

The Winters Tale

William Shakespeare

The Winters Tale

Actus Primus. Scoena Prima.

Enter Camillo and Archidamus.

Arch. If you shall chance (Camillo) to visit Bohemia, on the like occasion whereon my seruices are now on-foot, you shall see (as I haue said) great difference betwixt our Bohemia, and your Sicilia

Cam. I thinke, this comming Summer, the King of Sicilia meanes to pay Bohemia the Visitation, which hee iustly owes him

Arch. Wherein our Entertainment shall shame vs: we will be iustified in our Loues: for indeed- Cam. 'Beseech you- Arch. Verely I speake it in the freedome of my knowledge: we cannot with such magnificence- in so rare- I know not what to say- Wee will giue you sleepe Drinkes, that your Sences (vn-intelligent of our insufficiency) may, though they cannot prayse vs, as little accuse vs

Cam. You pay a great deale to deare, for what's giuen freely

Arch. 'Beleeue me, I speake as my vnderstanding instructs me, and as mine honestie puts it to vtterance

Cam. Sicilia cannot shew himselfe ouer-kind to Bohemia: They were trayn'd together in their Childhoods; and there rooted betwixt them then such an affection, which cannot chuse but braunch now. Since their more mature Dignities, and Royall Necessities, made seperation of their Societie, their Encounters (though not Personall) hath been Royally attorneyed with enter-change of Gifts, Letters, louing Embassies, that they haue seem'd to be together, though absent: shooke hands, as ouer a Vast; and embrac'd as it were from the ends of opposed Winds. The Heauens continue their Loues

Arch. I thinke there is not in the World, either Malice or Matter, to alter it. You haue an vnspeakable comfort of your young Prince Mamillius: it is a Gentleman of the greatest Promise, that euer came into my Note

Cam. I very well agree with you, in the hopes of him: it is a gallant Child; one, that (indeed) Physicks the Subject, makes old hearts fresh: they that went on Crutches ere he was borne, desire yet their life, to see him a Man

Arch. Would they else be content to die?

Cam. Yes; if there were no other excuse, why they should desire to liue

Arch. If the King had no Sonne, they would desire to liue on Crutches till he had one.

Exeunt.

Scoena Secunda.

Enter Leontes, Hermione, Mamillius, Polixenes, Camillo.

Pol. Nine Changes of the Watry-Starre hath been
The Shepherds Note, since we haue left our Throne
Without a Burthen: Time as long againe
Would be fill'd vp (my Brother) with our Thanks,
And yet we should, for perpetuitie,
Goe hence in debt: And therefore, like a Cypher
(Yet standing in rich place) I multiply
With one we thanke you, many thousands moe,
That goe before it

Leo. Stay your Thanks a while,
And pay them when you part

Pol. Sir, that's to morrow:
I am question'd by my feares, of what may chance,
Or breed vpon our absence, that may blow
No sneaping Winds at home, to make vs say,
This is put forth too truly: besides, I haue stay'd
To tyre your Royaltie

Leo. We are tougher (Brother)
Then you can put vs to't

Pol. No longer stay

Leo. One Seue' night longer

Pol. Very sooth, to morrow

Leo. Wee'le part the time betweene's then: and in that
Ile no gaine-saying

Pol. Presse me not ('beseech you) so:
There is no Tongue that moues; none, none i'th' World
So soone as yours, could win me: so it should now,
Were there necessitie in your request, although
'Twere needfull I deny'd it. My Affaires
Doe euen drag me home-ward: which to hinder,
Were (in your Loue) a Whip to me; my stay,
To you a Charge, and Trouble: to saue both,
Farewell (our Brother.)
Leo. Tongue-ty'd our Queene? speake you

Her. I had thought (Sir) to haue held my peace, vntill
You had drawne Oathes from him, not to stay: you (Sir)
Charge him too coldly. Tell him, you are sure
All in Bohemia's well: this satisfaction,
The by-gone-day proclaym'd, say this to him,
He's beat from his best ward

Leo. Well said, Hermione

Her. To tell, he longs to see his Sonne, were strong:
But let him say so then, and let him goe;
But let him sweare so, and he shall not stay,
Wee'l thwack him hence with Distaffes.
Yet of your Royall presence, Ile aduenture
The borrow of a Weeke. When at Bohemia
You take my Lord, Ile giue him my Commission,
To let him there a Moneth, behind the Gest
Prefix'd for's parting: yet (good-deed) Leontes,
I loue thee not a larre o'th' Clock, behind
What Lady she her Lord. You'le stay?

Pol. No, Madame

Her. Nay, but you will?

Pol. I may not verely

Her. Verely?

You put me off with limber Vowes: but I,
Though you would seek t' vnsphere the Stars with Oaths,
Should yet say, Sir, no going: Verely
You shall not goe; a Ladyes Verely 'is
As potent as a Lords. Will you goe yet?
Force me to keepe you as a Prisoner,
Not like a Guest: so you shall pay your Fees
When you depart, and saue your Thanks. How say you?
My Prisoner? or my Guest? by your dread Verely,
One of them you shall be

Pol. Your Guest then, Madame:

To be your Prisoner, should import offending;
Which is for me, lesse easie to commit,
Then you to punish

Her. Not your Gaoler then,

But your kind Hostesse. Come, Ile question you
Of my Lords Tricks, and yours, when you were Boyes:
You were pretty Lordings then?

Pol. We were (faire Queene)

Two Lads, that thought there was no more behind,
But such a day to morrow, as to day,
And to be Boy eternall

Her. Was not my Lord

The veryer Wag o'th' two?

Pol. We were as twyn'd Lambs, that did frisk i'th' Sun,
And bleat the one at th' other: what we chang'd,
Was Innocence, for Innocence: we knew not
The Doctrine of ill-doing, nor dream'd
That any did: Had we pursu'd that life,

And our weake Spirits ne're been higher rear'd
With stronger blood, we should haue answer'd Heauen
Boldly, not guilty; the Imposition clear'd,
Hereditarie ours

Her. By this we gather
You haue tript since

Pol. O my most sacred Lady,
Temptations haue since then been borne to's: for
In those vnflgd'd dayes, was my Wife a Girle;
Your precious selfe had then not cross'd the eyes
Of my young Play-fellow

Her. Grace to boot:
Of this make no conclusion, least you say
Your Queene and I are Deuils: yet goe on,
Th' offences we haue made you doe, wee'le answere,
If you first sinn'd with vs: and that with vs
You did continue fault; and that you slipt not
With any, but with vs

Leo. Is he woon yet?

Her. Hee'le stay (my Lord.)

Leo. At my request, he would not:

Hermione (my dearest) thou neuer spoak'st
To better purpose

Her. Neuer?

Leo. Neuer, but once

Her. What? haue I twice said well? when was't before?
I prethee tell me: cram's with prayse, and make's
As fat as tame things: One good deed, dying tonguelesse,
Slaughters a thousand, wayting vpon that.
Our prayses are our Wages. You may ride's
With one soft Kisse a thousand Furlongs, ere
With Spur we heat an Acre. But to th' Goale:

My last good deed, was to entreat his stay.
What was my first? it ha's an elder Sister,
Or I mistake you: O, would her Name were Grace.
But once before I spoke to th' purpose? when?
Nay, let me haue't: I long

Leo. Why, that was when
Three crabbed Moneths had sowr'd themselues to death,
Ere I could make thee open thy white Hand:
A clap thy selfe, my Loue; then didst thou vtter,
I am yours for euer

Her. 'Tis Grace indeed.
Why lo-you now; I haue spoke to th' purpose twice:
The one, for euer earn'd a Royall Husband;
Th' other, for some while a Friend

Leo. Too hot, too hot:
To mingle friendship farre, is mingling bloods.
I haue Tremor Cordis on me: my heart daunces,
But not for ioy; not ioy. This Entertainment
May a free face put on: deriue a Libertie
From Heartinesse, from Bountie, fertile Bosome,
And well become the Agent: 't may; I graunt:
But to be padling Palmes, and pinching Fingers,
As now they are, and making practis'd Smiles
As in a Looking-Glasse; and then to sigh, as 'twere
The Mort o'th' Deere: oh, that is entertainment
My Bosome likes not, nor my Browes. Mamillius,
Art thou my Boy?
Mam. I, my good Lord

Leo. I'fecks:
Why that's my Bawcock: what? has't smutch'd thy Nose?
They say it is a Coppy out of mine. Come Captaine,
We must be neat; not neat, but cleanly, Captaine:
And yet the Steere, the Heycfer, and the Calfe,
Are all call'd Neat. Still Virginaling
Vpon his Palme? How now (you wanton Calfe)

Art thou my Calfe?

Mam. Yes, if you will (my Lord.)

Leo. Thou want'st a rough pash, & the shoots that I haue
To be full, like me: yet they say we are
Almost as like as Egges; Women say so,
(That will say any thing.) But were they false
As o're-dy'd Blacks, as Wind, as Waters; false
As Dice are to be wish'd, by one that fixes
No borne 'twixt his and mine; yet were it true,
To say this Boy were like me. Come (Sir Page)
Looke on me with your Welkin eye: sweet Villaine,
Most dear'st, my Collop: Can thy Dam, may't be
Affection? thy Intention stabs the Center.
Thou do'st make possible things not so held,
Communicat'st with Dreames (how can this be?)
With what's vnreall: thou coactiue art,
And fellow'st nothing. Then 'tis very credent,
Thou may'st co-ioyne with something, and thou do'st,
(And that beyond Commission) and I find it,
(And that to the infection of my Braines,
And hardning of my Browes.)

Pol. What meanes Sicilia?

Her. He something seemes vnsetled

Pol. How? my Lord?

Leo. What cheere? how is't with you, best Brother?

Her. You look as if you held a Brow of much distraction:
Are you mou'd (my Lord?)

Leo. No, in good earnest.

How sometimes Nature will betray it's folly?
It's tendernesse? and make it selfe a Pastime
To harder bosomes? Looking on the Lynes
Of my Boyes face, me thoughts I did requoyle
Twentie three yeeres, and saw my selfe vn-breech'd,
In my greene Veluet Coat; my Dagger muzzel'd,
Least it should bite it's Master, and so proue
(As Ornaments oft do's) too dangerous:
How like (me thought) I then was to this Kernell,
This Squash, this Gentleman. Mine honest Friend,
Will you take Egges for Money?

Mam. No (my Lord) Ile fight

Leo. You will: why happy man be's dole. My Brother
Are you so fond of your young Prince, as we
Doe seeme to be of ours?

Pol. If at home (Sir)
He's all my Exercise, my Mirth, my Matter;
Now my sworne Friend, and then mine Enemy;
My Parasite, my Souldier: States-man; all:
He makes a lulyes day, short as December,
And with his varying childnesse, cures in me
Thoughts, that would thicke my blood

Leo. So stands this Squire
Offic'd with me: We two will walke (my Lord)
And leaue you to your grauer steps. Hermione,
How thou lou'st vs, shew in our Brothers welcome;
Let what is deare in Sicily, be cheape:
Next to thy selfe, and my young Rouer, he's
Apparant to my heart

Her. If you would seeke vs,
We are yours i'th' Garden: shall's attend you there?
Leo. To your owne bents dispose you: you'le be found,
Be you beneath the Sky: I am angling now,
(Though you perceiue me not how I giue Lyne)
Goe too, goe too.
How she holds vp the Neb? the Byll to him?
And armes her with the boldnesse of a Wife
To her allowing Husband. Gone already,
Ynch-thicke, knee-deepe; ore head and eares a fork'd one.
Goe play (Boy) play: thy Mother playes, and I
Play too; but so disgrac'd a part, whose issue
Will hisse me to my Graue: Contempt and Clamor
Will be my Knell. Goe play (Boy) play, there haue been
(Or I am much deceiu'd) Cuckolds ere now,
And many a man there is (euen at this present,
Now, while I speake this) holds his Wife by th' Arme,
That little thinkes she ha's been sluy'd in's absence,
And his Pond fish'd by his next Neighbor (by

Sir Smile, his Neighbor:) nay, there's comfort in't,
Whiles other men haue Gates, and those Gates open'd
(As mine) against their will. Should all despaire
That haue reuolted Wiues, the tenth of Mankind
Would hang themselues. Physick for't, there's none:
It is a bawdy Planet, that will strike
Where 'tis predominant; and 'tis powrefull: thinke 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,
With bag and baggage: many thousand on's
Haue the Disease, and feele't not. How now Boy?
Mam. I am like you say

Leo. Why, that's some comfort.
What? Camillo there?
Cam. I, my good Lord

Leo. Goe play (Mamillius) thou'rt an honest man:
Camillo, this great Sir will yet stay longer

Cam. You had much adoe to make his Anchor hold,
When you cast out, it still came home

Leo. Didst note it?
Cam. He would not stay at your Petitions, made
His Businesse more materiall

Leo. Didst perceiue it?
They're here with me already; whisp'ring, rounding:
Sicilia is a so-forth: 'tis farre gone,
When I shall gust it last. How cam't (Camillo)
That he did stay?
Cam. At the good Queenes entreatie

Leo. At the Queenes be't: Good should be pertinent,
But so it is, it is not. Was this taken
By any vnderstanding Pate but thine?

For thy Conceit is soaking, will draw in
More then the common Blocks. Not noted, is't,
But of the finer Natures? by some Seueralls
Of Head-peece extraordinarie? Lower Messes
Perchance are to this Businesse purblind? say

Cam. Businesse, my Lord? I thinke most vnderstand
Bohemia stayes here longer

Leo. Ha?

Cam. Stayes here longer

Leo. I, but why?

Cam. To satisfie your Highnesse, and the Entreaties
Of our most gracious Mistresse

Leo. Satisfie?

Th' entreaties of your Mistresse? Satisfie?
Let that suffice. I haue trusted thee (Camillo)
With all the neerest things to my heart, as well
My Chamber-Councels, wherein (Priest-like) thou
Hast cleans'd my Bosome: I, from thee departed
Thy Penitent reform'd: but we haue been
Deceiu'd in thy Integritie, deceiu'd
In that which seemes so

Cam. Be it forbid (my Lord.)

Leo. To bide vpon't: thou art not honest: or
If thou inclin'st that way, thou art a Coward,
Which hoxes honestie behind, restrayning
From Course requir'd: or else thou must be counted
A Seruant, grafted in my serious Trust,
And therein negligent: or else a Foole,
That seest a Game play'd home, the rich Stake drawne,
And tak'st it all for ieast

Cam. My gracious Lord,
I may be negligent, foolish, and fearefull,

In euery one of these, no man is free,
But that his negligence, his folly, feare,
Among the infinite doings of the World,
Sometime puts forth in your affaires (my Lord.)
If euer I were wilfull-negligent,
It was my folly: if industriously
I play'd the Foole, it was my negligence,
Not weighing well the end: if euer fearefull
To doe a thing, where I the issue doubted,
Whereof the execution did cry out
Against the non-performance, 'twas a feare
Which oft infects the wisest: these (my Lord)
Are such allow'd Infirmities, that honestie
Is neuer free of. But beseech your Grace
Be plainer with me, let me know my Trespas
By it's owne visage; if I then deny it,
'Tis none of mine

Leo. Ha' not you seene Camillo?
(But that's past doubt: you haue, or your eye-glasse
Is thicker then a Cuckolds Horne) or heard?
(For to a Vision so apparant, Rumor
Cannot be mute) or thought? (for Cogitation
Resides not in that man, that do's not thinke)
My Wife is slipperie? If thou wilt confesse,
Or else be impudently negatiue,
To haue nor Eyes, nor Eares, nor Thought, then say
My Wife's a Holy-Horse, deserues a Name
As ranke as any Flax-Wench, that puts to
Before her troth-plight: say't, and iustify't

Cam. I would not be a stander-by, to heare
My Soueraigne Mistresse clouded so, without
My present vengeance taken: 'shrew my heart,
You neuer spoke what did become you lesse
Then this; which to reiterate, were sin
As deepe as that, though true

Leo. Is whispering nothing?
Is leaning Cheeke to Cheeke? is meating Noses?

Kissing with in-side Lip? stopping the Cariere
Of Laughter, with a sigh? (a Note infallible
Of breaking Honestie) horsing foot on foot?
Skulking in corners? wishing Clocks more swift?
Houres, Minutes? Noone, Mid-night? and all Eyes
Blind with the Pin and Web, but theirs; theirs onely,
That would vnseene be wicked? Is this nothing?
Why then the World, and all that's in't, is nothing,
The couering Skie is nothing, Bohemia nothing,
My Wife is nothing, nor Nothing haue these Nothings,
If this be nothing

Cam. Good my Lord, be cur'd
Of this diseas'd Opinion, and betimes,
For 'tis most dangerous

Leo. Say it be, 'tis true

Cam. No, no, my Lord

Leo. It is: you lye, you lye:
I say thou lyeest Camillo, and I hate thee,
Pronounce thee a grosse Lowt, a mindlesse Slaue,
Or else a houering Temporizer, that
Canst with thine eyes at once see good and euill,
Inclining to them both: were my Wiues Liuer
Infected (as her life) she would not liue
The running of one Glasse

Cam. Who do's infect her?

Leo. Why he that weares her like her Medull, hanging
About his neck (Bohemia) who, if I
Had Seruants true about me, that bare eyes
To see alike mine Honor, as their Profits,
(Their owne particular Thrifts) they would doe that
Which should vndoe more doing: I, and thou
His Cup-bearer, whom I from meaner forme
Haue Bench'd, and rear'd to Worship, who may'st see
Plainely, as Heauen sees Earth, and Earth sees Heauen,
How I am gall'd, might'st be-spice a Cup,

To giue mine Enemy a lasting Winke:
Which Draught to me, were cordiall

Cam. Sir (my Lord)

I could doe this, and that with no rash Potion,
But with a lingring Dram, that should not worke
Maliciously, like Poyson: But I cannot
Beleeue this Crack to be in my dread Mistresse
(So soueraignely being Honorable.)

I haue lou'd thee,

Leo. Make that thy question, and goe rot:
Do'st thinke I am so muddy, so vnsetled,
To appoint my selfe in this vexation?
Sully the puritie and whitenesse of my Sheetes
(Which to preserue, is Sleepe; which being spotted,
Is Goades, Thornes, Nettles, Tayles of Waspes)
Giue scandall to the blood o'th' Prince, my Sonne,
(Who I doe thinke is mine, and loue as mine)
Without ripe mouing to't? Would I doe this?
Could man so blench?

Cam. I must beleeue you (Sir)

I doe, and will fetch off Bohemia for't:
Prouided, that when hee's remou'd, your Highnesse
Will take againe your Queene, as yours at first,
Euen for your Sonnes sake, and thereby for sealing
The Iniurie of Tongues, in Courts and Kingdomes
Knowne, and ally'd to yours

Leo. Thou do'st aduise me,
Euen so as I mine owne course haue set downe:
Ile giue no blemish to her Honor, none

Cam. My Lord,

Goe then; and with a countenance as cleare
As Friendship weares at Feasts, keepe with Bohemia,
And with your Queene: I am his Cup-bearer,
If from me he haue wholesome Beueridge,
Account me not your Seruant

Leo. This is all:

Do't, and thou hast the one halfe of my heart;
Do't not, thou splitt'st thine owne

Cam. Ile do't, my Lord

Leo. I wil seeme friendly, as thou hast aduis'd me.

Exit

Cam. O miserable Lady. But for me,
What case stand I in? I must be the poysoner
Of good Polixenes, and my ground to do't,
Is the obedience to a Master; one,
Who in Rebellion with himselfe, will haue
All that are his, so too. To doe this deed,
Promotion followes: If I could find example
Of thousand's that had struck anynted Kings,
And flourish'd after, Il'd not do't: But since
Nor Brasse, nor Stone, nor Parchment beares not one,
Let Villanie it selfe forswear't. I must
Forsake the Court: to do't, or no, is certaine
To me a breake-neck. Happy Starre raigne now,
Here comes Bohemia.
Enter Polixenes.

Pol. This is strange: Me thinkes
My fauor here begins to warpe. Not speake?
Good day Camillo

Cam. Hayle most Royall Sir

Pol. What is the Newes i'th' Court?

Cam. None rare (my Lord.)

Pol. The King hath on him such a countenance,
As he had lost some Prouince, and a Region
Lou'd, as he loues himselfe: euen now I met him
With customarie complement, when hee
Wafting his eyes to th' contrary, and falling
A Lippe of much contempt, speedes from me, and
So leaues me, to consider what is breeding,

That changes thus his Manners

Cam. I dare not know (my Lord.)

Pol. How, dare not? doe not? doe you know, and dare not?
Be intelligent to me, 'tis thereabouts:
For to your selfe, what you doe know, you must,
And cannot say, you dare not. Good Camillo,
Your chang'd complexions are to me a Mirror,
Which shewes me mine chang'd too: for I must be
A partie in this alteration, finding
My selfe thus alter'd with't

Cam. There is a sicknesse

Which puts some of vs in distemper, but
I cannot name the Disease, and it is caught
Of you, that yet are well

Pol. How caught of me?

Make me not sighted like the Basilisque.
I haue look'd on thousands, who haue sped the better
By my regard, but kill'd none so: Camillo,
As you are certainly a Gentleman, thereto
Clerke-like experienc'd, which no lesse adornes
Our Gentry, then our Parents Noble Names,
In whose successe we are gentle: I beseech you,
If you know ought which do's behoue my knowledge,
Thereof to be inform'd, imprison't not
In ignorant concealement

Cam. I may not answer

Pol. A Sicknesse caught of me, and yet I well?

I must be answer'd. Do'st thou heare Camillo,
I coniure thee, by all the parts of man,
Which Honor do's acknowledge, whereof the least
Is not this Suit of mine, that thou declare
What incidencie thou do'st ghesse of harme
Is creeping toward me; how farre off, how neere,
Which way to be preuented, if to be:

If not, how best to beare it

Cam. Sir, I will tell you,
Since I am charg'd in Honor, and by him
That I thinke Honorable: therefore marke my counsaile,
Which must be eu'n as swiftly followed, as
I meane to vtter it; or both your selfe, and me,
Cry lost, and so good night

Pol. On, good Camillo

Cam. I am appointed him to murther you

Pol. By whom, Camillo?

Cam. By the King

Pol. For what?

Cam. He thinkes, nay with all confidence he sweares,
As he had seen't, or beene an Instrument
To vice you to't, that you haue toucht his Queene
Forbiddenly

Pol. Oh then, my best blood turne
To an infected Gelly, and my Name
Be yoak'd with his, that did betray the Best:
Turne then my freshest Reputation to
A sauour, that may strike the dullest Nosthrill
Where I arriue, and my approach be shun'd,
Nay hated too, worse then the great'st Infection
That ere was heard, or read

Cam. Sweare his thought ouer
By each particular Starre in Heauen, and
By all their Influences; you may as well
Forbid the Sea for to obey the Moone,
As (or by Oath) remoue, or (Counsaile) shake
The Fabrick of his Folly, whose foundation
Is pyl'd vpon his Faith, and will continue

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