I say good queen;
And would by combat make her good, so were I
A man, the worst about you.

LEONTES

Force her hence.

PAULINA

80 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,
For she is good, hath brought you forth a daughter;
Here 'tis; commends it to your blessing.

85

Laying down the child

LEONTES

Out!
A mankind witch! Hence with her, out o' door:
A most intelligencing bawd!

PAULINA

Not so:
90 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

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

PAULINA

For ever
100 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

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

LEONTES

A nest of traitors!

PAULINA

Sir, I came to ask you to listen to me as your loyal servant,
your doctor, your obedient advisor. I came because I'm bold
enough (unlike your other servants, doctors, and advisors)
to call you out on your evil actions. I come on behalf of your
good queen.

LEONTES

"Good" queen?

PAULINA

Good queen, sir, good queen. I repeat: *good* queen. If I were
a man, I would fight to the death to prove she's good, unlike
you.

LEONTES

Get her out of here!

PAULINA

If you want your eyes scratched out, then come at me. I'll
leave on my own, but first I have to do what I came for. The
good queen (because she *is* good) has given birth to your
daughter. Here she is, now give her your blessing.

She lays the baby on the ground.

LEONTES

Get out! You manly witch! Take her away, out the door! That
damn busybody!


PAULINA

Nah, none of those names suits me at all. I'm as honest as
you are crazy and, all things considered, that's honest
enough for anyone.

LEONTES

[To the gentlemen] Traitors! Why aren't you forcing her out?
Give her the bastard.

[To ANTIGONUS] You old fart! Your wife is the boss of
you, you're completely whipped! Pick up the bastard. I said
pick it up! Give it to your hag of a wife.

 In the original text, "dotard" may refer both to someone whose age makes them seem foolish, and also to someone made foolish by love. Both meanings are present in Leontes's speech.

PAULINA

If you so much as touch the princess in response to his
disgusting words, your hands will be cursed forever.

LEONTES

[To the gentlemen, referring to ANTIGONUS] Look, he's
afraid of his wife!

PAULINA

I wish you feared your wife, too. Then you'd know your
children are yours beyond all reasonable doubt.

LEONTES

This place is full of traitors!

ANTIGONUS

I am none, by this good light.

PAULINA

Nor I, nor any

But one that's here, and that's himself, for he

110 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—

For, as the case now stands, it is a curse

115 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

Of boundless tongue, who late hath beat her husband

120 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

It is yours;

125 And, might we lay the old proverb to your charge,

So like you, 'tis the worse. Behold, my lords,

Although the print be little, the whole matter

And copy of the father, eye, nose, lip,

The trick of's frown, his forehead, nay, the valley,

130 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

So like to him that got it, if thou hast

135 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

A gross hag

And, lozel, thou art worthy to be hang'd,

140 That wilt not stay her tongue.

ANTIGONUS

Hang all the husbands

That cannot do that feat, you'll leave yourself

Hardly one subject.

LEONTES

Once more, take her hence.

PAULINA

145 A most unworthy and unnatural lord

Can do no more.

LEONTES

I'll ha' thee burnt.

PAULINA

I care not:

It is an heretic that makes the fire,

150 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

Of tyranny and will ignoble make you,

155 Yea, scandalous to the world.

LEONTES

On your allegiance,

Out of the chamber with her! Were I a tyrant,


ANTIGONUS

I'm no traitor, sir, I swear.

PAULINA


Neither am I, and neither is anyone here except for you, Leontes. You're a traitor to yourself, your honor, your queen, your son and heir, and your newborn baby. You've betrayed them all to gossip and rumor, causing a kind of pain that's worse than the physical. At this time, we can't convince him to stop unless we remove the root of the issue: the completely false idea that's rotted his brain.

LEONTES

Here's a slut who doesn't know when to shut up, who just beat her husband and is now trying to trick me! This brat is not mine, it's Polixenes's. Get it out of here, and throw it and the [bitch](#)  into the fire!

PAULINA

She *is* yours and, as the saying goes, she's like you to a fault.

[To the gentlemen] Behold, gentlemen. Though she might be a [smaller version](#) , she's an exact copy of her father: eyes, nose, mouth, his usual frown, his forehead, the cheek and chin dimples, his smile, the exact shape of his hand, fingers, and nails. Hermione's given birth to her husband's mini-me, and I guarantee you she has no doubt that her children are Leontes's!

LEONTES

You are a disgusting hag.

[To ANTIGONUS] And you're a worthless bum who should be hanged for not shutting her up.

ANTIGONUS

If you hang all the husbands who can't keep their wives quiet, you won't have any subjects left.

LEONTES

For the last time, get her out of here!


PAULINA

A king as despicable and unfit to rule as you can't do much more.

LEONTES


I'll have you burned to death.


PAULINA


I don't care. In that case, the [heretic](#)  would be the one making the fire, not the one burning in it! I'll stop short of calling you a tyrant, but this cruel treatment of your queen on the basis of nothing more than your unsupported fantasy definitely tastes like tyranny. The world will see you as horrible and scandalous from here on out.

LEONTES

[To the gentlemen] If you're loyal to me, you better get her out of this room! If I were a tyrant, she would be dead by

 "Dam" was a word usually used for animal mothers, in the same way that "bitch" and "sire" refer to the mother and father of a litter of puppies today. Leontes' uses "dam" to degrade Hermione.

 Paulina's metaphor equates baby Perdita with a book. The "print" (the text/font) is small and hard to read, but if you look closely, you can read the story of Leontes's paternity.

 A "heretic" is someone who believes things about God or the Bible that are outside the Church's official doctrine. Before and after the Protestant Reformation in England, heretics were burned to death. Paulina turns Leontes' threat around, saying that he's the heretic because his beliefs (about Hermione) are both dangerous and unshared by others.

Where were her life? she durst not call me so,
If she did know me one. Away with her!

PAULINA

160 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?
You, that are thus so tender o'er his follies,
165 Will never do him good, not one of you.
So, so: farewell; we are gone.

Exit

LEONTES

Thou, traitor, hast set on thy wife to this.
My child? away with't! Even thou, that hast
A heart so tender o'er it, take it hence
170 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,
With what thou else call'st thine. If thou refuse
175 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

I did not, sir:
180 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

You're liars all.

FIRST LORD

185 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
Past and to come, that you do change this purpose,
190 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
And call me father? better burn it now
195 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,
To save this bastard's life,—for 'tis a bastard,
200 So sure as this beard's grey,
—what will you adventure
To save this brat's life?

ANTIGONUS

Any thing, my lord,
That my ability may undergo
205 And nobleness impose: at least thus much:
I'll pawn the little blood which I have left
To save the innocent: any thing possible.

now. She wouldn't dare to call me that if she actually
thought I were one. Take her away!

PAULINA

[To the gentlemen] Please, don't push me, I'll leave.

[To LEONTES] Sir, take care of you child—since she is yours.
May God send her a guardian angel!

[To the gentlemen] Get your hands off me! All of you that
are coddling his idiotic behavior: you won't do him any
good, not one of you.

[To LEONTES] Well then, goodbye—we're through.

PAULINA leaves, accompanied by gentlemen.

LEONTES

You traitor, you told your wife to do this. *My child?* Get it out
of here! Since you seem to care so much about it: take it
away and watch it burn. I want it to be you and no one else.
Do it immediately, and come back within an hour to
confirm you've done it. If you're not honest with me about
it, I'll execute you and your entire family. If you refuse, you'll
have my anger to deal with, plus I'll dash its bastard brains
out with my own two hands. Go! Take it to the fire as
punishment for what you've made your wife do.

ANTIGONUS

Sir, I didn't do anything. These gentlemen are my friends
and can vouch for me.

LORDS

We can, your majesty. It's not his fault that she came here.

LEONTES

You're all liars.

FIRST LORD

Please, your highness, give us more credit than that. We've
always served you faithfully. We're begging you on our
knees: in recognition of our past and future service to you,
listen to us and stop what you're doing right now. It's too
horrible, too bloody—and it's going to end badly. Watch us
kneel. *[All the gentlemen kneel to LEONTES]*

LEONTES

You think my mind will be changed that easily, like a feather
carried on the wind? Do you expect me to wait around until
this bastard can kneel and call me "father?" It's better to
burn it now than to deal with it then. But fine, let it live. I'll
neither burn it nor keep it.

[To ANTIGONUS] You! You've been in cahoots with the
Wicked Witch, your wife, to save this bastard's life (and it is
a bastard, as sure as my beard is gray). What are you willing
to do to save this brat's life?

ANTIGONUS

Anything, sir, that I'm capable of doing. I'll lay down my life
to save the innocent. I'll do anything that's possible.

LEONTES

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

ANTIGONUS

210 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,
Whom for this time we pardon. We enjoin thee,
215 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,
Without more mercy, to its own protection
220 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 commend it strangely to some place
Where chance may nurse or end it. Take it up.

ANTIGONUS

225 I swear to do this, though a present death
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
Casting their savageness aside have done
230 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

235 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,
240 Being well arrived from Delphos, are both landed,
Hasting to the court.

FIRST LORD

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

LEONTES

Twenty-three days
245 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
250 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

LEONTES

Oh, it will be possible. Swear by my sword that you'll do
what I say.

ANTIGONUS

I will, sir.

LEONTES

Listen closely and do exactly what I tell you. If you fail at any
point, it means death for not only you, but for your horrible
wife (who, at least for now, I forgive). I command you as my
subject to carry this bastard to some deserted place far
away from this country. Leave it there, to the mercy of the
elements. It appeared in my life by a stroke of bad luck.
Therefore, I command that you, on pain of damnation and
death, leave it up to luck whether it lives or dies. Now pick it
up.

ANTIGONUS

I'll swear to do this, though it would have been more
merciful to just kill it.

[To the baby] Come on, poor baby. May a guardian angel
protect you from vicious animals. They say that wolves and
bears sometimes take pity on human babies on nurse them,
too.

[To LEONTES] Sir, good luck to you.

[To the baby] I hope you're protected from everything
horrible, you poor thing, even though you're condemned to
be lost.

⁹ *Perdita's name in Latin means "lost." As the prophecy from Delphi will reveal, Leontes is doomed until he can recover his lost daughter.*

ANTIGONUS leaves with the baby.

LEONTES

Nope, I won't raise someone else's kid.

A SERVANT enters.

SERVANT

Your highness? We just got news that the messengers you
sent to Delphos are almost back. Cleomenes and Dion just
got to the shore and are on their way to court.

FIRST lord

Sir, they've been much speedier than expected.

LEONTES

They've been gone for twenty-three days; they've made
good time. That bodes well for the truth Apollo will give us
soon.

[To the remaining gentlemen] Men, get ready for a special
meeting so that we can have a trial for Hermione. Since I've
accused her publicly, she should have a just and open trial.
As long as she lives, it'll weigh on my heart. Now leave me
alone, and go carry out my orders.

They all leave.

Act 3, Scene 1

Shakespeare

*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,
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 business: when the oracle,
Thus by Apollo's great divine seal'd up,
25 Shall the contents discover, something rare
Even then will rush to knowledge. Go: fresh horses!
And gracious be the issue!

Exeunt

Shakescleare Translation

*CLEOMENES and DION enter.***CLEOMENES**

The weather's fantastic, the air is fresh, the island is lush,
and the temple is even more beautiful than everyone says it
is.

DION

I'll talk about the thing that impressed me the most: the
super-spiritual lifestyle (that's how I'd describe it, anyway)
and discipline of the priests.

CLEOMENES

The best part was the blast of the oracle's ear-deafening
voice; it was like thunder! I was scared senseless. I felt tiny
and insignificant.

DION

Hopefully the reading of the prophecy is as successful as
our journey (for the queen's sake). It was a great, enjoyable,
quick trip, but we can only hope it was worth the time.


CLEOMENES

Dear Apollo 🙏, help it all go well! I don't like these
accusations against Hermione one bit.

DION

Leontes's violent way of going about it all is about to come
to an end. When we read the oracle's prophecy, sealed and
endorsed by Apollo, we'll find out the truth. Let's get fresh
horses! Let's hope the oracle has something good to say!

They both leave.

 In this play, characters pray aloud to classical gods. Even though Shakespeare's England was Christian, English playwrights often set their stories in the classical past. The play mixes Christian and pagan religious imagery, as Shakespeare's audiences saw fictional pagan faith and gods as a loose metaphor for their own Christianity.

Act 3, Scene 2

Shakespeare

*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.

Shakescleare Translation

*LEONTES, gentlemen, and officers enter.***LEONTES**

My extreme grief notwithstanding, I hereby pronounce this
trial open. It pulls at my heart strings; really, it does: the
party tried here today is both the daughter of a king and my
beloved wife. In doing this, it should be clear that I'm not a
tyrant; I'm proceeding openly in the due course of justice,
whether it leads to a "guilty" sentence or an "innocent"
one.

[To the officers] Bring in 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.

OFFICER

[Reads] Hermione, queen to the worthy
Leontes, king of Sicilia, thou art here accused and
15 arraigned of high treason, in committing adultery
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,
20 thou, Hermione, contrary to the faith and allegiance
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
25 The testimony on my part no other
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
30 Behold our human actions, as they do,
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
35 Hath been as continent, as chaste, as true,
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
40 A moiety of the throne), a great king's daughter,
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,
45 'Tis a derivative from me to mine,
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,
50 With what encounter so uncurrent I
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
55 Cry fie upon my grave!

LEONTES

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

HERMIONE

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

LEONTES

You will not own it.

OFFICER

The king has ordered that the queen appear at court in
person. Silence!

*Guards bring in HERMIONE, followed by PAULINA and the
female servants.*

LEONTES

Read the indictment.

OFFICER

[Reads from an official document] Hermione, Queen of
Sicily and wife of King Leontes: you are here accused and
called to account for high treason, for committing adultery
2 with Polixenes, King of Bohemia, and conspiring with
Camillo to assassinate your husband the king. By nature of
the circumstances, you are also charged with aiding and
abetting the fugitives to their escape, which violates the
trust and duty of a true subject.

HERMIONE

Since what I'm about to say can only be a rejection of my
accusations, and the only testimony this court will hear on
my behalf is my own, it's hardly worth it for me to say "not
guilty." Since you've already decided I'm a liar, you'll only
interpret my words as lies. But listen: if God watches over
us, as he does, then I'm sure that innocence will triumph
over false accusations, and that patience will defeat tyranny.

[To LEONTES] You should know better than anyone
(though, at the moment, you seem to know the least) how
pure and faithful I've been my entire life. No falsified history
can change that, no matter how well it's fabricated and
performed for spectators.

Look at me: I'm the king's wife (making me half of the royal
government), the daughter of a powerful king, the mother
of a young prince, and I'm standing here babbling on to
defend my life and reputation to any old person who'll
come and listen. Honestly? My life is about as precious to
me as my grief, which I'd rather not have to bear. I care
about my reputation because it affects my children's future;
that's the only reason I stand here now.

Sir, I appeal to your own conscience. Remember how much
you loved me—and how much I deserved it—before
Polixenes came to your court. Since he came, I've only tried
to remain worthy of your love. If I've done a single thing
outside the demands of duty, either in thought or deed,
then everyone who hears me can hate me and my own
family can curse my grave!

LEONTES


It's hardly uncommon for someone who committed such
heinous offenses to deny them later.


HERMIONE


That may be true of people who've actually done such
things; it has nothing to do with me.

LEONTES

So you won't admit it?

 Then as now, an indictment is an official charge against the accused (the "defendant"), usually read out by a clerk or a judge.

 Adultery was considered treason (a crime against the state) in the Renaissance. Extramarital pregnancy could raise questions about paternity, threatening inheritances. Henry VIII's wife Anne Boleyn was executed on charges of treason for adultery. Non-royal women adulterers could be charged with "petty treason," also a capital offense. There was no equivalent criminal category for men who cheated on their wives.

 Here, the idea of Hermione as the embodiment of grace (described in Act 1, Scene 2) collides with Paulina's report of Leontes's tyranny from Act 2. Hermione's grace contrasts with Leontes's cruelty.

HERMIONE

More than mistress of
Which comes to me in name of fault, I must not
65 At all acknowledge. For Polixenes,
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,
70 So and no other, as yourself commanded:
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
75 That it was yours. Now, for conspiracy,
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,
80 Wotting no more than I, are ignorant.

LEONTES

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:
85 My life stands in the level of your dreams,
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,—
90 Those of your fact are so—so past all truth:
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
95 Shalt feel our justice, in whose easiest passage
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:
100 The crown and comfort of my life, your favour,
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
105 Starr'd most unluckily, is from my breast,
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
110 To women of all fashion; I astly, hurried
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.
115 But yet hear this: mistake me not; no life,
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
120 'Tis rigor and not law. Your honours all,
I do refer me to the oracle:
Apollo be my judge!

FIRST LORD

This your request
Is altogether just: therefore bring forth,
125 And in Apollos name, his oracle.

HERMIONE

I can't admit to things that I haven't done. As far as
Polixenes is concerned, I can only confess that I loved him
as much as I should, with the kind of love that a woman in
my position should give—the kind of love that you, yourself,
commanded that I show. If I hadn't cared for him, I would
have been disobedient to you and inhospitable toward your
friend. I mean, you've loved Polixenes since before you
could speak, since you were a baby, and he's always loved
you back. As for conspiracy: I've never tasted it, despite the
fact that you keep serving it to me on a plate. All I know is
that Camillo was an honest man. God only knows why he
left your court; I have no idea.

LEONTES

You knew he was planning to leave, and you very well know
what you've been working on in his absence.

HERMIONE

You're speaking a language that I don't understand. It's as if
my life were being made up by your dreams; I'll lay down
what life I have now.

LEONTES

Your actions are my dreams! Oh, so you had Polixenes's
bastard, and I just dreamed it? Like all of your kind, you're
past shame, past truth. Denying your crimes only proves
you've committed them. The brat is gone, on its own now,
since no father will claim it—though that's more your fault
than the brat's. Now *you'll* feel my justice. Expect nothing
less than a death sentence.

HERMIONE


You can save your threats. Death doesn't scare me; death is
what I'm after. Life holds nothing for me now. Your love, the
light of my life? I've given up on that—it's gone, although I
don't know where or why it went. My second blessing, my
firstborn son? I'm barred from seeing him as if I had a
contagious disease. My third blessing, my poor daughter,
was ripped from my breast, the innocent milk still in her
innocent mouth, and haled out to be murdered. I've been
publicized as a whore on every street-corner, was denied
the normal hospital care for women who've just given birth,
and, finally, was rushed to this place—in the open
air—before I'd even gotten my strength back.

[*To LEONTES*] So, my king 👤: tell me what blessings I have
to live for, that would make me afraid to die? Therefore,
carry on. But hear this, and don't misunderstand me: I don't
value my own life at all, but my reputation—that I would
clear. If I'm going to be condemned on your suspicions
alone, with no proof except whatever your jealous mind has
come up with, well—that is injustice, not law.

[*To all*] Gentlemen, I defer to the oracle. May Apollo be my
judge!

FIRST LORD

Your request is perfectly reasonable. In Apollo's name, bring
forth the oracle.

 In the original text, "liege" identifies the legal and social relationship binding Hermione and Leontes. In the feudal system, a liege lord must reward his servant's loyalty with protection. In calling Leontes "my liege," Hermione emphasizes that she continues to uphold their relationship's terms, but Leontes has broken them.

Exeunt certain Officers

HERMIONE

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

Re-enter Officers, with CLEOMENES and DION

OFFICER

You here shall swear upon this sword of justice,
That you, Cleomenes and Dion, have
135 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,
You have not dared to break the holy seal
Nor read the secrets in't.

DION

140 All this we swear.

LEONTES

Break up the seals and read.

OFFICER

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

LORDS

Now blessed be the great Apollo!

HERMIONE

Praised!

LEONTES

Hast thou read truth?

OFFICER

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

LEONTES

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

Enter Servant

SERVANT

155 My lord the king, 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
Of the queen's speed, is gone.

LEONTES

160 How! gone!

Some of the officers leave.

HERMIONE

The Emperor of Russia was my father ⁵. I wish he were
alive to see his daughter on trial now! Seeing my misery,
he'd take pity, not revenge.

⁵ *Hermione imagines her dead father standing in for Leontes as her judge, another instance of mismatched paternal identification in this play (like Leontes identifying with Mamillius in Act 1, Scene 2).*

The officers come back in with CLEOMENES and DION.

OFFICER

Swear on this sword of justice that you, Cleomenes and
Dion, have been to Delphos and have brought back the
sealed oracle delivered to you by Apollo's priest. Swear
that, since then, you have neither broken the holy seal nor
read the secrets inside.

DION

We swear to all of this.

LEONTES

Break the seal and read it.

OFFICER

[Reading the oracle]
Hermione is virtuous,
Polixenes is blameless,
Camillo is a loyal subject,
Leontes is a jealous tyrant,
The baby is his biological daughter,
And the king will have no heir
Until he finds that which is lost ⁶.

⁶ *We recall that Perdita's name means "lost." The prophecy suggests that Perdita is the king's only remaining child, which foreshadows Mamillius's fate.*

LORDS

Bless you, Apollo!

HERMIONE

Praise Apollo!

LEONTES

Have you read the truth?

OFFICER

Yes, sir. Exactly as it's written down.

LEONTES

The oracle is complete garbage. The trial will proceed. This
is a pack of lies.

A SERVANT enters.

SERVANT

Sir, the king, the king!

LEONTES

What's going on here?

SERVANT

Oh sir, please don't shoot the messenger. The prince, your
son, out of worrying so much about his mother, is gone.

LEONTES

What do you mean, "gone?"

SERVANT

Is dead.

LEONTES

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

165 [HERMIONE swoons]

How now there!

PAULINA

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

LEONTES

170 Take her hence:

Her heart is but o'ercharged; she will recover:
I have too much believed mine own suspicion:
Beseech you, tenderly apply to her
Some remedies for life.

175 [Exeunt PAULINA and Ladies, with HERMIONE]

Apollo, pardon

My great profaneness 'gainst thine oracle!

180 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

185 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,

190 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,

195 No richer than his honour: how he glisters

Thorough my rust! and how his pity

Does my deeds make the blacker!

Re-enter PAULINA

PAULINA

Woe the while!

O, cut my lace, lest my heart, cracking it,

200 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

205 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

210 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,

215 Thou wouldst have poison'd good Camillo's honour,

To have him kill a king: poor trespasses,

More monstrous standing by: whereof I reckon

The casting forth to crows thy baby-daughter

To be or none or little; though a devil

220 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,

SERVANT

He's dead.

LEONTES

Apollo is angry. The heavens themselves are punishing me
for my injustice.

[HERMIONE faints] Look out!

PAULINA

This news has killed the queen. Look down and see what
death is doing!


LEONTES


Take her away. Her heart is just a little strained; she'll
recover. I put too much stock in my own suspicions. Please,
take care of her, get her some medicine. [PAULINA and the
female servants carry HERMIONE out]

Apollo, please forgive my blasphemy against your oracle! I'll
make up with Polixenes, win my wife over again, bring
Camillo back since I know now that he's a good guy. I was
too carried away with my jealousy and got caught up with
bloody thoughts of revenge. I told Camillo to poison my
friend Polixenes, which would have happened if Camillo
hadn't questioned my command (even though I threatened
him with death if he didn't obey). He admirably told
Polixenes what I had planned, then gave up his comfortable
position here to help Polixenes get away. He risked
everything to do what was right. His goodness glitters
through my dark intentions, making my actions look even
more dark by contrast!

PAULINA comes back in.

PAULINA

Oh, woe is me! My heart is about to break !

 In the original text, Paulina refers to the laces tightening the bodices of women's dresses. Unless her laces are loosened, Paulina's grieving heart will burst through them.

FIRST LORD

What's the matter with you, ma'am?

PAULINA

You tyrant, what tortures do you have in store for me?

Stretch me on the rack? Burn me at the stake? Boil me in

oil? What range of old and new punishments will I receive

for cursing you the way you deserve? Your tyranny and your

jealous fantasies, which were more immature than young

boys' passing thoughts and more useless than nine-year-

old girls' daydreams—well, just consider what your

fantasies have done! If you can get your head around it,

you'll really go crazy now! Everything you've done was just

a byproduct of that. You betrayed Polixenes, but that was

nothing; it just proved you were flaky and a damned

ungrateful idiot. It wasn't so bad, either, that you wrecked

Camillo's life by trying to force him to kill a king. Those were

small offenses compared to what came next. You

abandoned your daughter to the wilderness: that's not such

a big deal (though even the devil himself wouldn't have

done it). And really, it's not your fault that the sensitive,

young prince died of a broken heart, from disbelief that his

disgusting, foolish father would destroy his beloved mother.

No, sir. You don't have to answer for any of this. But this

most recent thing (and, gentleman, prepare to cry out as

Thoughts high for one so tender, cleft the heart
That could conceive a gross and foolish sire
225 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
230 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,
235 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
240 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
245 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

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
255 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:
260 The love I bore your queen—lo, fool again!—
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

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
270 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
275 I daily vow to use it. Come and lead me
Unto these sorrows.

Exeunt

soon as you hear it): the queen, the queen, the sweetest,
dearest creature is dead, and vengeance for it remains to be
seen.

FIRST LORD

God forbid!

PAULINA

I said she's dead; I'll swear it. If you don't believe me, go
and see for yourself. If you can bring the color back to her
cheeks, open her eyes, or get her breathing again, it would
be a miracle. You tyrant! Don't you dare repent what
you've done. These crimes couldn't be offset even if you
mustered every ounce of remorse in your body. From now
on, your whole life should be nothing but misery. A
thousand people praying naked and fasting on a mountain
in a perpetual winter storm for ten thousand years could
not convince the gods to have mercy on you.

LEONTES

Go on; go on. It's impossible for you to say too much. I
deserve the most bitter words anyone can offer.

FIRST LORD

Say no more. Whatever's happened, you overstepped your
boundaries in making that speech.

PAULINA


I'm sorry for that. Any faults that come to my attention, I'm
sure I'll repent for. [LEONTES starts to cry] Well, well. Just
call me a classic, over-emotional woman; I've hurt the
king's feelings.


[To LEONTES] Don't cry over what's in the past and can't be
helped. And don't be upset only because I told you to—I'd
rather you punished me for reminding you of what you
forgot. Now sir, forgive me for speaking so harshly. I loved
your queen so much—oops, I did it again! I won't talk about
her anymore, or about your children, or about my husband,
Antigonus, who is lost, too. Beg your pardon; I won't say a
word.


LEONTES

No, you said the right thing; you spoke the truth. I welcome
it, actually, more than I would welcome your pity. Please,
show me the dead bodies of my wife and son. I'll make
them a double grave, and, as a mark of my shame, will write
on their gravestones how and why they died. I'll visit the
chapel where they're buried every day and will spend all
my time crying over them. I'll do this for as long as I live.
Lead me to my heartbreak.

They all leave.

 The church teaches repentance in four parts: contrition (remorse), repentance (apologizing), penance (punishment), and absolution (forgiveness). A priest could offer God's absolution for sins. By saying Leontes is past forgiveness and even extreme penance, Paulina shows the extremity of his legal and spiritual crimes.

 Paulina highlights the absurdity of gender stereotypes which claim women are highly emotional and irrational, as Leontes (a man) has displayed these qualities.

 Leontes asks Paulina, like a priest, to instruct him in penance. This relationship will develop in Act 5.

Act 3, Scene 3

Shakespeare

Enter ANTIGONUS with a Child, and a MARINER

ANTIGONUS

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


Exit

ANTIGONUS

20 Come, poor babe:
I have heard, but not believed,
the spirits o' the dead
May walk again: i f such thing be, thy mother
Appear'd to me last night, for ne'er was dream
25 So like a waking. To me comes a creature,
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
30 My cabin where I lay; thrice bow'd before me,
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,
35 Hath made thy person for the thrower-out
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,
40 I prithee, call't. For this ungentle business
Put on thee by my lord, thou ne'er shalt see
Thy wife Paulina more.' And so, with shrieks
She melted into air. Affrighted much,
I did in time collect myself and thought
45 This was so and no slumber. Dreams are toys:
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
50 Of King Polixenes, it should here be laid,

Shakescleare Translation

ANTIGONUS enters holding the baby, accompanied by a
SAILOR .

 "Mariner" is another word for sailor.

ANTIGONUS

So you're sure we've arrived in Bohemia?

MARINER (SAILOR)

Yes, sir, and I'm afraid we've arrived at a bad time. The skies look dark, which means it's about to storm. In my opinion, the gods are angry at us and are punishing us.

ANTIGONUS

May the gods' will be done! Get back on board the boat; I'll be back in a minute.

mariner (SAILOR)

Hurry as fast as you can, and don't go too far inland—this storm looks bad. Besides, this place is famous for its man-eating animals.

ANTIGONUS

Go on; I'll be right behind you.

mariner (SAILOR)

I'll be glad to get this over with.

The SAILOR leaves.

ANTIGONUS

Come here, poor baby. I've heard (but haven't believed) stories about spirits of the dead walking the earth. If these things do happen, then your mother appeared to me last night in a dream that was so real, it felt like I was awake. Something walked toward me, moving its head from side to side. I've never seen anything so sad and so completely beautiful. In pure white robes, like a goddess, she walked toward the place where I was sleeping. She bowed three times, gasping as she tried to speak. Crying with rage, she finally burst out, "Antigonus, you have the bad luck to be disposing of my baby far away in Bohemia. Shed a tear as you leave her there. Since she's lost forever, you should call her 'Perdita.' And for what my husband has made you do, you'll never see your wife, Paulina, again." Then, shrieking, she disappeared into thin air. Terrified, it took me a while to collect myself, and I wasn't sure if it was a dream or not. Usually I don't put much stock in dreams, but this one I'd swear by superstitiously. I believe that Hermione died, and that Apollo wants this baby (who must be King Polixenes's daughter) to be laid here on its father's land, to either live or die.

[He places the baby on the ground in a basket with a letter and some jewels] Good luck! There you are, and there's the story of your identity. If you make it, these things might help you. The storm is beginning! Poor brat, you're out in the elements thanks to your mother's mistake, and who knows what will happen! I can't cry, but my heart is bleeding and I'm damned for getting tangled up in this. Goodbye! It's getting darker and darker. I'm afraid the lullaby you're about to get will be a little on the rough side;

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,
55 And still rest thine. The storm begins; poor wretch,
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 enjoined to this. Farewell!
60 The day frowns more and more: thou'rt like to have
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

SHEPHERD

65 I would there were no age between sixteen and
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 ancients,
stealing, fighting— Hark you now! Would any but
70 these boiled brains of nineteen and two-and-twenty
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
75 will what have we here! Mercy on 's, a barne a very
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
80 some stair-work, some trunk-work, some
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

85 Hilloa, loa!

SHEPHERD

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

CLOWN

90 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
sky: betwixt the firmament and it you cannot thrust
a bodkin's point.

SHEPHERD

Why, boy, how is it?

CLOWN

95 I would you did but see how it chafes, how it rages,
how it takes up the shore! but that's not the
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'd thrust a
100 cork into a hogshead. And then for the
land-service, to see how the bear tore out his



I've never seen the sky so black in the daytime. The
thunder, the lightning! I need to get aboard the ship!

[Walking away, he sees a bear running toward him] Well,
this is it: I'm gone forever.

A bear chases him out.

A SHEPHERD enters.

SHEPHERD

I wish  we could go straight from sixteen to twenty-three,
or that we could put our lives on pause in between those
ages. Ya don't get up to much at that age except knocking
girls up, embarrassing your old folks, stealing,
fighting—*[Seeing the basket on the ground]* Well, whadaya
know! Only no-good youngsters would be out in this
weather! They've scared away two of my best sheep, and I'll
be darned if the wolves don't find them before I do. If
they're anywhere to be found, it's down by the sea, grazing
on some weeds . . . *[He looks into the basket]* Lord have
mercy, it's a baby, a very pretty little baby! Is it a boy or a
girl, I wonder? Ah, it's a pretty one, you're a very pretty one,
aren't you, with a pretty face. I may not be all that smart,
but I can tell from your face your mama's a high-class lady.
This has been some back-room , behind-closed-doors,
under-the-covers business, huh, by two people who were
hotter and heavier than you are now! You poor thing, come
here. *[He picks up the basket]* I'll hold on 'til my son comes;
I thought I heard him just now—Hey there!

The CLOWN  (SHEPHERD'S SON) enters.

clown (SHEPHERD's son)

Howdy-hey!

SHEPHERD

What're you doing up here? If you wanna see the darnedest
thing you ever did see, get yourself over here! What's the
matter with you, boy?

clown (shepherd's son)


I've seen two unbelievable things, one in the sea and one
on land! But now I don't know what's the sea and what's
the sky; everything's all mixed up in this storm.


SHEPHERD


What in the world do you mean, boy?

clown (shepherd's son)

If only you could see how the water is roiling and raging all
the way up the beach—but that's not the point! The pitiful
cries of people who are doomed! I could see 'em, and then I
couldn't as the ship went up and down, to and fro, pushed
around in the waves like you'd push a cork into a keg of
beer. And then on land, if you'd seen how the bear tore his
arm out of its socket, and heard how he cried to me for help
and said his name was Antigonous, a gentleman. But back to

 The shepherd speaks with a
Scottish or northern English accent,
and some of his words (like "bairn" for
baby) are regional slang.

 The shepherd guesses that
Perdita is abandoned because she
was the unwanted product of an
extramarital affair. His guess is ironic,
considering that she was born in
wedlock, but her father chose to
believe a story much like the one the
shepherd invents.

 A "clown" in Shakespeare's
English can refer to a comedian, but
more commonly refers to a rural
person (comic characters in early
modern plays were often lower-class
and/or rural)

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 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

110 Now, now: I have not winked since I saw these 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

115 I would you had been by the ship side, to have 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 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: open't. What's within, boy?

CLOWN

You're a made old man: if the sins of your youth 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 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 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.

SHEPHERD

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

Exeunt

the ship: if you'd seen how the sea gobbled them up, and the people screamed, and the sea laughed at them, and how the poor man screamed and the bear laughed at him, both screaming louder than the sea or the storm.

SHEPHERD

Bless my soul. When was this, boy?

clown (shepherd's son)

Now, now! I've barely blinked since I saw it all. The men have hardly sunk to the ocean floor yet and the bear hasn't finished eating the gentleman; he's at it now.


SHEPHERD

I wish I would have been there to have helped the old man!

clown (shepherd's son)

I wish you would have been alongside the ship, to have helped it, too, though that would have been pretty difficult.

SHEPHERD

That's heavy stuff! Heavy stuff! But lookee here, boy. Cross your heart—you came across the dying, and I came across something that's newborn. *[He lifts Perdita's blanket out of the basket]* Here's a sight for you: look, a blanket for a gentleman's baby! *[He pulls out a bag of gold]* Lookee here, pick it up now, pick it up, boy, and open it! So, let's see: I've got an idea the fairies  have made me rich. This is a changeling—open it. What's it say, boy?

clown (shepherd's son)

Your fortune is made, old man. Someone must have forgiven the sins of your youth; now you're set for life. Gold! All gold!

SHEPHERD

This is fairy gold, boy, you'll see! Hold on to it tight. Let's get on home now. We are lucky, boy, and to hold on to our luck we need to keep this under wraps. Let the sheep go. Let's get on home now, boy!

clown (shepherd's son)

Go on ahead with your findings. I'll go and see if the bear is gone and, if there's anything left of the gentleman, I'll bury it.

SHEPHERD

That's a good thing to do. If you can tell from what's left who he is and where he's from, bring me there to see him.


clown (shepherd's son)

Yes, sir, I will, and you can help me bury him.

SHEPHERD

We're lucky today, boy. Let's give thanks by doing good.

They all exit.

 According to English folklore, fairies (friendly but mischievous spirits) sometimes swapped babies without the parents' knowledge. When a baby didn't resemble its parents, people in Shakespeare's day would call the baby a "changeling"—someone "changed" (switched) at birth.

Act 4, Scene 1

Shakespeare

SCENE I:


*Enter Time, the Chorus***TIME**



I, that please some, try all, both joy and terror
 Of good and bad, that makes and unfolds error,
 5 Now take upon me, in the name of Time,
 To use my wings. Impute it not a crime
 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
 10 To o'erthrow law and in one self-born hour
 To plant and o'erwhelm custom. Let me pass
 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
 15 To the freshest things now reigning and make stale
 The glistening of this present, as my tale
 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,
 20 The effects of his fond jealousies so grieving
 That he shuts up himself, imagine me,
 Gentle spectators, that I now may be
 In fair Bohemia, and remember well,
 I mentioned a son o' the king's, which Florizel
 25 I now name to you; and with speed so pace
 To speak of Perdita, now grown in grace
 Equal with wondering: what of her ensues
 I list not prophecy; but let Time's news
 Be known when 'tis brought forth.
 30 A shepherd's daughter,
 And what to her adheres, which follows after,
 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
 35 He wishes earnestly you never may.

Exit

Shakescleare Translation

ACT 4, PROLOGUE


TIME comes in as narrator **TIME**


I reveal all—joy and terror, good and bad, mistakes made and mistakes paid for—to the benefit of some and to the detriment of others. I am Time, and I came here to flap my wings. Don't blame me for flying by , passing over sixteen years as if it were nothing. It's within my power to defy the rules  and pack all of this into a single hour. I am the same now as I have been since ancient times, since the dawn of Time. I'm about to bring in something fresh and new to liven up our current tale, which is as old (and stale) as Time.


[TIME turns an hourglass over in his hand] If you don't mind, I'll turn my hourglass to while away the years before our next scene as quickly as if you'd slept through it. We'll leave Leontes there. He regretted the consequences of his jealousy so much that he shut himself away.

Those of you in the audience: imagine I'm in Bohemia now. Remember when I mentioned the king's son? Now I can tell you that his name is Florizel, and I'll also tell you that Perdita has grown up into a beautiful woman. I won't tell you what becomes of her; you'll see everything in due Time. She was raised as a shepherd's daughter, and what happens to her next only Time will tell. Bear with us for the next part; you'll be glad you took the Time. Ever had a worse Time than you've had watching this play? Well, Time himself hopes that you never will.

TIME leaves.

 Many early modern plays had explanatory speeches ("choruses") before each act. Actors would change choruses for revivals of the same production, or even from night to night. Thus, temporary choruses weren't often sent to the printer along with the script, and didn't make it into the version of the play we have. Scholars believe that the chorus, Time, may have had 5 or 6 speeches in this play that are now lost.

 In this speech, the Chorus puns on familiar sayings about time (like "time flies").

 According to classical Greek dramatic convention, a play's plot should cover a single day. Renaissance playwrights tried to follow this standard. Shakespeare apologizes for breaking this "rule," but also pokes fun at writers and critics who adhere to it. Shakespeare influentially phased out classical rules for drama; later, plots spanning greater lengths of time became standard.

Act 4, Scene 2

Shakespeare

*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.

Shakescleare Translation

*POLIXENES and CAMILLO enter.***POLIXENES**

Please, Camillo, don't pester me. Though it's hard to deny you anything, it would be the death of you if I said "yes."

CAMILLO

It is fifteen 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
 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
 45 cottage.

POLIXENES

That's likewise part of my intelligence; but, I
 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
 50 shepherd; from whose simplicity I think it not
 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

55 My best Camillo! We must disguise ourselves.

Exeunt

CAMILLO

I haven't been home in fifteen years. I've been away for so
 long, but I do want to die and be buried there. Besides, the
 remorseful king, my former boss, has asked me to come. I
 might be able to ease his suffering, which is just another
 reason I want to go.

POLIXENES

Camillo, if you're loyal to me, you wouldn't think of leaving
 me now; I need your services especially (and, since I've
 been spoiled with a servant as effective as you, I can hardly
 settle for someone else). Plus, you've built industries for me
 here that no one but you can take care of, so you either
 need to stay here to do it yourself, or take your projects with
 you. I can never thank you enough for all the work you've
 done—and for your friendship. Please, don't talk about
 Sicily anymore. The name alone dredges up bad memories
 of that "remorseful" king (as you call him), my friend, and
 the loss of his wife and children, which we should be
 mourning even now.

Anyway, when did you last see my son, Prince Florizel? It's
 just as bad for a king to misplace a good son as to have a
 bad one at hand.

CAMILLO

Sir, I haven't seen the prince for three days. I'm not sure
 what he's up to, but I have noticed that he's been away
 from court a lot and that he's been neglecting his princely
 duties more than usual.

POLIXENES

I've noticed, too, Camillo—so much so that I have people
 watching him for me wherever he goes. They've reported
 that he's spending most of his time at a poor shepherd's
 house. They tell me that some time ago the shepherd
 suddenly went from rags to riches, to the complete shock of
 his neighbors.

CAMILLO

I've heard of this guy, sir, and that he has a very beautiful
 daughter. By all reports, she's far beyond what you'd expect
 from such circumstances.

POLIXENES

I've heard that, too, and I'm afraid you've put your finger on
 the bait that's lured my son away. You'll come with me to
 the place, where we'll disguise ourselves and question the
 shepherd. Since he's probably not all that bright, it won't be
 difficult to get the story of my son's shenanigans out of him.
 Please forget about Sicily and come help me with this.

CAMILLO

I'm happy to do as you say.

POLIXENES

Atta boy, Camillo! Let's put on disguises.

They both leave.

Act 4, Scene 3

Shakespeare

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!
 Doth set my pugging tooth on edge;
 For a quart of ale is a dish for a king.
 10 The lark, that tirra-lyra chants,
 With heigh! with heigh! the thrush and the jay,
 Are summer songs for me and my aunts,
 While we lie tumbling in the hay.
 15 I have served Prince Florizel and in my time wore
 three-*pile*; but now I am out of service:
 But shall I go mourn for that, my dear?
 20 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,
 25 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
 30 lesser linen. My father named me Autolycus; who 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
 35 highway: beating and hanging are terrors to me: for the
 life to come, I sleep out the thought of it. A prize! a
 prize!

Enter Clown

CLOWN

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

AUTOLYCUS

[Aside]

If the springe hold, the cock's mine.

Shakescleare Translation

AUTOLYCUS enters, singing.

AUTOLYCUS

When **1** daffodils begin to bloom,
 (Say "hey!") roll around in the grass with your lover
 Since spring, the best time of the year, is here,
 After a winter of waiting and wanting.

The clean white sheets hanging out to dry
 (Say "hey!") and the birds' beautiful singing
 Have me hankering for a hook-up.
 I'm no snob—an ugly girl **2** satisfies as much as any other.

The lark **3** that chirps, "tweet, tweet!"
 (Say "hey!" Say "hey!"), the thrush, and the blue jay
 Are the perfect soundtrack for me and my ladies,
 While we get down in the hay.

[He interrupts his song] I served Prince Florizel back in the
 day and used to wear a fancy suit, but now I'm out of a job.

But **4** am I crying over that, sweetheart?
 The moon shines in the night:
 Its light guides me as I wander around after-hours
 At which time I (mostly) do good.

If we tolerate handymen
 Who live on a piss-poor budget
 Then I might as well "fix" my income.
 I'll pay for it with jail time if I have to.

I'm in the sheets business **5**. If you see a hawk like me
 swooping in, you better get out your second-best linens **6**.
 My father named me "Autolycus" **7**. Like me, he was
 destined to be a thief, and, like me, he spent his time
 snapping up overlooked goodies. I paid for this outfit by
 pimping—not to mention the additional profit of cheap
 booty. The threats of jail and death are pretty real out here
 on the street. I live in constant fear of being beaten or
 hanged, and I can't even think about the afterlife **8**! I drink
 to forget about it.

[Seeing the shepherd's son] Ah, here's a treat!

Enter the SHEPHERD'S SON.

CLOWN (Shepherd's son)

Let's see: every sheep yields eleven pounds of wool, every
 pound of wool is worth a dollar and a penny, and we've
 shaved fifteen hundred sheep. How much does that make
 us?

AUTOLYCUS

[To himself] If I do this right, I'll catch him.

1 Autolycus' *ballad* (popular song) has stanzas of four lines each, with alternating rhyme, and a refrain ("Say hey!"). The song's wordplay relates to flowers and sheep—symbols of innocence, spring, beauty, the female body, and nature (important to the sheep-shearing in Act 4, Scene 3).

2 Autolycus compares beer to women to show he's not picky about sexual partners.

3 Larks, thrushes, and bluejays are types of birds.

4 Autolycus improvises this second part of his song. Most productions use the same tune as the spring ballad, though Autolycus now sings about his life as a pickpocket and crook.

5 The word "sheets" stands in for beds and sex, but also refers to songs and stories. English ballads were known as "broadsheets" because they were printed on large, single pages.

6 Autolycus suggests that, if he visits your house, he'll steal your sheets (so you should hide the expensive ones). Following the sheets/sex metaphor, Autolycus warns that he may seduce your wife (so you should hide her if she's beautiful).

7 In Greek, "Autolycus" translates to "the wolf itself," and emphasizes the character's wolfish qualities.

8 Christians believe that sinners who don't repent spend eternity in hell. Autolycus, a non-believer and a criminal, fears he'll go to hell if it's real.

CLOWN

I cannot do't without counters. Let me see; what am I to buy for our sheep-shearing feast? Three pound
 45 of sugar, five pound of currants, rice,—what will 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
 50 ones; but they are most of them means and bases; but 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
 55 may beg; four pound of prunes, and as many of raisins o' the sun.

AUTOLYCUS

O that ever I was born!

Grovelling on the ground

CLOWN

I' the name of me—

AUTOLYCUS

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

CLOWN

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

AUTOLYCUS

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

CLOWN

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

AUTOLYCUS

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

CLOWN

What, by a horseman, or a footman?

AUTOLYCUS

A footman, sweet sir, a footman.

CLOWN

75 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, I'll help thee: come, lend me thy hand.

AUTOLYCUS

O, good sir, tenderly, O!

CLOWN

Alas, poor soul!

AUTOLYCUS

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

CLOWN

How now! canst stand?

CLOWN (Shepherd's son)

I can't do it without a calculator. Let's see: what do I need to buy for the sheep-shearing ⁹ party? Three pounds of sugar, five pounds of grapes, rice—no idea what my sister needs rice for, but my dad set her up as the debutante of the party, and she's in charge. She made bouquets for all twenty-four of the men who'll shave the sheep tonight. They're all decent guys, but they're rascals. There's only one religious guy ¹⁰ out of all of them, and he's really strange. I need some spices for the pies, herbs . . . dates? No, not dates. Some nutmeg, a bit of ginger (but I could get that from a friend), four pounds of prunes, and tons of raisins.

AUTOLYCUS

Oh, woe is me!

AUTOLYCUS rolls around on the ground.

CLOWN (shepherd's son)

What in the world?

AUTOLYCUS

Oh, help me, help me! Get these rags off me, so I can die in peace!

CLOWN (Shepherd's son)

You poor thing! In that case, you need clothes to be buried in, not for what's left of your clothes to be taken away.

AUTOLYCUS (SHEPHERD'S SON)

Man, these ugly rags hurt me more than the millions of punches and kicks I just received.

CLOWN (Shepherd's Son)

Oh, poor man! A million punches and kicks can do a lot of damage.

AUTOLYCUS

I've been beaten and robbed. My money and clothes were stolen, and then they threw these rags on me.

CLOWN (SHEPHERD'S SON)

Was it someone on horseback, or walking?

AUTOLYCUS

Walking, my friend, walking.

CLOWN (SHEPHERD'S SON)

That makes sense—someone rich enough to ride a horse wouldn't have been wearing rags like this. Give me your hand, I'll help you up. Give me your hand. [*He grasps AUTOLYCUS's hand and pulls*]

AUTOLYCUS

Oh, thank you, sir—carefully, ow! [*AUTOLYCUS winces in pain*]

CLOWN (SHEPHERD'S SON)

Ah, poor thing!

AUTOLYCUS

Oh, man, carefully! I think I've broken my shoulder blade.

CLOWN (SHEPHERD'S SON)

Really? Can you stand? [*He leans over to take a closer look at AUTOLYCUS's shoulder*]

⁹ The shepherd's son (Perdita's foster brother) prepares for a traditional spring festival in which shepherds shear their sheep's winter wool, and celebrate with beer, food, and dancing.

¹⁰ The "puritan" in the original text would be part of a conservative English religious group: they took Reformation principles (simple worship, undecorated churches, modesty) beyond the Anglican Church's standards. Persecution led many of them to flee to colonies in America, only about a decade after this play was written.

AUTOLYCUS*[Picking his pocket]*

85 Softly, dear sir; good sir, softly. You ha' done me a charitable office.

CLOWN

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

AUTOLYCUS

90 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

What manner of fellow was he that robbed you?

AUTOLYCUS

95 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

100 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

105 Vices, I would say, sir. I know this man well: he hath been since an ape-bearer; then a 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

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

AUTOLYCUS

110 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 but looked big and spit at him, he'd have run.

AUTOLYCUS

115 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?

AUTOLYCUS

120 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

[AUTOLYCUS takes the shepherd's son's wallet out of his pocket without him noticing] Carefully, my friend, very carefully . . . *[The shepherd's son lifts AUTOLYCUS to his feet]* You've really helped me out.

CLOWN (SHEPHERD'S SON)

Do you need money? I can give you a little money. *[He reaches toward his back pocket]*

AUTOLYCUS

No! My dear friend, no, please. My uncle lives under a mile away, and I was just heading there. I can get some money and anything else I need there. Please, don't offer me any money, I can't bear that.

CLOWN (SHEPHERD'S SON)

What kind of guy was it that robbed you?

AUTOLYCUS

A guy ¹¹ with a reputation for hanging out with prostitutes. I know he used to be the prince's servant. He was kicked out of court for one of his virtues; I can't remember which one.

¹¹ Autolycus describes himself here.

CLOWN (SHEPHERD'S SON)

You mean his vices, right? There's no virtue that would get you kicked out of court. They could use virtue there, considering they have none.

AUTOLYCUS

Vices, yes, that's what I meant. I know this guy well: he was an odd-jobs guy, then a police officer, then he wasted all his money for a while ¹², and then he married a handyman's wife about a mile away from where I live now. He's tried his hand at several questionable professions and has now settled on being a criminal. Some call him Autolycus.

¹² *The Prodigal Son is one of Jesus's parables about a profligate man who ultimately finds redemption.*

CLOWN (SHEPHERD'S SON)

He's the worst! What a jerk! He hangs around funerals, fairs, and public events ¹³.

¹³ *In Shakespeare's day, "bear-baitings" were ticketed events in which bears were chained to stakes and attacked by dogs.*

AUTOLYCUS

That's true. He's the crook that put me in this outfit.

CLOWN (SHEPHERD'S SON)

He's the most cowardly criminal in the entire country. If you just shouted and looked intimidating, you'd scare him away.

AUTOLYCUS

I have to admit, I'm not a fighter—my heart's too weak. I'll bet he knew that.

CLOWN (SHEPHERD'S SON)

How are you feeling now?

AUTOLYCUS

Much better than I was, my friend. I can stand and walk; I'll even say goodbye and make my way toward my uncle's house.

CLOWN (SHEPHERD'S SON)

Do you want me to come with you?

AUTOLYCUS

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

CLOWN

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

AUTOLYCUS

- 125 Prosper you, sweet sir!
[Exit Clown]
Your purse is not hot enough to purchase your spice.
- 130 I'll be with you at your sheep-shearing too: if I 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!
- 135 [Sings] Jog on, jog on, the foot-path way,
And merrily hent the stile-a:
A merry heart goes all the day,
Your sad tires in a mile-a.

Exit

AUTOLYCUS

No, you sweet, caring man, you.

CLOWN (SHEPHERD'S SON)

Goodbye, then. I have to go buy spices for our sheep-shearing.

AUTOLYCUS

God bless you, my friend! [The shepherd's son leaves]

You don't have enough money in your wallet to purchase those spices. I'll be at the sheep-shearing, too. I pulled off this trick and I'm about to make the shearers my next victims ¹⁴. If I can't pull it off (as if that were possible), I'll trade my wicked ways for good deeds!

[Singing] Run along, run along the dirt path

And jump right over the cattle-guard ¹⁵

A smile can go on all day

But a frown only lasts for a mile.

¹⁴ In planning to make the shearers his sheep, Autolycus plays off his name's wolfish meaning. He will prey on and steal from the weak, foolish country people like the shepherd's son.

¹⁵ A "stile" or "cattle-guard" is a gap in a fence through which people can pass, but hoofed animals cannot. Suspended metal bars cover a hole beneath. A person can step on the metal bars and get out, not falling in the gaps between.

He leaves.

Act 4, Scene 4

Shakespeare

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, sworn, I think,

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?

Shakescleare Translation

FLORIZEL and PERDITA enter.

FLORIZEL

This costume looks good on you! You're not a shepherdess; you're Flora ¹⁴, the goddess of spring. This sheep-shearing festival is a meeting of the gods, and you're the queen of all of them.

¹⁴ Flora was the Roman goddess of flowers and spring, associated with fertility and youth (themes which play a part in Florizel and Perdita's relationship).

PERDITA

Sweetheart, I hate to correct your over-exaggerations—please forgive me for pointing them out. Though you've disguised yourself as a shepherd, you're still the prince of our country and I'm only a poor peasant girl playing dress-up. If it weren't the kind of party where everyone will be looking a little silly, I'd be embarrassed for you to be dressed the way you are, and I could hardly look in a mirror.

FLORIZEL

I'm thankful for the day my falcon landed on your father's farm.

PERDITA

May God keep you safe here! I'm afraid of the consequences; you've been sheltered enough to not know what fear is. I'm terrified of what would happen if your dad showed up here by chance the way that you did. Oh, just imagine! What would he think of his royal son being engaged to someone like me? What would he say? And how would I, in this ridiculous outfit, respond to his anger?

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
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

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

65 Fie, daughter! when my old wife lived, upon
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;
70 On his shoulder, and his; her face o' fire
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
75 These unknown friends to's welcome; for it is
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,
And bid us welcome to your sheep-shearing,
80 As your good flock shall prosper.

FLORIZEL

All I want you to think about is having a good time! You know, the gods  turned themselves into animals for the sake of love: Jupiter became a bull, Neptune became a ram, and the sun god, Apollo, became a shepherd just like I am now. And their transformations weren't for girls as beautiful as you. Or as pure—since, you know, I'm not trying to move too quickly here. My commitment to you goes beyond physical desire.

 The following stories are Greco-Roman legends in which gods turned themselves into humans or animals to seduce beautiful human women.

PERDITA

But it will be hard for you to maintain that when the king is against you. One of two things will have to happen: you'll stop pursuing me, or I'll become a different person.

FLORIZEL

Perdita, please don't ruin the party by worrying. I belong to you, sweetheart, not my father. I'm nothing to myself and the world if I don't have you—I swear I mean it, despite all the odds. Be happy, relax, and get rid of all these negative thoughts. Your guests are coming! Smile like today's the wedding day we've been planning.

PERDITA

I hope Lady Luck is on our side!

FLORIZEL

Look, your guests are coming. Try to have fun with them; let's all have a good time.

*The SHEPHERD, the SHEPHERD'S SON, MOPSA, DORCAS,
and others come in, along with POLIXENES and CAMILLO in
disguises.*

SHEPHERD

Shame on you, daughter! When your mother was alive, she was a jack-of-all-trades on the day of the festival. She welcomed everyone, served everyone, sang and danced—she was at one end of the table, then the other, serving this man and that man, sweating from working so hard and drinking all the while. Meanwhile, you're relaxing as if you were a guest and not the host! *[He gestures toward POLIXENES and CAMILLO]* Please welcome these strangers. I hope we can get to know them better. All right, stop blushing and introduce yourself; you're the queen of the feast. Come on, and welcome everyone to the sheep-shearing so that we can start enjoying ourselves.

PERDITA

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

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

POLIXENES

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

PERDITA

Sir, the year growing ancient,
95 Not yet on summer's death, nor on the birth
Of trembling winter, the fairest
flowers o' the season
Are our carnations and streak'd gillyvors,
Which some call nature's bastards: of that kind
100 Our rustic garden's barren; and I care not
To get slips of them.

POLIXENES

Wherefore, gentle maiden,
Do you neglect them?

PERDITA

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

POLIXENES

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

PERDITA

So it is.

POLIXENES

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

PERDITA

120 I'll not put
The dibble in earth to set one slip of them;
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;
125 Hot lavender, mints, savoury, marjoram;
The marigold, that goes to bed wi' the sun
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.

PERDITA

[To POLIXENES] Welcome, sir. My father has asked me to
play hostess today.

[To CAMILLO] You're welcome, too, sir.

[To DORCAS] Give me those flowers, Dorcas . . .

[To POLIXENES and CAMILLO] Gentlemen, here are some
herbs for you that will stay green all winter long; rosemary
and rue ³ are a gift to symbolize grace and remembrance.
And welcome to our shearing!

³ In the Renaissance, flowers were heavily symbolic in literature and culture. Rosemary and rue symbolized remembrance and repentance. Rue's nickname—Herb of Grace—connects it to the gracious Hermione.

POLIXENES

You are beautiful, shepherdess. And we see what you did
there—you gave us winter flowers because we're old!

PERDITA

Since it's spring, sir—summer's not over yet and winter
hasn't come—the prettiest flowers blooming at the
moment are carnations and multicolor gillyvors ⁴, which
some people call "nature's bastards." We don't grow those
here, and I'm not a big fan.

⁴ Gillyvors are a hybrid, red-and-white flower, made when humans breed two different species of flowers together.

POLIXENES

Why don't you care for them?

PERDITA

I've heard people say that engineering their
multicoloredness is "playing God" ⁵.

⁵ Perdita is morally opposed to cross-breeding plants, because she thinks only God (or "Nature") should have the power to create life.

POLIXENES

Maybe you're right, but humans can't create anything in
nature that doesn't already have the potential to exist; the
"engineering" that you say is contrary to nature is actually
enabled by nature itself. You see, sweetheart, if we graft ⁶
a purebred plant to a weed, we can make the weed produce
a beautiful flower. This is "engineering" that improves
nature, but the engineering itself is all natural.

⁶ Grafting is a gardening technique in which a cutting from one plant is attached to grow on the stalk or trunk of another. Polixenes argues that even a weed can produce a beautiful plant if combined with a purebred garden variety. Likewise, a poor peasant like Perdita can marry a royal like Florizel and have a noble child. Polixenes said earlier that he didn't want his son to marry a shepherdess, but, ironically, Perdita is actually a princess.

PERDITA

I suppose you're right.

POLIXENES

Then you should grow lots of gillyvors and stop calling
them "bastards."

PERDITA

I won't plant a single one. It'd be the same if my boyfriend
only thought I was beautiful after I put on heavy make-up ⁷.

[She hands flowers to CAMILLO] Here are flowers for you
that close at night and open in the day to receive the
sunshine. As midsummer flowers, they're the perfect gift for
middle-aged men. You're very welcome here.

⁷ Perdita maintains her argument against "art" (something created by humans) in defense of "nature," extending her argument to her relationship with Florizel.

CAMILLO

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

PERDITA

Out, alas!
You'd be so lean, that blasts of January
Would blow you through and through.
135 Now, my fair'st friend,
I would I had some flowers o' the spring that might
Become your time of day; and yours, and yours,
That wear upon your virgin branches yet
Your maidenheads growing: O Proserpina,
140 For the flowers now, that frighted thou let'st fall
From Dis's waggon! daffodils,
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
145 Or Cytherea's breath; pale primroses
That die unmarried, ere they can behold
Bright Phoebus in his strength—a malady
Most incident to maids; bold oxlips and
The crown imperial; lilies of all kinds,
150 The flower-de-luce being one! O, these I lack,
To make you garlands of, and my sweet friend,
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;
155 Not like a corse; or if, not to be buried,
But quick and in mine arms. Come, take your flowers:
Methinks I play as I have seen them do
In Whitsun pastorals: sure this robe of mine
Does change my disposition.

FLORIZEL

160 What you do
Still betters what is done. When you speak, sweet,
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,
165 To sing them too: when you do dance, I wish you
A wave o' the sea, that you might ever do
Nothing but that; move still, still so,
And own no other function: each your doing,
So singular in each particular,
170 Crowns what you are doing in the present deed,
That all your acts are queens.

PERDITA

O Doricles,
Your praises are too large: but that your youth,
And the true blood which peepeth fairly through't,
175 Do plainly give you out an unstain'd shepherd,
With wisdom I might fear, my Doricles,
You woo'd me the false way.

FLORIZEL

I think you have
As little skill to fear as I have purpose
180 To put you to't. But come; our dance, I pray:
Your hand, my Perdita: so turtles pair,
That never mean to part.

PERDITA

I'll swear for 'em.

CAMILLO

If I were one of your sheep, I wouldn't need to graze on
grass—I could live just by gazing at your beautiful face.

PERDITA

Oh, stop it! You'd starve to death in that case.

[To FLORIZEL] Now, my dear: if only I had some spring
flowers for you and for my friends. Spring flowers are fitting
for young virgins ⁸. I wish I had the flowers the spring
goddess ⁹ threw away when she was carted off to the
underworld! I wish I had daffodils (the earliest spring
flowers), violets (so dark and sweet), primroses (that die
when kissed by the sun), oxlips (the royal flowers), and
every kind of lily, including the fleur-de-lis! Unfortunately I
don't have any of these to make a flower-crown for you, or
to throw on top of you!

⁸ In the original text, "virgin branches" is the first of many phrases in Perdita's speech that link spring flowers with sexual love and marriage. (She and Florizel haven't consummated their love yet.)

⁹ Pluto (the god of the underworld) abducted Proserpina, the goddess of spring and flowers. She spent half the year in the underworld, and the other on earth, with her mother Ceres (goddess of grain). The myth was used to explain the seasons. Perdita identifies with Proserpina, flowers, nature, and youth.

FLORIZEL

What, like a dead body ¹⁰?

PERDITA

No, like a grassy hill for lovers to roll around on, not like a
dead body! Your body's not anywhere close to being buried,
unless you mean buried in my arms. Come on, take your
flowers. I feel like I'm acting in a community play; it's like
this costume has totally changed my personality.

¹⁰ Florizel jokes that Perdita's desire to cover him in flowers mimics traditional funeral rites, where mourners throw flowers onto a coffin as it's lowered into the grave.

FLORIZEL

Everything you do is even more wonderful than what you
did before. My darling, I can't get enough of your voice; I
could listen to you talk forever. Your singing is like charity
for my poor soul, and makes me want to sing, too. When
you dance, I don't want you to stop, I want you to keep
moving so gracefully forever. Everything you do—in exactly
the way you do it—makes you even more perfect than you
already are.

PERDITA

Oh, "Doricles ¹¹," you exaggerate. If it weren't oh-so-
obvious that you're nothing more than an innocent
shepherd, I'm afraid I'd think you were just trying to get in
my pants!

¹¹ Perdita calls Florizel a conventional name used for male shepherds in Renaissance pastoral poetry. She teases him for his disguise, and reminds him that he's a prince.

FLORIZEL

You have nothing to be afraid of as far as that's concerned.
Come on, let's dance. Give my your hand, Perdita, and
never let go.

PERDITA

I'll swear to that.

POLIXENES

185 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,
Too noble for this place.

CAMILLO

190 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

Mopsa must be your mistress: marry, garlic,
To mend her kissing with!

MOPSA

Now, in good time!

CLOWN

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

Music. Here a dance of Shepherds and Shepherdesses

POLIXENES

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

SHEPHERD

200 They call him Doricles; and boasts himself
To have a worthy feeding: but I have it
Upon his own report and I believe it;
He looks like sooth. He says he loves my daughter:
I think so too; for never gazed the moon
205 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
Who loves another best.

POLIXENES

She dances feately.

SHEPHERD

210 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
Which he not dreams of.

Enter Servant

SERVANT

215 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
utters them as he had eaten ballads and all men's
220 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
indeed and sung lamentably.

SERVANT

225 He hath songs for man or woman, of all sizes; no
milliner can so fit his customers with gloves: he

POLIXENES

[To CAMILLO] She's the prettiest peasant girl I've ever seen.
Everything she does is graceful. She's too noble for this
place.

CAMILLO

[Watching FLORIZEL and PERDITA] He's telling her
something that makes her blush. Just look how fair her skin
is!

CLOWN (shepherd's son)

Come on, start the music!

DORCAS

Dance with Mopsa . . . though you might need some strong
stuff ¹² to cover her bad breath!

¹² In the Renaissance, people often
chewed garlic to cover bad breath.

MOPSA

Hey, cut that out!

CLOWN (Shepherd's son)

I won't say a word; I'll be perfectly polite. Come on, start the
music!

*The music starts, and the shepherds and shepherdesses
dance.*

POLIXENES

Hey, shepherd: who's the young guy dancing with your
daughter?

SHEPHERD

His name is Doricles. He says he owns a prosperous farm,
and I believe it, considering how handsome and well-
dressed he is. He says he's in love with my daughter, and I
think it's true. To be blunt, the way he stares at her ¹³
completely gives it away! You'd be hard pressed to say
which one loves the other more.

¹³ In the original text, the shepherd
compares Florizel's fixed gaze on
Perdita's face to the moon's steady
reflection upon the water.

POLIXENES

She's a great dancer.

SHEPHERD

She's good at everything. And, just between you and me: if
Doricles does marry her, she'll bring him more than he ever
dreamed of ¹⁴.

¹⁴ The shepherd refers to the money
and jewels he found with baby Perdita
sixteen years ago. If Perdita marries
Florizel, she'll bring that secret
fortune as a "dowry," or wedding-gift.

A SERVANT enters.

SERVANT

[To the SHEPHERD'S SON] Sir, there's a traveling salesman
at the door who can play the drums and the flute better
than anyone I've ever seen. He knows all sorts of songs—he
can sing any ballad you can think of.

CLOWN (shepherd's son)

Perfect timing, let him in! I love ballads more than I should:
happy ones, sad ones, and even happy ones sung sadly.

SERVANT

He has songs for men and women of all shapes and sizes.
He can fit a song to a crowd better than a tailor can fit a suit

has the prettiest love-songs for maids; so without bawdry, which is strange; with such delicate 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, slights him, with 'Whoop, do me no harm, good man.'

POLIXENES

235 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; points more than all the lawyers in Bohemia can learnedly handle, though they come to him by the gross: 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 to the sleeve-hand and the work about the square on't.

CLOWN

245 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

250 Ay, good brother, or go about 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;
255 Masks for faces and for noses;
Bugle bracelet, necklace amber,
Perfume for a lady's chamber;
Golden quoifs and stomachers,
For my lads to give their dears:
260 Pins and poking-sticks of steel,
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

265 If I were not in love with Mopsa, thou shouldst take no money of me; but being enthralled as I am, it 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.

to your body. He has love songs for the ladies (and they're not dirty, none of that funny business your average street musician puts into his songs).

POLIXENES

This guy has some serious guts.

CLOWN (shepherd's son)

Believe me, you've already sold us on this guy. Is he selling anything else?

SERVANT

He has ribbons of every color in the rainbow, more pens than anyone could ever use in a lifetime, ink, and all kinds of fabrics (and he absolutely raves about the workmanship of the weavers).

CLOWN (shepherd's son)

Please bring him in, and have him sing on the way.

PERDITA

And please ask him not to use any inappropriate language in his songs.

The SERVANT leaves.

CLOWN (shepherd's son)

These traveling salesmen sometimes have more to them than you might think, sis.

PERDITA

Yes, brother, more than I want to think about.

AUTOLYCUS comes in singing.

AUTOLYCUS

Linen ¹⁵ as white as snow,
Cotton black as a crow,
Sweet-smelling gloves,
Masks for your face,
Beaded bracelets, gemstone necklaces,
Perfume for ladies' bedrooms,
Golden hairpieces and belts
For young men to give their girlfriends,
Steel pins and clips
For ladies that need them:
Come buy from me; come buy, come buy,
Boys, buy up, or your girlfriends will be sad. Come buy!

CLOWN (Shepherd's son)

If I weren't in love with Mopsa, I wouldn't spend any money, but since I am in love, I'll have to buy some ribbons and gloves.

MOPSA

You promised to get them for me before the feast, but they're just as good now.

DORCAS

Unless people are lying, he's promised you more than that ¹⁶

¹⁵ Autolycus' song describes the items he has for sale.

¹⁶ In the Renaissance, premarital sex was discouraged. Yet, in common law, a couple was considered married if they exchanged a promise to marry and consummated that vow through sex. The "jilted woman"--abandoned after that consummation--was a

cultural trope. Dorcas suggests that the shepherd's son impregnated and jilted Mopsa. In many productions, Mopsa is portrayed with a pregnant stomach.

17 *Mopsa retorts by suggesting Dorcas is a prostitute whom the shepherd's son has paid for sex. Mopsa leaves it unclear whether Dorcas would need to "give" the shepherd's son some of his money back, or another sexual encounter.*

MOPSA

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

CLOWN

275 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 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

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

CLOWN

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

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

AUTOLYCUS

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

CLOWN

What hast here? ballads?

MOPSA

290 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 wife was brought to bed of twenty money-bags at a burthen and how she longed to eat adders' heads and toads carbonadoed.

MOPSA

295 Is it true, think you?

AUTOLYCUS

Very true, and but a month old.

DORCAS

Bless me from marrying a usurer!

AUTOLYCUS

300 Here's the midwife's name to't, one Mistress Tale-porter, and five or six honest wives that were present. Why should I carry lies abroad?

MOPSA

He's paid you all he owed you **17**. He probably paid you too much, and you'll have to give something back.

CLOWN (Shepherd's son)

Do you ladies have no manners? Is this how you treat each other? Isn't there some other place where you could call each other names, instead of doing it here in front of all our guests? Now everyone's whispering about you. Please shut up; don't say anything else.

MOPSA

I'm through. Come on, you promised me some lace and a pair of pretty gloves.

CLOWN (Shepherd's son)

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

AUTOLYCUS

Sir, it's true that there are tricksters out there, so it's always smart to be aware.

CLOWN (Shepherd's son)

Don't worry; you're in no danger here.

AUTOLYCUS

I hope not, considering how much merchandise I have with me.

CLOWN (Shepherd's son)

What do you have here? Ballads?

MOPSA

Aw, please buy some! I love a printed ballad, since if they're printed they must be true.

AUTOLYCUS

Here's one (set to a very sad tune) about how a banker's **18** wife gave birth to twenty money bags and how, during the pregnancy, she had cravings for snakes' heads and grilled frogs.

18 *Usurers were bankers who charged excessive rates of interest on loans, thereby making a profit off of the poor. Since there were laws against Christians committing usury in most of Europe, the roles of banking and lending were often filled by Jews, leading to negative cultural stereotypes like this one.*

MOPSA

Do you think it's true?

AUTOLYCUS

Very true, and only a month old.

DORCAS

I'll never marry a banker!

AUTOLYCUS

Look: the midwife, Mrs. Rumor, signed her name to prove it, along with five or six eyewitnesses. Why would I sell lies?

MOPSA

Pray you now, buy it.

CLOWN

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

AUTOLYCUS

305 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 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
310 loved her: the ballad is very pitiful and as true.

DORCAS

Is it true too, think you?

AUTOLYCUS

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

CLOWN

Lay it by too: another.

AUTOLYCUS

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

MOPSA

Let's have some merry ones.

AUTOLYCUS

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.
320

MOPSA

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

DORCAS

We had the tune on't a month ago.

AUTOLYCUS

325 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
Where it fits not you to know.

DORCAS

Whither?

MOPSA

330 O, whither?

DORCAS

Whither?

MOPSA

It becomes thy oath full well,
Thou to me thy secrets tell.

MOPSA

[To the SHEPHERD'S SON] Please buy it.

CLOWN (Shepherd's son)

All right, set it aside, but let's look through more ballads first. We'll buy the other things later.

AUTOLYCUS

Here's another ballad about a fish that washed up on the coast on Wednesday, April twenty-fourth, miles away from the water, and sung this ballad to warn cold-hearted girls. People thought she was a woman who'd been turned into a fish for not having sex with her boyfriend. The ballad is both sad and true.

DORCAS

Is it really true?

AUTOLYCUS

Five judges verified it, and there were countless witnesses.

CLOWN (Shepherd's son)

Put that one aside. Another.

AUTOLYCUS

This is a funny ballad, but it's pretty, too.

MOPSA

Let's have some funny ones!

AUTOLYCUS

This is a really funny one that's set to the tune of "Two girls flirting with the same guy".¹⁹ Girls all over the country are singing it; it's in vogue, I'm happy to say.

¹⁹ Autolycus makes a joke, since both Mopsa and Dorcas are in love with the shepherd's son. His song describes their actual love triangle.

MOPSA

[To DORCAS] We can both sing it.

[To AUTOLYCUS] If you'll take a part, we can do it, since it has three parts.

DORCAS

We learned the tune of it a month ago.

AUTOLYCUS

I can sing my part; it's my job, of course. Let's sing.

They sing.

AUTOLYCUS

Get out of here; I have to go
Somewhere you can't follow.

DORCAS

Where?

MOPSA

Oh, where?

DORCAS

Where?

MOPSA

Since you promised to be my boyfriend,
You shouldn't have any secrets from me.

DORCAS

Me too, let me go thither.

MOPSA

335 Or thou goest to the orange or mill.

DORCAS

If to either, thou dost ill.

AUTOLYCUS

Neither.

DORCAS

What, neither?

AUTOLYCUS

Neither.

DORCAS

340 Thou hast sworn my love to be.

MOPSA

Thou hast sworn it more to me:
Then whither goest? say, whither?

CLOWN

We'll have this song out anon by ourselves: my
father and the gentlemen are in sad talk, and we'll
345 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

And you shall pay well for 'em.

350 *[Follows singing]*

Will you buy any tape,
Or lace for your cape,
My dainty duck, my dear-a?

355 Any silk, any thread,
Any toys for your head,
Of the new'st and finest, finest wear-a?
Come to the pedlar;
Money's a medler.

360 That doth utter all men's ware-a.

Exit

Re-enter Servant

SERVANT

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
365 say is a gallimaufry of gambols, because they are
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

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

POLIXENES

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

DORCAS

Me too; let's go there together.

MOPSA

Are you going to the forest, or the town?

DORCAS

Whichever it is, it's a mistake.

AUTOLYCUS

Neither.

DORCAS

What do you mean, "neither?"

AUTOLYCUS

Neither.

DORCAS

You said you'd be my boyfriend.

MOPSA

No, you said you'd be my boyfriend!
So where are you going? Tell me, where?

CLOWN (Shepherd's son)

[Interrupting the song] Well, we can finish this song by
ourselves later on. My father and the gentlemen are having
a serious discussion and we won't bother them.

[To AUTOLYCUS] Come on, bring your merchandise and
follow me. Ladies, I'll buy something for both of you. Give
them their first choice. Follow me, girls.

The SHEPHERD'S SON leaves with DORCAS and MOPSA.

AUTOLYCUS

And you'll pay well for them.

[AUTOLYCUS follows them, singing] Do you want to buy any
ribbons

Or lace to decorate your coat,
My beautiful girl, my dear?
Any silk, any thread,
Any hats or bows for your hair
Of the newest and best there is?
Come to the traveling salesman.
Money makes the world go 'round
And it's with money that men buy everything.

AUTOLYCUS leaves.

The SERVANT comes back in.

SERVANT

Sir, there are three wagon-makers, three shepherds, three
cowboys, and three pig-herders outside dressed up as
satyrs ²⁰. They call themselves "The Wits" and say they
have a dance to perform, but the girls are saying its a load
of garbage. But the men say that, if people aren't easily
offended, they'll enjoy the performance.

²⁰ Satyrs are mythological half-goat,
half-man creatures, traditionally
associated with nature; the gods Pan
and Bacchus; and debauchery.

SHEPHERD

Tell them to go away! We won't have it. There's been
enough shenanigans here *already*.

[To POLIXENES] Sir, I know you're getting tired of us.

POLIXENES

No, this is the kind of thing we like! Come on, let in this
group of men.

SERVANT

One three of them, by their own report, sir, hath
danced before the king; and not the worst of the
375 three but jumps twelve foot and a half by the squier.

SHEPHERD

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

380 O, father, you'll know more of that hereafter.
[*To CAMILLO*] Is it not too far gone? 'Tis time to part
them.

He's simple and tells much.

385 [*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
390 To load my she with knacks: I would have ransack'd
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
395 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:

400 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,
405 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?

410 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.

FLORIZEL

Do, and be witness to 't.

POLIXENES

415 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

420 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

425 Fairly offer'd.

SERVANT

Three of them claim to have danced for the king, but
they're all liars.

SHEPHERD

Oh, cut it out. If these men are all right with it, we'll let
them in. Go quickly!

SERVANT

They're waiting at the door, sir.

The SERVANT leaves.

The twelve men come in, dressed as satyrs, and dance.

POLIXENES

[*To the shepherd, but without him hearing*] You poor father,
you'll have more of this funny business to deal with after
the festival.

[*To CAMILLO*] Has it gone too far? We need to separate
them. Florizel is an idiot and is about to give himself away.

[*To FLORIZEL*] Hello there, handsome shepherd! You're
distracted by love and not too focused on this party, huh?
I'll tell you, when I was your age, I was a sucker for buying
gifts for my girlfriend. I would have bought every piece of
silk from the traveling salesman if it would have won her
over, but you've let him go without buying a single thing. If
your girlfriend interpreted this as a lack of love on your
part, you'd be hard-pressed to convince her that you really
care.

FLORIZEL

Sir, she doesn't care about stuff like that. The gifts she
expects from me are the ones that come from the heart,
and I've given those to her already, though I haven't
delivered them ²¹. You must have had some experience
with love, sir, at your age . . . let me explain how much I love
her. Watch me take her hand—her soft, pure white hand ²².
[*He holds PERDITA's hand*]

²¹ Florizel has given Perdita his love
and a promise to marry her, though
the marriage hasn't happened yet.

²² By taking her hand and
announcing that he's about to make a
vow, Florizel prepares to go through
the traditional marriage contract
parodied by Mopsa and the
shepherd's son.

POLIXENES

What comes next? This young shepherd speaks beautifully
about a beautiful woman. I'd written you off but, since you
ask, I'll listen.

FLORIZEL

Listen, and be a witness.

POLIXENES

[*Gesturing to CAMILLO*] And my friend, too?

FLORIZEL

Sure—him, everyone, the earth, and the heavens. Even if I
were king of the whole world, the most handsome man
alive, and wiser than anyone in history, it wouldn't matter
without her love. Everything I do, I do for her. I put my gifts
and my faults into her hands, for better or worse.

POLIXENES

Fair enough.

CAMILLO

This shows a sound affection.

SHEPHERD

But, my daughter,
Say you the like to him?

PERDITA

I cannot speak

430 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:

435 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;

440 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;

445 Have you a father?

FLORIZEL

I have: but what of him?

POLIXENES

Knows he of this?

FLORIZEL

He neither does nor shall.

POLIXENES

Methinks a father

450 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?

455 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

460 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

465 The father, all whose joy is nothing else

But fair posterity, should hold some counsel

In such a business.

CAMILLO

It sounds like you really love her.

SHEPHERD

Perdita, do you feel the same way about him?

PERDITA

I can't speak as well as he does; not at all, and my words' meaning couldn't be better than his. But our thoughts are one and the same.

SHEPHERD

Take each other's hands; let's make a wedding contract!

[To POLIXENES and CAMILLO] Our new friends will be our witnesses. I give my daughter to him in marriage, and will give them equal parts of my fortune.

FLORIZEL

The only fortune I need is your beautiful daughter; when my father dies, I will have more money than you've ever dreamed of. But, come on, let's swear to our contract before these witnesses.

SHEPHERD

Give me your hand. And, Perdita, give me yours.

POLIXENES

Just a minute, shepherd ²³. Do you have a father?

²³ Polixenes's interruption is the equivalent of someone shouting "I object!" in the middle of a wedding when the bride and groom are at the altar.

FLORIZEL

I do. What about him?

POLIXENES

Does he know about this?

FLORIZEL

He doesn't and he never will.

POLIXENES

I think fathers are usually important guests at their sons' weddings. Another question: has your father gone senile? Is he ancient and in poor health? Can he speak? Hear? Recognize people? Take care of his property? Is he bedridden? Is he basically like a child again?

FLORIZEL

No, sir. He's healthy and stronger than most men at his age.

POLIXENES

Well, then, you're a terrible son for not inviting him to your wedding. If my son were choosing a wife, I'd have a say in it, considering the future of my family is at stake.

FLORIZEL

I yield all this;
But for some other reasons, my grave sir,
470 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

475 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.

POLIXENES

480 Mark your divorce, young sir,
[Discovering himself]
Whom son I dare not call; thou art too base
485 To be acknowledged: thou a sceptre's heir,
That thus affect'st a sheep-hook! Thou old traitor,
I am sorry that by hanging thee I can
But shorten thy life one week. And thou, fresh piece
Of excellent witchcraft, who of force must know
490 The royal fool thou copest with,—

SHEPHERD

O, my heart!

POLIXENES

I'll have thy beauty scratch'd with briars, and made
More homely than thy state. For thee, fond boy,
If I may ever know thou dost but sigh
495 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,
Far than Deucalion off: mark thou my words:
Follow us to the court. Thou churl, for this time,
500 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,
That makes himself, but for our honour therein,
Unworthy thee,— if ever henceforth thou
505 These rural latches to his entrance open,
Or hoop his body more with thy embraces,
I will devise a death as cruel for thee
As thou art tender to't.

Exit

PERDITA

Even here undone!
510 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
Hides not his visage from our cottage but
Looks on alike. Will't please you, sir, be gone?
515 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,
But milk my ewes and weep.

FLORIZEL

That's all true. But for some other reasons, sir, which you
don't know, I can't tell my father about this.

POLIXENES

Tell him.

FLORIZEL

I can't.

POLIXENES

Please, let him know.

FLORIZEL

No, he can't know.

SHEPHERD

Let him know, son. There's no reason he would disapprove
your choice.

FLORIZEL

I'm serious; he can't know. Let's sign the contract.

POLIXENES

Sign your divorce, sir—*[He takes off his disguise]* I can
hardly call you my son now; I wouldn't stoop down to your
level. Look at you, a prince, dressed up with a shepherd's
staff!

[To the shepherd] You old traitor, it's too bad that by
hanging you I won't be shortening your life that much.

[To PERDITA] And you, you witch, as if you don't know that
you're meddling with a prince.

SHEPHERD

Oh, my heart!

POLIXENES

[To PERDITA] I'll have your beautiful face scratched with
thorns until you're uglier than your ugly poverty.

[To FLORIZEL] And you, lover boy, if you so much as sigh
over not seeing this slut again, you'll never inherit the
throne and, what's more, I'll disown you as my son. You'll
be out of the family forever, mark my words. Follow me
back to court.

[To the SHEPHERD] This time you're off the hook, though I
am not at all pleased.

[To PERDITA] And you, you witch! Your tricks might be good
enough for a shepherd, but not for my son. If you ever let
him through your gates again, or lay a hand on him, I'll
think up the cruelest, most painful possible death for you.

POLIXENES leaves.

PERDITA

Ruined, at the last minute! I wasn't afraid, though. I was
about to tell him that the same sun that shines in court
shines here at our cottage, looking down on us equally.

[To FLORIZEL] Will you go, then? I told you what would
come of this. Please, remember that you are a prince. It was
all a dream. Now I'm awake, and I won't imagine I'm a
queen anymore. I'll just go back to my sheep and cry.

CAMILLO

Why, how now, father!
520 Speak ere thou diest.

SHEPHERD

I cannot speak, nor think
Nor dare to know that which I know. O sir!
You have undone a man of fourscore three,
That thought to fill his grave in quiet, yea,
525 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
Where no priest shovels in dust. O cursed wretch,
That knew'st this was the prince,
530 and wouldst adventure
To mingle faith with him! Undone! undone!
If I might die within this hour, I have lived
To die when I desire.

Exit

FLORIZEL

Why look you so upon me?
535 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
My leash unwillingly.

CAMILLO

Gracious my lord,
540 You know your father's temper: at this time
He will allow no speech, which I do guess
You do not purpose to him; and as hardly
Will he endure your sight as yet, I fear:
Then, till the fury of his highness settle,
545 Come not before him.

FLORIZEL

I not purpose it.
I think, Camillo?

CAMILLO

Even he, my lord.

PERDITA

How often have I told you 'twould be thus!
550 How often said, my dignity would last
But till 'twere known!

FLORIZEL

It cannot fail but by
The violation of my faith; and then
Let nature crush the sides o' the earth together
555 And mar the seeds within! Lift up thy looks:
From my succession wipe me, father; I
Am heir to my affection.

CAMILLO

Be advised.

FLORIZEL

I am, and by my fancy: if my reason
560 Will thereto be obedient, I have reason;
If not, my senses, better pleased with madness,
Do bid it welcome.

CAMILLO

This is desperate, sir.

FLORIZEL

So call it: but it does fulfil my vow;
565 I needs must think it honesty. Camillo,
Not for Bohemia, nor the pomp that may

CAMILLO

What do you say for yourself, shepherd? Speak or you die.

SHEPHERD

I can't speak; I can't think or wrap my head around what I
know now.

[*To FLORIZEL*] Sir, you've ruined an eighty-three-year-old
man who only wanted to die in peace on the same bed
where his father passed away, and to be buried near him.
Now some executioner will bury me, alone.

[*To PERDITA*] How dare you continue to play around with
him, knowing he was the prince? Ruined! Ruined! If I die
within the hour, I'll be glad to be out of my misery.

The SHEPHERD leaves.

FLORIZEL

Why are you looking at me like that? I'm sorry this
happened, but I'm not afraid. This delays me, but doesn't
change me. I am who I was before. This setback makes me
want to marry Perdita even more.

CAMILLO

Sir, you know your father has a temper. He doesn't want to
hear from you right now, so I don't suggest you try it. He
probably doesn't want to see you, either. Stay away from
him until his anger dies down.

FLORIZEL

I won't try it, then. You're Camillo, right ²⁴?

²⁴ Camillo is still wearing his disguise.

CAMILLO

That's me, sir.

PERDITA

I've told you so many times that this would happen! I've
been saying that I'd be ruined as soon as we were found
out!

FLORIZEL

You could only be ruined if I left you, but that will never
happen! Chin up! My father can disown me; I have my love
to sustain me ²⁵.

²⁵ In the original text, Florizel proclaims that if he is no longer his father's "heir" (successor to the throne), he is still "heir" to love. Love, not the crown, will provide for him and make him happy.

CAMILLO

You should think this through . . .

FLORIZEL

I have, and I know what I'm doing—following my heart. Call
me crazy; if I'm crazy, I embrace it.

CAMILLO

This is irresponsible, sir.

FLORIZEL

Maybe so, but it's keeping my promise and therefore it's the
right thing to do. Camillo, I wouldn't break my vow to
Perdita, not for the whole country, the sun, the earth, and

Be thereat glean'd, for all the sun sees or
 The close earth wombs or the profound sea hides
 In unknown fathoms, will I break my oath
 570 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
 To see him any more,— cast your good counsels
 Upon his passion; let myself and fortune
 575 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;
 And most opportune to our need I have
 A vessel rides fast by, but not prepared
 580 For this design. What course I mean to hold
 Shall nothing benefit your knowledge, nor
 Concern me the reporting.

CAMILLO

O my lord!
 I would your spirit were easier for advice,
 585 Or stronger for your need.

FLORIZEL

Hark, Perdita
[Drawing her aside]
 590 I'll hear you by and by.

CAMILLO

He's irremovable,
 595 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
 And that unhappy king, my master, whom
 600 I so much thirst to see.

FLORIZEL

Now, good Camillo;
 I am so fraught with curious business that
 I leave out ceremony.

CAMILLO

Sir, I think
 605 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
 To speak your deeds, not little of his care
 610 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
 Your gracious self, embrace but my direction:
 615 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
 Enjoy your mistress, from the whom, I see,
 620 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
 And bring him up to liking.

FLORIZEL

How, Camillo,
 625 May this, almost a miracle, be done?
 That I may call thee something more than man
 And after that trust to thee.

the sea. So, as my father's friend, please put in a good word
 for me when he realizes he misses me (since, by the way, I
 won't be seeing him anymore). Maybe I'll come back onto
 his good side in the future. You can let him know that
 Perdita and I are sailing away on a ship I have nearby (which
 is lucky, though I had it ready for something else). I won't
 tell you where we're going, though.

CAMILLO

Oh, sir, I wish you would listen to my advice; you might
 need it.

FLORIZEL

Perdita, come here. *[PERDITA and FLORIZEL move away to
 talk privately]*

[To CAMILLO] I'll listen to you in a minute.

CAMILLO

[To himself] I can't change his mind; he's decided to leave. I
 could make this work to my advantage and keep him safe,
 all the while being loyal to him and to Polixenes. This could
 be my chance to see Leontes again, who I've wanted to see
 so much.

FLORIZEL

Now, Camillo: I've been so caught up with all this that I've
 been rude.

CAMILLO

Sir, I think you're familiar with my reputation for service
 through the work I've done for your father.

FLORIZEL

Of course; he speaks very highly of you, and is always
 rewarding you for a job well done.

CAMILLO

Well, sir, since you know I've served your father well, it
 follows that I would serve just as well the person he loves
 the most (that is, you). Hear me out: if you encounter any
 difficulties on your journey, I can tell you where to go,
 where to take Perdita (since it's clear you don't want to be
 separated from her, unless some sort of catastrophe got in
 your way), and where to marry her. And, while you're gone,
 I can try to win your father over for you.

FLORIZEL

Camillo, that would basically be a miracle, but how can we
 do it? You would be a superhero and I'd never doubt you
 again.

CAMILLO

Have you thought on
630 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
Ourselves to be the slaves of chance and flies
635 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,
And there present yourself and your fair princess,
640 For so I see she must be, 'fore Leontes:
She shall be habitied as it becomes
The partner of your bed. Methinks I see
Leontes opening his free arms and weeping
His welcomes forth; asks thee the son forgiveness,
645 As 'twere i' the father's person; kisses the hands
Of your fresh princess; o'er and o'er divides him
'Twi' his unkindness and his kindness; the one
He chides to hell and bids the other grow
Faster than thought or time.

FLORIZEL

650 Worthy Camillo,
What colour for my visitation shall I
Hold up before him?

CAMILLO

Sent by the king your father
To greet him and to give him comforts. Sir,
655 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
What you must say; that he shall not perceive
660 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

A cause more promising
665 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;
Nothing so certain as your anchors, who
670 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
Affliction alters.

PERDITA

675 One of these is true:
I think affliction may subdue the cheek,
But not take in the mind.

CAMILLO

Yea, say you so?
There shall not at your father's house these
680 seven years
Be born another such.

CAMILLO

Have you thought about where you'll go?

FLORIZEL

Nowhere yet, but since this was all unplanned, we're flying
by the seat of our pants here.

CAMILLO

Then, listen to me: If you're determined to leave the
country, go to Sicily, introduce yourself, and call your bride
a princess. If she's going to visit Leontes's court, it's only
fitting that she be dressed as your royal wife should. I can
imagine Leontes greeting you with a hug, crying as he asks
your forgiveness as if you were your own father. He'll kiss
your princess's hands. His kindness will be a complete
departure from the cruelty you've heard about in the past.
He's over that now; he's kicked his evil ways to hell and has
been nurturing his better qualities all these years.

FLORIZEL

But Camillo, what reason for visiting can I make up?

CAMILLO

Say your father sent you to greet him and to bring him gifts.
I'll write down some instructions for how to behave toward
him and will pack all the gifts you'll deliver on your father's
behalf. All of it will support your story: that you've come to
make peace between him and your father.

FLORIZEL

I'll do exactly as you say. This makes a lot of sense.

CAMILLO

It's a better reason, at least, than your completely
haphazard journey overseas with no plan, no trajectory,
and no help, with no company but each other. Take care of
each other. A heart full of love can make even the worst
places bearable, and can bring a smile to your face even in
the midst of suffering.

PERDITA

Part of what you say is true: I think suffering ²⁶ may wipe
the smile from your face, but it can never change the state
of your mind.

CAMILLO

Oh, you think so? You're one-in-a-million, shepherd girl.

²⁶ Perdita's wisdom resonate with Leontes and Hermione's past conflict. Hermione remained faithful, despite extreme suffering; Leontes suffered so much in his mind that he destroyed the love he had.

FLORIZEL

My good Camillo,
She is as forward of her breeding as
She is i' the rear our birth.

CAMILLO

685 I cannot say 'tis pity
She lacks instructions, for she seems a mistress
To most that teach.

PERDITA

Your pardon, sir; for this
I'll blush you thanks.

FLORIZEL

690 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?
We are not furnish'd like Bohemia's son,
695 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
To have you royally appointed as if
700 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

AUTOLYCUS

Ha, ha! what a fool Honesty is! and Trust, his
sworn brother, a very simple gentleman! I have sold
all my trumpery; not a counterfeit stone, not a
705 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
hallowed and brought a benediction to the buyer:
710 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
wenches' song, that he would not stir his petticoats
715 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
purse; I could have filed keys off that hung in
720 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
with a whoo-bub against his daughter and the king's
725 son and scared my choughs from the chaff, I had not
left a purse alive in the whole army.

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

And those that you'll procure from King Leontes—

CAMILLO

730 Shall satisfy your father.

FLORIZEL

Camillo, she's so far beyond her lower-class origins; she's
basically as noble as you and I.

CAMILLO

I would say "it's too bad she hasn't had an education," but
she seems more capable than most teachers I know.

PERDITA

I beg your pardon, sir. I'm embarrassed, but thank you.

FLORIZEL

My beautiful Perdita! But we're in a sticky situation.
Camillo, you've rescued my father and now me; you're a
life-saver. What should we do? I don't have the clothes and
facilities I normally travel with as the prince of Bohemia,
and I won't be able to get those things in Sicily.

CAMILLO

Sir, don't worry. As you know, I have a lot of connections
there. I can make sure you're provided for, as surely as if I
were there myself. For example, sir—if I can ease your mind,
talk with me for a moment.

CAMILLO and FLORIZEL talk privately.

AUTOLYCUS comes back in.

AUTOLYCUS

Ha, ha! Honest men are idiots, and people who trust me are
just plain stupid. I've sold all my junk. I don't have a single
fake gem, ribbon, mirror, perfume, jewelry, book, ballad,
knife, belt, glove, shoelace, bracelet, or ring left in my bag.
They all swarmed to be the first to buy, as if my stuff were
some kind of holy charm. I took note of where they kept
their wallets and remembered that for later. The shepherd's
son (he's not all that bright, by the way) was so impressed
with the girls' song that he wouldn't budge until he learned
the tune and the words. That was the best advertisement,
since it sent all the others running to me to get the song for
themselves. There was nothing you could do; everyone was
singing this god-awful song, non-stop. While they were all
lying around, I took the opportunity to pick their pockets
and rifled through most of their purses. If that old man
hadn't come in and raised a ruckus about the shepherd's
daughter and the prince, scaring everyone away, I wouldn't
have left a single penny in anyone's wallet.

CAMILLO, FLORIZEL, and PERDITA come forward.

CAMILLO

No, my letters will get there before you arrive and will clear
up any doubt.

FLORIZEL

And the letters you'll get from King Leontes—

CAMILLO

—will satisfy your father.

PERDITA

Happy be you!
All that you speak shows fair.

CAMILLO

Who have we here?
735 *[Seeing AUTOLYCUS]*
We'll make an instrument of this, omit
Nothing may give us aid.

AUTOLYCUS

740 If they have overheard me now, why, hanging.

CAMILLO

How now, good fellow! why shakest thou so? Fear
not, man; here's no harm intended to thee.

AUTOLYCUS

I am a poor fellow, sir.

CAMILLO

Why, be so still; here's nobody will steal that from
745 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
change garments with this gentleman: though the
pennyworth on his side be the worst, yet hold thee,
750 there's some boot.

AUTOLYCUS

I am a poor fellow, sir.
[Aside]
755 I know ye well enough.

CAMILLO

Nay, prithee, dispatch: the gentleman is half
flayed already.

AUTOLYCUS

Are you in earnest, sir?
760 *[Aside]*
I smell the trick on't.

FLORIZEL

Dispatch, I prithee.

AUTOLYCUS

Indeed, I have had earnest: but I cannot with
765 conscience take it.

CAMILLO

Unbuckle, unbuckle.

FLORIZEL and AUTOLYCUS exchange garments

CAMILLO

Fortunate mistress,—let my prophecy
Come home to ye!— you must retire yourself
770 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
The truth of your own seeming; that you may—
For I do fear eyes over—to shipboard
775 Get undescried.

PERDITA

I see the play so lies
That I must bear a part.

PERDITA

Thank you! You're so generous.

CAMILLO

[Noticing AUTOLYCUS] Who have we here?

[To FLORIZEL and PERDITA] We'll make use of this; we can't
overlook anything that might help us.

AUTOLYCUS

If they just overheard me, I'm dead.

CAMILLO

Hello, sir! Why are you shaking? Don't be afraid; no one's
going to hurt you.

AUTOLYCUS

I'm a poor man, sir.

CAMILLO

Calm down, no one here is going to steal from you.
However, we would like to trade you for your poor man's
clothes, so get undressed (it's necessary, you see) and
change clothes with this gentleman. Though Florizel's
getting the worst end of the deal already, we'll give you
some money, too.

AUTOLYCUS

I'm a poor fellow, sir.

[To himself] I know exactly who you are.

CAMILLO

Come on, now, get your clothes off. Florizel's half-stripped
already.

AUTOLYCUS

Are you serious, sir?

[To himself] This must be a trick.

FLORIZEL

Get on with it, please.

AUTOLYCUS

Ah, I can see you're serious, but I can't take your clothes in
good conscience.

CAMILLO

Unbuckle, unbuckle.

FLORIZEL and AUTOLYCUS exchange clothes.

CAMILLO

Perdita, I hope my plan ²⁷ works out for your sake! You
need to hide yourself for the time being. Take Florizel's hat
and cover your face, change your clothes, and disguise
yourself as much as possible. I'm afraid you're being
watched, and you need to get onboard the ship undetected.

²⁷ Camillo calls his plan a
"prophecy"—a way of saying that he
hopes the couple's safe arrival and
happy marriage in Sicilia works out as
planned. The word "prophecy" echoes
the prophecy from Delphi about
Camillo's loyalty and Perdita's return.

PERDITA

I guess I'll play the part I've been given.

CAMILLO

No remedy.
Have you done there?

FLORIZEL

780 Should I now meet my father,
He would not call me son.

CAMILLO

Nay, you shall have no hat.
[Giving it to PERDITA]
785 Come, lady, come. Farewell, my friend.

AUTOLYCUS

Adieu, sir.

FLORIZEL

O Perdita, what have we twain forgot!
Pray you, a word.

CAMILLO

790 [Aside] What I do next, shall be to tell the king
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
795 I have a woman's longing.

FLORIZEL

Fortune speed us!
Thus we set on, Camillo, to the sea-side.

CAMILLO

The swifter speed the better.

Exeunt FLORIZEL, PERDITA, and CAMILLO

AUTOLYCUS

800 I understand the business, I hear it: to have an
open ear, a quick eye, and a nimble hand, is
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.
805 What an exchange had this been without boot! What
a boot is here with this exchange! Sure the gods do
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
810 clog at his heels: if I thought it were a piece of
honesty to acquaint the king withal, I would not
do't: I hold it the more knavery to conceal it;
and therein am I constant to my profession.

Re-enter Clown and Shepherd

AUTOLYCUS

815 Aside, aside; here is more matter for a hot brain:
every lane's end, every shop, church, session,
hanging, yields a careful man work.

CLOWN

See, see; what a man you are now!
There is no other way but to tell the king
820 she's a changeling and none of your flesh and blood.

SHEPHERD

Nay, but hear me.

CLOWN

Nay, but hear me.

CAMILLO

There's nothing we can do about it.

[To FLORIZEL] Are you all dressed?

FLORIZEL

My own father wouldn't recognize me now.

CAMILLO

No, you don't need a hat. [He gives the hat to PERDITA]
Come on, Perdita.

[To AUTOLYCUS] Goodbye, friend.

AUTOLYCUS

Goodbye, sir.

FLORIZEL

Perdita, are we forgetting anything? Let's talk. [They talk
privately]

CAMILLO

[To himself] Next I'll tell the king they escaped and where
they're headed. I'm hoping he'll go after them and that I'll
get to come along to see my beloved country, Sicily.

FLORIZEL

I pray we have a quick journey! Camillo, we're off to the
seaside.

CAMILLO

The quicker the better.

FLORIZEL, PERDITA, and CAMILLO leave.

AUTOLYCUS

I see what's going on here. As a pickpocket, it's necessary to
have an open ear, quick eye, fast hand—and a good nose,
too, so you can smell out the good places to steal. This is a
great time to be a criminal. He just traded me fancy clothes
for my rags; I gained everything, and he gained nothing!
The gods have clearly given me permission to do whatever I
want now. The prince himself is up to no good, running
away from his father with his whore in tow. Even if it were a
good deed to tell the king, I wouldn't do it. I think it's more
crafty to keep it a secret, and since I'm a crook, I'll do just
that.

The SHEPHERD and the SHEPHERD'S SON come back in.

AUTOLYCUS

[Seeing them] But wait, there's more work to be done.
Every street, store, church, meeting, and funeral can turn
into an opportunity if you're savvy.

CLOWN (Shepherd's son)

Well, look where you are now! The only thing to do is to tell
the king she's a [changeling](#)²⁸ and not your biological
daughter.

SHEPHERD

No, listen to me.

CLOWN (Shepherd's son)

No, listen to *me*.

²⁸ We remember that "changelings" are babies switched at birth by meddling fairies in English folklore.

SHEPHERD

Go to, then.

CLOWN

825 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 things, all but what she has with her: this being done, let the law go whistle: I warrant you.

SHEPHERD

830 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 me the king's brother-in-law.

CLOWN

835 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

Well, let us to the king: there is that in this fardel will make him scratch his beard.

AUTOLYCUS

840 *[Aside]* I know not what impediment this complaint may be to the flight of my master.

CLOWN

Pray heartily he be at palace.

AUTOLYCUS

845 *[Aside]* Though I am not naturally honest, I am so sometimes by chance: let me pocket up my pedlar's excrement.
[Taking off his false beard] How now, rustics! whither are you bound?

SHEPHERD

To the palace, an it like your worship.

AUTOLYCUS

850 Your affairs there, what, with whom, the condition 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

855 A lie; you are rough and hairy. Let me have no 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

860 Your worship had like to have given us one, if you had not taken yourself with the manner.

SHEPHERD

Go on, then.

CLOWN (Shepherd's son)

Since she's not actually part of your family, your family hasn't offended the king, and your family can't be punished by him. Show him the things you found with her—all the things that you kept secret all these years (except for whatever she took with her). Then, the law can have nothing to do with us, I promise you.

SHEPHERD

I'll tell the king everything, every word. And I'll tell him about Florizel's tricks, too. He hasn't been very truthful to his father or to me, considering he was about to make me a king's brother-in-law.

CLOWN (Shepherd's son)

If they had actually gotten married and you were his brother-in-law by now, he'd hate you even more, and the price on your head would be even higher.

AUTOLYCUS

[To himself] Very smart, boys!

SHEPHERD

Well, let's go to the king. The stuff in this bag will give him something to think about.

AUTOLYCUS

[To himself] I'm not sure how this will get in the way of Florizel's departure.

CLOWN (Shepherd's son)

Let's hope he's at the palace.

AUTOLYCUS

[To himself] I'm not naturally an honest man, but sometimes I'm honest by accident. I need to take off this traveling salesman disguise.

[AUTOLYCUS takes off his fake beard and speaks to the shepherds] Hello, peasants! Where are you going?

SHEPHERD

To the palace, [if it please you, sir](#) ²⁹.

²⁹ The Shepherd addresses Autolycus formally and with respect because, now that Autolycus has Florizel's fancy clothes on, the Shepherd can only assume he's royalty.

AUTOLYCUS

Tell me what business you have there, and with whom. Tell me what's in that bag, where you live, your names, your ages, how much money you have, who your parents are, and anything else that I should know.

CLOWN (Shepherd's son)

We're simple people, sir.

AUTOLYCUS

That's a lie! You're rough and hairy ³⁰. Don't lie to me. Only business people lie. But, since we soldiers pay them with money instead of pulling out our swords, they don't expose us for lying.

³⁰ Autolycus puns on the shepherd's son's word "plain," which can mean "simple" (humble) or "nondescript" (ordinary).

CLOWN (Shepherd's son)

It seemed like you were going to try to expose us for lying, but you've just revealed that you're the liar.

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?
 865 hath not my gait in it the measure of the court?
 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
 870 cap-a-pe; and one that will either push on or pluck
 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

875 I know not, an't like you.

CLOWN

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!
 880 Yet nature might have made me as these are,
 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

885 He seems to be the more noble in being fantastical:
 a great man, I'll warrant; I know by the picking
 on's teeth.

AUTOLYCUS

The fardel there? what's i' the fardel?
 Wherefore that box?

SHEPHERD

890 Sir, there lies such secrets in this fardel and box,
 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

895 Why, sir?

AUTOLYCUS

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

Are you a courtier or not, sir?

AUTOLYCUS

Whether I like it or not, I'm a courtier. Can't you see my
 courtly clothes? Don't I walk like a courtier? Smell like one?
 Look down my nose at you like one? Just because I'm
 asking you questions, you think I'm not a courtier? I'm a
 courtier from head to toe and I have the power to help you
 to court or to stop you right there. For that reason I
 command you to tell me everything.

SHEPHERD

I have some business with the king, sir.

AUTOLYCUS

And who is pleading your case to him?

SHEPHERD

I don't know, sir.

CLOWN (shepherd's son)

[To the SHEPHERD] "Advocate" is court-speak for
 "pheasant;" say you don't have one.

SHEPHERD

None, sir. I have no pheasant, male or female.

AUTOLYCUS

[To himself] Thank God I'm not an idiot! But, since there
 but for the grace of God go I, I won't look down on them.

CLOWN (shepherd's son)

He must be a really important courtier.

SHEPHERD

His clothes are fancy, but he's not wearing them elegantly.

CLOWN (shepherd's son)

The fact that he's a little crazy makes him seem even more
 noble. I could spot it a mile away.

AUTOLYCUS

What about the bag? What's in the bag? And why the box?

SHEPHERD

Sir, there are secrets in this bag and this box which are for
 the king alone. If I get the chance to speak to him, he'll
 know within the hour.

AUTOLYCUS

Old man, you're out of luck.

SHEPHERD

Why, sir?

AUTOLYCUS

The king is not at the palace. He went aboard a new ship to
 escape his sadness. Understand? The king is grieving.

SHEPHERD

900 So 'tis said, sir; about his son, that should have 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

905 Think you so, sir?

AUTOLYCUS

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 ram-tender, to offer to have his daughter come into grace! Some say he shall be stoned; but that death is too soft for him, say I draw our throne into a sheep-cote! all deaths are too few, the sharpest too easy.

915

CLOWN

Has the old man e'er a son, sir, do you hear. an't 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 aqua-vitae or some other hot infusion; then, raw as he is, and in the hottest day prognostication proclaims, shall 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 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 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.

920

925

930

935

CLOWN

He seems to be of great authority: close with him, 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.'

940

SHEPHERD

An't please you, sir, to undertake the business for 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

945 After I have done what I promised?

SHEPHERD

Ay, sir.

AUTOLYCUS

Well, give me the moiety. Are you a party in this business?

SHEPHERD

I've heard, sir, that he's grieving his son who almost married a shepherd's daughter.

AUTOLYCUS

If that shepherd isn't in jail already, he better run for it. The punishment he faces will be enough to break any man.

CLOWN (shepherd's son)

Do you think so, sir?

AUTOLYCUS

He'll suffer horribly, but so will his family and everyone within fifty degrees of relation to him. They'll all be hanged; it's a pity, but it's necessary. Can you believe some old shepherd was grooming his daughter to catch a prince? Some say he'll be stoned to death, but I say that's too lenient for someone who almost ruined our prince! No punishment is too harsh for him.

CLOWN (Shepherd's son)

Have you heard anything about the old man having a son, sir? If it please you, sir?

AUTOLYCUS

Oh, he has a son. He'll be skinned alive, drizzled in honey, thrown into a wasp's nest, and forced to stay there until he's nearly dead. Then they'll wake him up with a shot of whisky and stand him, raw flesh and all, on top of a brick wall to be baked in the sun and eaten by flies.

But why are we talking about these backstabbing traitors? We should be thankful they're going to be put to death for their crimes! Since you seem to be humble peasants, tell me what you're bringing to the king. If it's worth his attention, I'll bring you aboard his ship and introduce you to him with a kind recommendation. If there's anyone besides the king who can help you, it's me.

CLOWN (shepherd's son)

[To the SHEPHERD] He seems to have a lot of power. Let's make friends with him and give him a little money. You can control even power with money; give him a few coins and see how easy everything becomes. Remember he said we're condemned to be "stoned to death" and "skinned alive!"

SHEPHERD

If it please you to help us, sir, please take this money. I can give more afterward—as much as you like—and you can keep this young man as collateral until I do.

AUTOLYCUS

After I have done what I promised?

SHEPHERD

Yes, sir.

AUTOLYCUS

Well, give me that part of it.

[To the SHEPHERD'S SON] Are you a part of this business?

CLOWN

950 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, he'll be made an example.

CLOWN

955 Comfort, good comfort! We must to the king and show 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

960 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

965 Let's before as he bids us: he was provided to do us good.

Exeunt Shepherd and Clown

AUTOLYCUS

970 If I had a mind to be honest, I see Fortune would not suffer me: she drops booties in my mouth. I am 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 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 what shame else belongs to't. To him will I present them: there may be matter in it.

Exit

CLOWN (Shepherd's son)

Sort of, sir. Even though my share is small, I hope I won't be skinned out of it.

AUTOLYCUS

Oh, that's the punishment for the shepherd's son. Forget about him! They'll make an example out of him.

CLOWN (shepherd's son)

Isn't that comforting?

[To the SHEPHERD] We need to see the king and show him our secret stuff. He needs to know that she's neither your daughter nor my sister, otherwise we're dead.

[To AUTOLYCUS] Sir, I'll give you as much money as this old man did after the business is done. And you can hold on to me as collateral in the meantime.

AUTOLYCUS

I trust you. Walk down to the sea; I'll follow you from behind.

CLOWN (shepherd's son)

We are blessed to have met this man. Very blessed.

SHEPHERD

Let's get going and do what he says. God sent him to help us.

The SHEPHERD and the SHEPHERD'S SON leave.

AUTOLYCUS

If I were a good man, maybe I'd make even more money than I do as a criminal. Now I have a two-for-one deal: money and a chance to do Florizel, my former master, some good. Who knows how I can work this to my advantage? I'll bring these two idiots aboard to Polixenes. If he kicks them back to shore and their reason for seeing him turns out to be bogus, the worst that can happen is that he calls me "crook" (which doesn't offend me, since I've earned that title!). I'll present them to Polixenes; it may turn out to be something after all.

AUTOLYCUS leaves.

Act 5, Scene 1

Shakespeare

Enter LEONTES, CLEOMENES, DION, PAULINA, and Servants


CLEOMENES


5 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 trespass: at the last, Do as the heavens have done, forget your evil; With them forgive yourself.

Shakescleare Translation

LEONTES, CLEOMENES, DION, PAULINA, and servants enter.

CLEOMENES

Sir, you've done enough; you've grieved enough. You've redeemed every one of your sins. You've done more penitence  than you did wrong. For the last time: do what God does. Forget what your evil actions and forgive yourself.

 *Cleomenes uses religious language to describe Leontes' crimes ("sins") against Hermione, Perdita, and others, and his ensuing "penitence," or spiritual atonement. Thus, Shakespeare linguistically opens up the possibility of grace, which Christians believe God extends to those who confess and do penance for their sins.*

LEONTES

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 striketh 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.

PAULINA

You are one of those
Would have him wed again.

DION

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
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.
55 [To LEONTES] Care not for issue;
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,
60 Who hast the memory of Hermione,
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—

LEONTES

As long as I remember ² her, I can't forget my mistakes. I
still think about how badly I messed up, leaving my
kingdom without a prince and myself without a wife.

PAULINA

Too true, too true, sir. No woman alive compares to the
woman you killed.

LEONTES

I think you're right. Killed? The woman I killed? It's true, but
it hurts to hear you say that. It hurts to think that. Please,
don't say it often.

CLEOMENES

Ma'am, please stop. Anything you could possibly say would
be better than that.

PAULINA

You're one of those men who want him to marry again.

DION

If you're against him marrying, you're not thinking
realistically about our country or the fact that Leontes
needs an heir to his royal name ³. Consider what will
happen if he dies without an heir—the kingdom will
descend into warfare. We should thank God Hermione is in
heaven now. Only good could come of a new queen:
companionship for Leontes and the possibility of future
princes and princesses.

PAULINA

No one but Hermione herself deserves that role. Besides,
the gods intended this: didn't Apollo's oracle say that King
Leontes would not have an heir until his lost child was
found? It's about as likely that baby will return as it is that
Antigonus, my husband (who died with it) will come back to
life. You're advising the king to go against the gods' will.

[To LEONTES] Don't worry about having children; you'll find
someone to inherit the throne. Alexander the Great didn't
have children, so he left his to whoever was most worthy.
That worked out fine for him.

LEONTES

Paulina, you keep Hermione's memory alive. I wish I would
have listened to you before! If I had, I might be looking into
my queen's eyes at this very moment. I might be kissing her
precious lips—

² Recall the herbs Perdita
presented to the disguised Polixenes
(rosemary and rue) and what they
symbolized (remembrance and grace).
Hermione has been silent for much of
the play, and yet her presence is felt
throughout.

³ Dion and Paulina are talking of
two different kinds of "remembrance."
When Dion uses the word in the
original text, he looks to the future.
Leontes must marry again and have a
child through whom his name will be
remembered. Paulina has been
encouraging Leontes to dwell instead
on his past—to remember his sins
against Hermione and her goodness.

PAULINA

65 And left them
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
70 Again possess her corpse, and on this stage,
Where we're offenders now, appear soul-vex'd,
And begin, 'Why to me?'

PAULINA

Had she such power,
She had just cause.

LEONTES

75 She had; and would incense me
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
80 You chose her; then I'd shriek, that even your ears
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;
85 I'll have no wife, Paulina.

PAULINA

Will you swear
Never to marry but by my free leave?

LEONTES

Never, Paulina; so be blest my spirit!

PAULINA

Then, good my lords, bear witness to his oath.

CLEOMENES

90 You tempt him over-much.

PAULINA

Unless another,
As like Hermione as is her picture,
Affront his eye.

CLEOMENES

Good madam,—

PAULINA

95 I have done.
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
100 As, walk'd your first queen's ghost,
it should take joy
To see her in your arms.

LEONTES

My true Paulina,
We shall not marry till thou bid'st us.

PAULINA

105 That
Shall be when your first queen's again in breath;
Never till then.

PAULINA

Her lips were precious, and you should consider yourself
lucky they ever kissed you.

LEONTES

You speak the truth. I won't marry again, since there's no
one else like Hermione. If I married someone less wonderful
than Hermione, yet treated that second wife better than I
treated my first, I can only imagine Hermione's ghost would
possess her body and come back to haunt me, asking "Why
are you doing this to me?"

PAULINA

If she had that power, she'd be justified in doing so.

LEONTES

She would, and she'd force me to murder my new wife.

PAULINA

I should think so. If I were Hermione's ghost, I'd make you
look your new wife in the eye. I'd ask you to tell me why you
chose her. Then I'd shriek loud enough to burst your
eardrums, and say, "Remember me."

LEONTES

No eyes are as beautiful as hers were. Don't be afraid of me
marrying a wife, Paulina; I won't marry a new wife.

PAULINA

Will you swear never to marry unless I give you permission?

LEONTES

Never, Paulina, God bless my soul!

PAULINA

Then, gentlemen, bear witness to his promise.

CLEOMENES

You're playing to his weakness.

PAULINA

He won't marry again unless another woman, the spitting
image of Hermione, crosses his eye.

CLEOMENES

Ma'am—

PAULINA

I'm done. Yet, if you do intend to marry, sir, and won't be
stopped, give me the right to choose your new queen. She
won't be as young as your first one, but she'll be someone
that Hermione's ghost would be happy to see you with.

LEONTES

Paulina, I won't marry until you tell me.

PAULINA

That will be when your first queen breathes again, and not a
moment sooner.

*Enter a Gentleman***GENTLEMAN**

110 One that gives out himself Prince Florizel,
Son of Polixenes, with his princess, she
The fairest I have yet beheld, desires access
To your high presence.

LEONTES

115 What with him? he comes not
Like to his father's greatness: his approach,
So out of circumstance and sudden, tells us
'Tis not a visitation framed, but forced
By need and accident. What train?

GENTLEMAN

But few,
And those but mean.

LEONTES

120 His princess, say you, with him?

GENTLEMAN

Ay, the most peerless piece of earth, I think,
That e'er the sun shone bright on.

PAULINA

125 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
Have said and writ so, but your writing now
Is colder than that theme, 'She had not been,
Nor was not to be equal'd;'—thus your verse
130 Flow'd with her beauty once: 'tis shrewdly ebb'd,
To say you have seen a better.

GENTLEMAN

Pardon, madam:
The one I have almost forgot,—your pardon,—
The other, when she has obtain'd your eye,
135 Will have your tongue too. This is a creature,
Would she begin a sect, might quench the zeal
Of all professors else, make proselytes
Of who she but bid follow.

PAULINA

How! not women?

GENTLEMAN

140 Women will love her, that she is a woman
More worth than any man; men, that she is
The rarest of all women.

LEONTES

145 Go, Cleomenes;
Yourself, assisted with your honour'd friends,
Bring them to our embracement. Still, 'tis strange
He thus should steal upon us.

*Exeunt CLEOMENES and others***PAULINA**

150 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.

*A gentleman enters.***GENTLEMAN**

A man calling himself Prince Florizel, son of Polixenes, is
here with a beautiful princess. He's asked to see you.

LEONTES

What is he doing here? He's not arriving with his father's
usual style. This can't be planned—he must have been
forced to visit suddenly by some accident. Who did he bring
with him?

GENTLEMAN

Very few people, and most of them are peasants.

LEONTES

Did you say he has his princess with him?

GENTLEMAN

Yes, the most beautiful woman I think I've ever seen.

PAULINA

[To herself] Oh, Hermione, every new woman makes men
forget the old ones.

[To the gentleman] Sir, you yourself have said and written
that "Hermione was not, and will not be matched."
Considering how you used to rave about her beauty, you're
doing her a disservice now to say you've seen someone
more beautiful.

GENTLEMAN

I'm sorry, ma'am. I'd almost forgotten Hermione. When you
see this princess, though, you'll want to praise her, too.
She's like a goddess who converts everyone who sees her to
the religion of worshipping her.

PAULINA

Really? Women, too?

GENTLEMAN

Women will love her for being more worth their love than
men. Men will love her because she's the most special
woman that ever was.

LEONTES

Go, Cleomenes. You and some of these gentleman should
welcome them on my behalf. Still, it's strange for Florizel to
surprise us like this.

*CLEOMENES and the others leave.***PAULINA**

If Mamillius had lived to see this day, he'd be Florizel's age.
They were born about a month apart.

LEONTES

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
 155 Unfurnish me of reason. They are come.
 Your mother was most true to wedlock, prince;
 For she did print your royal father off,
 Conceiving you: were I but twenty-one,
 160 Your father's image is so hit in you,
 His very air, that I should call you brother,
 As I did him, and speak of something wildly
 By us perform'd before. Most dearly welcome!
 And your fair princess,—goddess!—O, alas!
 165 I lost a couple, that 'twixt heaven and earth
 Might thus have stood begetting wonder as
 You, gracious couple, do: and then I lost—
 All mine own folly—the society,
 Amity too, of your brave father, whom,
 170 Though bearing misery, I desire my life
 Once more to look on him.

FLORIZEL

By his command
 Have I here touch'd Sicilia and from him
 Give you all greetings that a king, at friend,
 175 Can send his brother: and, but infirmity
 Which waits upon worn times hath something seized
 His wish'd ability, he had himself
 The lands and waters 'twixt your throne and his
 Measured to look upon you; whom he loves—
 180 He bade me say so—more than all the sceptres
 And those that bear them living.

LEONTES

O my brother,
 Good gentleman! the wrongs I have done thee stir
 Afresh within me, and these thy offices,
 185 So rarely kind, are as interpreters
 Of my behind-hand slackness. Welcome hither,
 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,
 190 To greet a man not worth her pains, much less
 The adventure of her person?

FLORIZEL

Good my lord,
 She came from Libya.

LEONTES

Where the warlike Smalus,
 195 That noble honour'd lord, is fear'd and loved?

FLORIZEL

Most royal sir, from thence; from him, whose daughter
 His tears proclaim'd his, parting with her: thence,
 A prosperous south-wind friendly, we have cross'd,
 To execute the charge my father gave me
 200 For visiting your highness: my best train
 I have from your Sicilian shores dismiss'd;
 Who for Bohemia bend, to signify
 Not only my success in Libya, sir,
 But my arrival and my wife's in safety
 205 Here where we are.

LEONTES

The blessed gods
 Purge all infection from our air whilst you
 Do climate here! You have a holy father,

LEONTES

Please, no more—stop. You know that hearing that is like
 seeing him die all over again. But your words will keep me
 in check when I see this young man. Here they come.

[CLEOMENES, FLORIZEL, PERDITA, and gentlemen come back in]

Florizel, your mother should be proud: you look exactly like ⁴
 your father did when he was your age. So much so that
 I'm tempted to call you "brother," like I used to call him, and
 to start chatting with you about some wild escapades the
 two of us got up to! You are very welcome here. And your
 beautiful princess—she's like a goddess! Oh, I lost two
 children some time ago that would have been as wonderful
 to behold as you two are now. I lost—due to my own
 stupidity—your father's friendship, too. I'd do anything to
 see him again, no matter how painful it might be.

⁴ Leontes uses the metaphor of printing to demonstrate that Florizel's mother was faithful to Polixenes, because Florizel looks exactly like his father. In printing, identical copies are made from type set in a printing press. This is the same metaphor Paulina used to defend Perdita's legitimacy in Act 2.

FLORIZEL

I'm here in Sicily by his command. He's asked me to greet
 you not just as a king, but as a friend and brother. Though
 he wanted to come, he was held back by some unavoidable
 issues at home. He asked me to tell you that he loves you
 more than all the thrones and all the kings in the world.

LEONTES

Oh, my brother! I'm thinking through the wrong I did you all
 over again; your friendly message only makes me feel more
 guilty. You two are as welcome as spring is on earth. And
 has Polixenes put this beautiful girl through a long,
 uncomfortable boat journey just to see me, who's hardly
 worth the trouble?

FLORIZEL

Sir, she's from Libya ⁵.

⁵ In Shakespeare's day, all English actors (as far as we know) were white. Florizel's poorly-thought-out backstory—that Perdita is African—would be funny to contemporary audiences because of the actor's obviously white skin.

LEONTES

Where King Smalus rules, feared and loved by all?

FLORIZEL

Exactly, sir. He was sad to part with her, his daughter, and
 we've just come from there to follow my father's
 instructions to visit you. I didn't bring my gentlemen and
 servants here—I sent them back to Bohemia to tell
 everyone about our marriage, and that my wife and I have
 arrived safely here.

LEONTES

I hope you have a happy and healthy stay here! Your father
 is a righteous man, and I've sinned against him. As a
 punishment, the gods have left me without any children of

A graceful gentleman; against whose person,
 210 So sacred as it is, I have done sin:
 For which the heavens, taking angry note,
 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,
 215 Might I a son and daughter now have look'd on,
 Such goodly things as you!

Enter a Lord

LORD

Most noble sir,
 That which I shall report will bear no credit,
 Were not the proof so nigh. Please you, great sir,
 220 Bohemia greets you from himself by me;
 Desires you to attach his son, who has—
 His dignity and duty both cast off—
 Fled from his father, from his hopes, and with
 A shepherd's daughter.

LEONTES

225 Where's Bohemia? speak.

LORD

Here in your city; I now came from him:
 I speak amazedly; and it becomes
 My marvel and my message. To your court
 Whiles he was hastening, in the chase, it seems,
 230 Of this fair couple, meets he on the way
 The father of this seeming lady and
 Her brother, having both their country quitted
 With this young prince.

FLORIZEL

235 Camillo has betray'd me;
 Whose honour and whose honesty till now
 Endured all weathers.

LORD

Lay't so to his charge:
 He's with the king your father.

LEONTES

Who? Camillo?

LORD

240 Camillo, sir; I spake with him; who now
 Has these poor men in question. Never saw I
 Wretches so quake: they kneel, they kiss the earth;
 Forswear themselves as often as they speak:
 Bohemia stops his ears, and threatens them
 245 With divers deaths in death.

PERDITA

O my poor father!
 The heaven sets spies upon us, will not have
 Our contract celebrated.

LEONTES

You are married?

FLORIZEL

250 We are not, sir, nor are we like to be;
 The stars, I see, will kiss the valleys first:
 The odds for high and low's alike.

LEONTES

My lord,
 Is this the daughter of a king?

my own. Your father is blessed to have you! I would be
 blessed, too, if I had a son and daughter like you two with
 me now!

A LORD enters.

LORD

Sir, you'll hardly believe this, but you have to because the
 one who sent me is about to arrive: Polixenes sends you his
 greetings. He asks that you hold his son here—you see, his
 son ran away from his father and his responsibilities with a
 shepherd's daughter.

LEONTES

Tell me, where's Polixenes?

LORD

Here in your city; I just came from him. And (it may seem
 crazy . . . I can hardly believe it myself) while Polixenes was
 on his way to your court, chasing this young couple, he ran
 into this girl's father and brother, who have also fled the
 country.

FLORIZEL

Camillo has betrayed me, though he's always been loyal
 and honest before now.

LORD

You can tell him yourself; he's with your father, the king.

LEONTES

Who, Camillo?

LORD

Camillo, sir. I spoke with him and with the shepherds. I've
 never seen men so afraid: they kneel, kiss the ground, and
 swear every time they speak. Polixenes can hardly listen to
 them; he keeps threatening them with death.

PERDITA

Oh, my poor father! The spies have found us, and now we
 won't get to celebrate our wedding.

LEONTES


Aren't you married?

FLORIZEL

We're not, sir, and probably won't be. Pigs will fly before
 that happens 🐷. The odds don't seem to be in our favor.

LEONTES

Sir, is she a princess?

 In the original text, Florizel says that it's more likely for the stars to fall from the heavens and touch the lowest points on earth than it is for his marriage to take place.

FLORIZEL

255 She is,
When once she is my wife.

LEONTES

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
260 Where you were tied in duty, and as sorry
Your choice is not so rich in worth as beauty,
That you might well enjoy her.

FLORIZEL

Dear, look up:
Though Fortune, visible an enemy,
265 Should chase us with my father, power no jot
Hath she to change our loves. Beseech you, sir,
Remember since you owed no more to time
Than I do now: with thought of such affections,
Step forth mine advocate; at your request
270 My father will grant precious things as trifles.

LEONTES

Would he do so, I'd beg your precious mistress,
Which he counts but a trifle.

PAULINA

Sir, my liege,
Your eye hath too much youth in't: not a month
275 'Fore your queen died, she was more worth such gazes
Than what you look on now.

LEONTES

I thought of her,
Even in these looks I made.
280 *[To FLORIZEL]*
But your petition
Is yet unanswer'd. I will to your father:
Your honour not o'erthrown by your desires,
I am friend to them and you: upon which errand
285 I now go toward him; therefore follow me
And mark what way I make: come, good my lord.

Exeunt

FLORIZEL

She will be, once she's my wife.

LEONTES

That "once" isn't likely to come to pass now that your
father's on his way. I'm very sorry to hear that you're at
odds with your father; you should be obedient to him. And
I'm sorry, too, that you won't be able to enjoy this girl, since
her station in life does not match her beauty.

FLORIZEL

[To PERDITA] Chin up, sweetheart. Nothing that my father
does can change the love we have for each other.

[To LEONTES] Sir, I beg you—think of what you were like
when you were my age and in love. Defend me to my father.
If you ask, he'll give you an expensive gift as quickly as if it
were a cheap one.

LEONTES

If he'd really do anything, I'd ask him to give me your
girlfriend, who he clearly doesn't care for.

PAULINA

Sir? My lord! The way you're looking at her is hardly
appropriate. Your queen, before she died, was much more
beautiful than the girl you see now.

LEONTES

I was thinking of her even while I looked at this young girl.

[To FLORIZEL] I haven't answered your question. I will
speak to your father. Your love hasn't compromised your
duties as prince; I support you and your actions. I'll go to
him now; come with me and watch what I do. Come, sir.

They all leave.

Act 5, Scene 2

Shakespeare

Enter AUTOLYCUS and a Gentleman

AUTOLYCUS

Beseech you, sir, were you present at this relation?

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

Shakesclear Translation

AUTOLYCUS and a gentleman come in.

AUTOLYCUS

And, sir, were you there when all this was said?

FIRST GENTLEMAN

I was there when they opened the bag, heard the old
shepherd explain how he found it, and that's when, after a
moment of shock, we were all told to leave. But I thought I
heard the shepherd say that he found the child.

AUTOLYCUS

I'd love to know what happened next.

FIRST GENTLEMAN

I'm not telling the story very well, but the king and Camillo
seemed happy to see each other. They stared at each other
so intensely it seemed like their eyes would pop out of their
heads. They could hardly speak, but they said it all in 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 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.

15 [Enter another Gentleman]

20 Here comes a gentleman that haply knows more. The 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.

25 [Enter a third gentleman]

30 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

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 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 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 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 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 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

65 What, pray you, became of Antigonus, that carried hence the child?

THIRD GENTLEMAN

Like an old tale still, which will have matter to 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?

hugs and gestures. They looked like they'd seen the world rebuilt—or destroyed. They were filled with wonder. But no one who was watching could tell if they were joyful, or sad. It was the extreme version of one of those two.

[SECOND GENTLEMAN comes in] Here comes another gentleman who probably knows more. What's the news, Rogero?

SECOND GENTLEMAN

Nothing but sensations! The oracle is fulfilled, the king's daughter is found. So many wonderful things have happened in the last hour that even ballad-writers won't be able to express it.

[THIRD GENTLEMAN comes in]

Here comes Lady Paulina's servant; he can tell you more.

[To the THIRD GENTLEMAN] How are you, sir? This news sounds so much like a fairytale that it can hardly be true. Has the king found his heir?

THIRD GENTLEMAN

It's really true, if we can believe the circumstances. You might have to see the evidence to believe it: Hermione's scarf, her necklace, letters in Antigonus's handwriting, the girl's resemblance to her mother, her obvious nobility which proves she's not a shepherdess . . . all this and more proves that she's the king's daughter. Did you see the meeting of the two kings?

SECOND GENTLEMAN

No.

THIRD GENTLEMAN

You missed a sight to be seen; I can't really explain it in words. They were so overjoyed that both of them were moved to tears. They looked up to heaven and held each other's hands. They looked so much alike that we could only tell them apart by their clothes! Leontes—who was about to leap out of his skin, he was so happy he found his daughter—cries out, "Oh, your mother, your mother!" as if the joy made his grief new, too. He asked Polixenes for forgiveness, then hugged his new son-in-law, then hugged his daughter again, then thanked the old shepherd who stood by like an old watchman. I have never heard of anything like it. No report can fully sum it up. Description doesn't do it justice.

SECOND GENTLEMAN

What happened to Antigonus, who carried the baby to Bohemia?

THIRD GENTLEMAN

That's like something out of a fairytale, too, which you won't believe no matter how many times I tell it. He was torn to pieces by a bear, according to the shepherd's son. We should believe him because he's fairly stupid, but also because he had some handkerchiefs and rings of Antigonus' that Paulina recognized.

FIRST GENTLEMAN

What happened to his ship and his servants?

THIRD GENTLEMAN

75 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
80 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

85 The dignity of this act was worth the audience of
kings and princes; for by such was it acted.

THIRD GENTLEMAN

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
90 death, with the manner how she came to't bravely
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
95 heart wept blood. Who was most marble there changed
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,
100 which is in the keeping of Paulina,— a piece many
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
105 ape: he so near to Hermione hath done Hermione that
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.

SECOND GENTLEMAN

110 I thought she had some great matter there in hand;
for she hath privately twice or thrice a day, ever
since the death of Hermione, visited that removed
house. Shall we thither and with our company piece
the rejoicing?

FIRST GENTLEMAN

115 Who would be thence that has the benefit of access?
every wink of an eye some new grace will be born:
our absence makes us unthrifty to our knowledge.
Let's along.

Exeunt Gentlemen

AUTOLYCUS

120 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
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
125 sea-sick, and himself little better, extremity of
weather continuing, this mystery remained
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.
130 *[Enter Shepherd and Clown]*
Here come those I have done good to against my will,

THIRD GENTLEMAN

The shepherd saw them wreck at the same instant that
Antigonus died, so everything that brought the child to
them disappeared at the moment she was found. But poor
Paulina—she was torn between joy and grief! She was
crying for her husband, but rejoicing that the oracle was
fulfilled. She kept hugging the princess, as if she would hold
her to her heart forever so that she'd never be lost again.

FIRST GENTLEMAN

Kings and princes could have watched a play like that,
considering kings and princes were the actors.

THIRD GENTLEMAN

One of the most beautiful parts of it (it brought tears to my
eyes) was when the king explained how the queen died,
and the poor princess listened to the whole thing, crying,
saying "Oh, no!" and practically bleeding tears. I think my
heart wept blood. Even the most unemotional people there
nearly fainted, and everyone cried. If the whole world had
seen it, the sadness would have been universal.

FIRST GENTLEMAN

Did they go back to the court?

THIRD GENTLEMAN

No, because the princess just heard about the statue of her
mother, which Paulina has. It's been in the works for years
and was just finished by Julio Romano, the Italian master,
whose sculptures are incredibly lifelike. His "Hermione"
statue looks so much like her that you'd be tempted to
speak to it and wait for an answer. They've all hurried to see
the statue, and they're planning to have dinner there.

SECOND GENTLEMAN

I thought she must have some important business in that
isolated house, since she's visited it alone two or three
times a day every day since Hermione's death. Should we
head that way and join the celebration?

FIRST GENTLEMAN

Would anyone say "no" to that? Something incredible
happens every time you blink! The longer we stay here, the
less we'll see. Let's go.

The gentlemen leave.

AUTOLYCUS

If I weren't a thief, I'd be getting a promotion right about
now. I brought the old man and his son onboard the
prince's ship. I told him what I'd heard about the bag and
whatnot, but he was too busy worrying about the
shepherd's daughter (as he thought she was then), who was
sea-sick, and then he got sea-sick, too because of the
storm. So the mystery remained unsolved. But it's all the
same to me; if I'd figured out this secret, it wouldn't have
matched up very well with my other crimes.

[The SHEPHERD and the SHEPHERD'S SON come in] Here
come the guys I helped against my will, already decked out
in their new, fancy clothes.

and already appearing in the blossoms of their fortune.

SHEPHERD

135 Come, boy; I am past moe 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 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

145 And so have I, boy.

CLOWN

So you have: but I was a gentleman born before my 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

155 Ay; or else 'twere hard luck, being in so 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

160 Prithee, son, do; for we must be gentle, now we are gentlemen.

CLOWN

Thou wilt amend thy life?

AUTOLYCUS

Ay, an it like your good worship.

CLOWN

Give me thy hand: I will swear to the prince thou art as honest a true fellow as any is in Bohemia.

SHEPHERD

165 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

170 If it be ne'er so false, a true gentleman may swear it in the behalf of his friend: and I'll swear to

SHEPHERD

My son, I won't be having any more children, but your sons and daughters will all be born gentlemen and women.

CLOWN (shepherd's son)

[To AUTOLYCUS] Good to see you, sir. You chose not to fight with me the other day because I wasn't a gentleman. See these clothes? Can you look at these and still think I wasn't born a gentleman? You might as well say these clothes weren't born gentlemen! Call me a liar. Tell me I wasn't born a gentleman.

AUTOLYCUS

I know you are now, sir, born a gentleman.

CLOWN (shepherd's son)

Yep, I was born a gentleman about four hours ago!

SHEPHERD

Me, too, son.

CLOWN (shepherd's son)

That's true, but I was born a gentleman before my father. You see, the king's son took me by the hand, 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 we all cried. Those were the first gentlemanly tears that we ever cried.

SHEPHERD

We may live, son, to cry many more.

CLOWN (shepherd's son)

If we don't live to cry again, that'll be bad luck, considering how good we have it now.

AUTOLYCUS

I am very sorry, sir, for all the wrong I've done you, sir. Please report good things about me to the prince my master.

SHEPHERD

[To the SHEPHERD'S SON] You should do it, son. We should be "gentle" now that we're gentlemen.

CLOWN (shepherd's son)

You'll change your ways?

AUTOLYCUS

Of course, sir, if you like.

CLOWN (shepherd's son)

Let's shake hands. [They shake hands] I'll swear to the prince that you're as honest and loyal as any man in Bohemia.

SHEPHERD

You can say it, but don't swear it.

CLOWN (shepherd's son)

I can't swear it, now that I'm a gentleman? If the peasants and the middle class can swear, I can swear, too.

SHEPHERD

But what if it's not true, son?

CLOWN (shepherd's son)

If you believe it should be true, a true gentleman can swear it on behalf of his friend. I'll swear to the prince that you're

175 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 wouldst
be a tall fellow of thy hands.

AUTOLYCUS

I will prove so, sir, to my power.

CLOWN

180 Ay, by any means prove a tall fellow: if I do not
wonder how thou darest venture to be drunk, not
being a tall fellow, trust me not. Hark! the kings
and the princes, our kindred, are going to see the
queen's picture. Come, follow us: we'll be thy
good masters.

Exeunt

hardworking and not likely to get drunk, but I know you're
not hardworking and very likely to get drunk. So I hope
that, when I *do* swear it, you'll make a better effort to be
hardworking and not a drunk.

AUTOLYCUS

I'll try to live up to that, sir, to the best of my ability.

CLOWN (Shepherd's son)

Yes, and please try to work hard (although it's fine by me if
you get a little drunk once in a while). But wait! The kings
and the prince (our new family) are going to see the queen's
statue. Come on and follow us. We'll take care of you.

They all leave.

Act 5, Scene 3

Shakespeare

*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

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.
25 *[PAULINA draws a curtain, and discovers HERMIONE
standing like a statue]*
I like your silence, it the more shows off
Your wonder: but yet speak; first, you, my liege,
30 Comes it not something near?

LEONTES

Her natural posture!
Chide me, dear stone, that I may say indeed
Thou art Hermione; or rather, thou art she
In thy not chiding, for she was as tender
35

Shakescleare Translation

*LEONTES, POLIXENES, FLORIZEL, PERDITA, CAMILLO,
PAULINA, lords, and servants enter.*

LEONTES

Paulina, you've comforted me so much.

PAULINA

If there's anything I didn't do correctly, know that I meant
to do it better. You've repaid me for everything, and now
you, Polixenes, Perdita, and Florizel have come to visit my
little house. It's extremely gracious for you to be here, and I
can never thank you enough.

LEONTES

Oh, Paulina, you know I'd do anything for you. But I came to
see the statue of my queen. But I've passed through your
entire gallery—which was great, and all—without my
daughter seeing the statue of her mother that she came to
see.

PAULINA

When Hermione was alive, no one was as beautiful as she
was. It's the same with her statue; I'm sure you've never
seen another man-made thing that's as perfect. That's why
I keep it hidden here. Here it is; get ready to see that which
is to life as sleep is to death—the closest you can come
without being the actual thing. Take a look, and tell me
what you think.

*[PAULINA pulls back a curtain, revealing HERMIONE
standing like a statue]*

I like your silence; it shows how in awe you are. But say
something!

[To LEONTES] You first, sir. Does it look anything like her?

LEONTES

Exactly the way she used to stand!

[To HERMIONE] Statue, if you would reprimand me, I'd say
you were the real Hermione. Actually, you're more like her

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

So much the more our carver's excellence;
40 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
Now piercing to my soul. O, thus she stood,
45 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,
There's magic in thy majesty, which has
50 My evils conjured to remembrance and
From thy admiring daughter took the spirits,
Standing like stone with thee.

PERDITA

And give me leave,
And do not say 'tis superstition, that
55 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!
The statue is but newly fix'd, the colour's Not dry.

CAMILLO

60 My lord, your sorrow was too sore laid on,
Which sixteen winters cannot blow away,
So many summers dry; scarce any joy
Did ever so long live; no sorrow
But kill'd itself much sooner.

POLIXENES

65 Dear my brother,
Let him that was the cause of this have power
To take off so much grief from you as he
Will piece up in himself.

PAULINA

Indeed, my lord,
70 If I had thought the sight of my poor image
Would thus have wrought you,—for the stone is mine—
I'd not have show'd it.

LEONTES

Do not draw the curtain.

PAULINA

No longer shall you gaze on't, lest your fancy
75 May think anon it moves.

LEONTES

Let be, let be.
Would I were dead, but that, methinks, already—
What was he that did make it? See, my lord,
Would you not deem it breathed? and that those veins
80 Did verily bear blood?

because you're not reprimanding me, considering she was
as sweet as a baby and as gentle as grace itself.

[To PAULINA] But, Paulina, Hermione didn't have that many
wrinkles. She wasn't as old as this statue seems.

POLIXENES

Not nearly as old.

PAULINA

That's the sculptor's skill: he made her look like she would
if she lived now, sixteen years later.

LEONTES

And she might have done so; seeing it makes me happy but
fills me with guilt, too. She looked just like this when I first
fell in love with her, though she was warm and living, not
cold and made of stone. I'm ashamed. Is the statue
reprimanding me for being more stony and cold-hearted
than it?

[To HERMIONE] My queen, your magic has conjured up all
the crimes I committed against you and your daughter,
making me think neither of you could ever forgive me.

PERDITA

Call me superstitious, but I'm going to kneel and ask for her
blessing. [PERDITA kneels in front of HERMIONE]


Ma'am, you died just when I was born. Let me kiss your
hand. [PERDITA moves to kiss HERMIONE's hand]

PAULINA

Oh, wait! The statue was just painted and it's not dry yet.
[LEONTES begins to cry]

CAMILLO

[To LEONTES] Sir, you had a lot to grieve for, but
sixteen years should have helped ease that pain. Few
joys last that long, and any other sorrow would have fizzled
out long before now.

 Camillo talks about passing years
as passing "winters," which aren't
made any less dark by the "summers"
that accompany them, to describe
Leontes's continuous grief.

POLIXENES

My brother, I wish I could bear some of that grief for you.

PAULINA

Sir, if I knew my statue would make you so upset—since it
belongs to me—I wouldn't have showed it to you.

LEONTES

[Still crying] Don't close the curtain.

PAULINA

You shouldn't look at it anymore, or you'll start to
hallucinate that it's moving.

LEONTES

Let it be, let it be. I wish I were dead. Except . . . I think . . .
already . . . who made this?

[To POLIXENES] Look, doesn't it look like it's breathing?
Doesn't it look like those veins have blood running through
them?

POLIXENES

Masterly done:
The very life seems warm upon her lip.

LEONTES

The fixture of her eye has motion in't,
As we are mock'd with art.

PAULINA

85 I'll draw the curtain:
My lord's almost so far transported that
He'll think anon it lives.

LEONTES

O sweet Paulina,
Make me to think so twenty years together!
90 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
I could afflict you farther.

LEONTES

Do, Paulina;
95 For this affliction has a taste as sweet
As any cordial comfort. Still, methinks,
There is an air comes from her: what fine chisel
Could ever yet cut breath? Let no man mock me,
For I will kiss her.

PAULINA

100 Good my lord, forbear:
The ruddiness upon her lip is wet;
You'll mar it if you kiss it, stain your own
With oily painting. Shall I draw the curtain?

LEONTES

No, not these twenty years.

PERDITA

105 So long could I
Stand by, a looker on.

PAULINA

Either forbear,
Quit presently the chapel, or resolve you
For more amazement. If you can behold it,
110 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
By wicked powers.

LEONTES

What you can make her do,
115 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

It is required
You do awake your faith. Then all stand still;
120 On: those that think it is unlawful business
I am about, let them depart.

LEONTES

Proceed:
No foot shall stir.

POLIXENES

It's very well done. She looks almost alive.

LEONTES

Her eyes almost look like they're moving; this art is too
realistic.

PAULINA

I'll close the curtain. The king is so carried away, next he'll
think that it lives.

LEONTES

Oh, Paulina, I want to believe that she lives. No perception
of reality could be as blissful as that kind of [insanity](#) .
Leave it alone.

PAULINA

Sir, I'm sorry I've gotten you so worked up. But I could go
one step further.

LEONTES

Do it, Paulina. This suffering is sweet to me.

[Moving closer to HERMIONE] It looks like she's breathing.
What artist could sculpt breath? No one make fun of me; I'm
going to kiss her.

PAULINA

Sir, restrain yourself. The red paint on her lips is wet. You'll
smudge it if you kiss it, and you'll get oil paint on your own
face. Should I close the curtain?

LEONTES

No, never.

PERDITA

I could stand here forever, too, just looking.

PAULINA

Either restrain yourself, leave the chapel, or get ready for
more amazement. If you can handle it, I'll make the statue
move, walk down, and take you by the hand. But I'm afraid
you'll think I'm a witch using [black magic](#) .

LEONTES


I'll watch anything you can make her do. I'll listen to
anything you can make her say. Surely it's as easy to make
her speak as it is to make her move?


PAULINA

You need to have faith. Everyone stand still. And anyone
who thinks I'm doing something I shouldn't can leave.

LEONTES

Proceed. No one will leave.

 Believing *Hermione is alive so that he can love her again* is the inverse of Leontes' delusion in Acts 1-3, when he wanted her dead so that he could take his revenge on her.

 In Shakespeare's time, people believed in witchcraft. King James I had published his own book about witches only a few years before this play. Black magic was associated with satanism, the rejection or subversion of Christian faith (and, in Protestant England, with Catholicism).

PAULINA

Music, awake her; strike! *[Music]*

- 125 '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,
Bequeath to death your numbness, for from him
130 Dear life redeems you. You perceive she stirs:
[HERMIONE comes down]
Start not; her actions shall be holy as
135 You hear my spell is lawful: do not shun her
Until you see her die again; for then
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

- 140 O, she's warm!
If this be magic, let it be an art
Lawful as eating.

POLIXENES

She embraces him.

CAMILLO

- She hangs about his neck:
145 If she pertain to life let her speak too.

POLIXENES

Ay, and make't manifest where she has lived,
Or how stolen from the dead.

PAULINA

- That she is living,
Were it but told you, should be hooted at
150 Like an old tale: but it appears she lives,
Though yet she speak not. Mark a little while.
Please you to interpose, fair madam: kneel
And pray your mother's blessing. Turn, good lady;
Our Perdita is found.

HERMIONE

- 155 You gods, look down
And from your sacred vials pour your graces
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,
160 Knowing by Paulina that the oracle
Gave hope thou wast in being, have preserved
Myself to see the issue.

PAULINA

- There's time enough for that;
Lest they desire upon this push to trouble
165 Your joys with like relation. Go together,
You precious winners all; your exultation
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,
170 Lament till I am lost.

LEONTES

- O, peace, Paulina!
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;
175

PAULINA

Music, awake her now! *[Music begins to play]*

[To HERMIONE] It's time, come down. Don't be a statue anymore. Come to us and you'll amaze all of us who are watching. Come, I'll close your grave. Move! Come on, now, forget death and come back to life.

[To LEONTES and the others] Look, she's moving.

[HERMIONE steps down from the pedestal and moves toward LEONTES]

[To LEONTES] Don't be afraid! Everything she does is as safe as my spell, like I told you. Don't reject her until you see her die again, or you'll be killing her a second time. *[HERMIONE reaches out her hand, but LEONTES steps back]* No, give her your hand. You won her over when she was young. Now that you're old, is she the one who has to win you?

LEONTES

Wow, she's warm! If this is from your magic spell, your magic should be considered an art as natural as eating.

POLIXENES

She's hugging him.

CAMILLO

She's hanging on his neck. If she's so lifelike, she should speak, too.

POLIXENES

Yes, and tell us where she's been living, or how she's come back from the dead.

PAULINA

If I just told you she was alive, you would write it off as an old fairytale ⁴. But even though she hasn't spoken, it certainly looks like she's living. Wait a minute.

[To PERDITA] Speak to her, ma'am. Kneel and ask for your mother's blessing.

[PERDITA kneels behind HERMIONE]

[To HERMIONE] Turn around, my lady. Our Perdita ⁵ is found.

HERMIONE

[Looking up to heaven] God bless you, daughter. Tell me, sweetheart: how did you escape? Where did you live? How did you get back to your father's court? You should know: Paulina told me that the oracle gave us hope that you were still alive. I kept myself going just to see you.

PAULINA

There's plenty of time for that and to tell all our stories. Go on, all of you lucky people! Go to the feast. Meanwhile, I'll find some lonely place to mourn my husband until I die.

LEONTES

Oh hush, Paulina. I'll give you a husband, since you gave me a wife. She and I have just been married again by exchanging our promises. You found her, and I have no idea how, since I was sure I saw her die and I prayed at her grave

⁴ This is the fourth reference in the play to "tales." Mamillius told his mother a tale in the nursery; the gentlemen who related Leontes and Perdita's reunion to Autolycus called it an "old tale;" and the play is called *The Winter's Tale*, another term for an "old wives' tale" or "fairytale."

⁵ The text includes an obvious pun on Perdita's name: the "lost" one is found.

But how, is to be question'd; for I saw her,
 As I thought, dead, and have in vain said many
 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,
 180 And take her by the hand, whose worth and honesty
 Is richly noted and here justified
 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
 185 My ill suspicion. This is your son-in-law,
 And son unto the king, who, heavens directing,
 Is troth-plight to your daughter. Good Paulina,
 Lead us from hence, where we may leisurely
 Each one demand an answer to his part
 190 Perform'd in this wide gap of time since first
 We were dissever'd: hastily lead away.

Exeunt

for years. I won't have to look far to find a husband for you.

[He leads CAMILLO over to PAULINA] Come on, Camillo, and take her by the hand. Polixenes and I can vouch for him as a valuable, trustworthy man.

[To HERMIONE] Let's leave this place. But first, take a look at my brother, Polixenes. Both of you, please forgive me for ever being suspicious of your friendship. *[Motioning to FLORIZEL]* This is your son-in-law, Polixenes's son, who's engaged to your daughter.

[To PAULINA] Paulina, lead us out of here. We'll take all the time in the world asking each other what we've been up to in the many years since we were all separated. Quickly, lead the way!

They all exit.

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